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Cinema Papers #87 March-April 1992

Scott Murray

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SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

MULTI-CULTURAL CINEMA
INCLUDING ABORIGINAL CINEMA AND TELEVISION

PLUS STEVEN SPIELBERG AND ‘HOOK’
GEORGE NEGUS FILMING THE RED UNKNOWN
RICHARD LOWENSTEIN’S ‘SAY A LITTLE PRAYER’
JEWISH CINEMA / BARTON FINK / LATEST REVIEWS
CINEMA PAPERS
CONGRATULATES

Film Victoria

ON ITS
10TH ANNIVERSARY

FILM VICTORIA
HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN
64 FEATURE FILMS, 40 MINI-SERIES
AND TELEMOVIES, MORE THAN 1000 HOURS
OF TELEVISION DRAMA, 56 INDEPENDENT
DOCUMENTARIES, 23 SHORT FILMS
AND TWO "RENAISSANCES"
OF FILM

VIVA VICTORIA!
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CONTRIBUTORS

ANA-MARIA BAHIANA is a Brazilian film writer based in Los Angeles; CRAIG BROWN is a freelance writer specializing in television; PHILLIP DUTCHAK is a freelance writer and film historian; JAN EPSTEIN is the film reviewer for the Melbourne Report; EVA FRIEDMAN is a freelance journalist who often writes for The Age’s EG; JOHN HARDING is a playwright and performance poet, as well as administrator of the Ilbijerri Aboriginal-Torres Strait Islander Theatre Co-operative; GREG KERR is a freelance writer specializing in the entertainment industry; ROSE LUCAS is a senior tutor in Literature and Cinema Studies at Monash University; ADRIAN MARTIN is the film critic of Business Review Weekly; KARL QUINN is a freelance writer on film; JORGE DAVID REMY is based in Georgia, U.S., and has contributed to such magazines as Living Blues, Art Papers and The Georgia Review; JIM SCHEMBRI, despite his new year’s promise in The Age, has still to make his bed; SYLVIE SHAW is the film consultant to Asialink; ARCHIE WELLER is an author, whose novel Day of the Dog has just been filmed; RAYMOND YOUNIS is a lecturer at the University of Sydney.
This list includes 1991 world releases, even a less-than-complete record of films seen.

**BEST FILMS**
- Texasville (Peter Bogdanovich)
- The Comfort of Strangers (Paul Schrader)
- Le Mari de la Coiffeuse (The Hairdresser's Husband, Patrice Leconte)
- Porte Aperte (Open Doors, Gianni Amelio)
- Mr and Mrs Bridge (James Ivory)

**RUNNERS-UP**
- The Sheltering Sky (Bernardo Bertolucci)
- La Double Vie de Veronique (The Double Life of Veronika, Krzysztof Kieslowski)
- Aux Yeux du Monde (The Eyes of the World, Eric Rohant)

**BEST PERFORMANCES (FEMALE)**
- Irène Jacob (La Double Vie de Veronique)
- Anna Galléna (Le Mari de la Coiffeuse)

**BEST PERFORMANCES (MALE)**
- Jean Rochefort (Le Mari de la Coiffeuse)
- Philippe Noiret (Faux et Usage de Faux)

**BEST ENSEMBLE CAST**
- Texasville

**BEST PHOTOGRAPHY**
- Vittorio Storaro's for The Sheltering Sky

**BEST PHOTOGRAPHY (AUSTRALIAN)**
- David Eggby's for Quiqley

**BEST MUSIC SCORE**
- Zbigniew Preisner's for La Double Vie de Veronique

**BEST CONFIRMATION OF A NEW TALENT**
- Eric Rochant with Aux Yeux du Monde

**MOST ENCOURAGING RETURN TO (NEAR) FORM**
- Claude Chabrol with Madame Bovary

**MOST TECHNICALLY STUNNING**
- Prospero's Books (Peter Greenaway)

**MOST UNDER-RATED**
- Texasville, The Sheltering Sky

**MOST OVER-RATED**
- Ju Dou (Zhang Yi-Mou)
- Thelma & Louise (Ridley Scott)
- The Grifters (Stephen Frears)
- Cape Fear (Martin Scorsese)
- Bonfire of the Vanities (Brian de Palma)

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**OBITUARIES**

As full and sympathetic obituaries have already been printed in many newspapers and magazines, let it then be just noted here the sad deaths of Australians Dame Judith Anderson, Greg Tepper and Brian Robinson. All three, in vastly differing ways, contributed to the world film culture.

Dame Judith was an exceptional actress who will always be especially remembered for her role as Mrs Danvers in Alfred Hitchcock's Rebecca (1940). Born in Adelaide in 1898, she made her Australian stage debut in Sydney in 1915 and her American on Broadway in 1918. Her first film was Blood Money (1933), which was followed by striking performances in such films as Kings Row (1942), Laura (1944), The Strange Love of Martha Ivers (1946) and Cat on a Hot Tin Roof (1958), to almost randomly select a few. Her sole Australian credit was in Terry Bourke's thriller, Inn of the Damned (1975).

Greg Tepper worked for a long time at the Victorian Film Commission (later Film Victoria). A quick, sometimes acerbic, wit, he was greatly loved by his fellow workers, as he was by many filmmakers he helped. He was also a producer in his own right (We of the Never Never, 1982).

Brian Robinson was a filmmaker (co-director with Phillip Adams of Jack and Jill: A Postscript, 1970) and passionate film lover who inspired many filmmakers at the Swinburne Film and Television School. That Swinburne films have long been regarded as braver and more visually cinematic than those from Sydney's Film Television & Radio School is, to many, a tribute to Robinson. His legacy will thus live on in the work of the many filmmakers who came under his nurturing wing.
FEATURES


DISTRIBUTOR


MEN AND WOMEN - THE DIFFERENCE (4 x 60 mins) Robin Hughes & Associates. Producers: Ian Munro, Robin Hughes. Directors: Ian Munro, Robin Hughes. Scriptwriter: Robin Hughes. This television series examines the difference between men and women, using the latest scientific knowledge to explode myths about gender and to discover what lies at the heart of the battle of the sexes.

BLOOD BROTHERS (4 x 60 mins) City Pictures. Executive producer: Barbara Marlotti. Producers: Ned Landers, Rachel Perkins. Directors: Ned Landers, Rachel Perkins. Scriptwriters: Marcia Langton, Eric Willmot, Tjanara Williams, Ned Landers, Rachel Perkins. This documentary series profiles four prominent Aboriginal men whose lives are interwoven with significant events in the history of the Aboriginal struggle. The stories of Darby Jampinjima Ross, Rupert Max Stuart, Charles Perkins and Bart Willoughby are told in this production made from an Aboriginal perspective.

SEARCHING (60 mins) M & A Film Corporation. Producer: Tristram Miall. Director: Nicola Woolmington. Scriptwriter: Nicola Woolmington. Filmmaker Nicola Woolmington, who was an adopted child, uses her own quest as the core of this film about the personal search by adopted children for their natural parents.

WHEN MRS HEGARTY COMES TO JAPAN (55-59 mins) Tenchijin Productions. Producer: Noriko Sekiguchi. Consultant producer: Bob Connolly. Director: Noriko Sekiguchi. Scriptwriter: Noriko Sekiguchi. This documentary focuses on Mrs Hegarty's first encounters with the people and culture of Japan, which she once held as alien, and with the parents of her adopted "Japanese daughter", who belong to a generation she once regarded as enemies. The filmmaker is the "Japanese daughter" portrayed in the film.

19 DECEMBER

FEATURES

DECAY OF OUR LIVES (90 mins) Oltrag Productions. Producers: Chris Kennedy, Patrick Fitzgerald. Director: Chris Kennedy. Scriptwriter: Chris Kennedy. This stylized docu-drama unravels the bizarre events which led Australian dentist Gordon Fairweather to defraud the British health system and become an international fugitive, leaving behind a trail of overtreated teeth and pursued by a love-struck dental nurse.

MINI-SERIES

ON THE BEACH (2 x 90 mins) Southern Star Sullivan. Producer: Errol Sullivan. Line producer: Rod Allan. Director: Ian Barry. Scriptwriters: Bill Kerby. David Williamson. Australia is the last remaining place on Earth as yet unaffected by the nuclear fallout of World War III. As Melbourne awaits the deadly radiation cloud, the remnants of the American navy struggle into port. While time runs out, the survivors find despair, tragedy and love in this mini-series based on Nevil Shute's classic book.

DOCTMENTARIES

THE TENTH DANCER (60 mins) Singing Nomad Productions. Executive producer: Denise Patience. Producer: Sally Ingleton. Director: Sally Ingleton. At the end of Pot Pot's reign of terror, only one in ten classical dancers of Cambodia's Royal Court had survived. This is the story of two of the survivors and of their efforts to rebuild a destroyed culture.

LIVING IN THE NEVER NEVER (60 mins) Sorena. Producers: John Mabey, Rhonda Mabey. Director: John Mabey. Cook is one of the last remaining railway settlements built in the nullarbor Plain to service the transcontinental line. This documentary shows how the people of Cook (population 69) thrive in this harsh, remote environment.


23 JANUARY

FEATURES

ALEX (90 mins) Total Film & Television. Producers: Philip Gerlach, Tom Parkinson. Director: Megan Simpson. Scriptwriter: Ken Catran. Based on the novel by Tessa Duder. Winning has always been easy for Alex, a 15-year-old champion swimmer from the wrong side of the tracks. Then comes love and tragedy and the loss of innocence. In 1959, she faces her toughest challenge: qualifying for the Rome Olympics.

COPS AND ROBBERS (90 mins) Total Film & Television. Producers: Philip Gerlach, Tom Parkinson. Director: Fane Flaws. Scriptwriter: Timothy Bean. A bankrupt man bungles his suicide attempt and embarks on a career in crime in this action-packed cops and robbers comedy involving murder, mayhem and marriage.

MINI-SERIES


THE NEW ADVENTURES OF BLACK BEAUTY 2 (26 x 30 mins) PRO Television. Executive producer: Richard Becker. Producer: Sue Wild. Story editors: Harold Landers, Roger Moulton. This period children's drama series follows the adventures of Isabella Barrett, a 13-year-old orphan, whose life changes dramatically when she is rescued by Black Beauty. Black Beauty, Isabella and her new friends band together to untangle the mysteries surrounding her arrival in an Australian country town and the discovery of a lost gold shipment.

DOCTMENTARIES

THE BETTER LIVING SERIES (3 x 60 mins) David Flatman Productions. Executive producer: David Flatman. Scriptwriter: David Flatman. The series of three documentary specials examines the quality of life in the developed world and looks at some of the pressures and inequalities created by the push for higher living standards. How can we improve our lives and make better use of the health systems designed to care for us? The programmes will focus on nutrition, injury and ageing.

PRESERVING FOR THE TASTE OF IT (13 x 30 mins) CM Film Productions. Executive producer: Jon Sainken. Producer: Margaret Musca. Director: Carmelo Musca. Scriptwriter: Carmelo Musca. This series shows how Australia's multi-cultural groups approach the art of preserving food. The programmes are also about the handing on of culture and traditions from one generation to the next and their integration into the Australian way of life.

CRYING FOR THE DREAM (60 mins) Kennedy White. Executive producer: Barbara Mariotti. Producer: Kate Kennedy White. Director: Kate Kennedy White. Associate producer: Janine Haynes. Janine Haynes was separated from her Aboriginal mother at the age of two and placed in a foster home. She wants to understand more of a world denied to her and embarks on a journey to the heartland of her mother's people, the Kukutu tribe, travelling along the trail of the Eagle Dreaming, from the southern coast of Australia to Uluru.

THE 1992 FILM FUND

The FFC announced late January the shortlist of six projects for the Film Fund. This list will be cut down to up to four films. No budget is to exceed $2.5 million.


A Wilderness Journey in Russia

George Negus

While at 60 Minutes, George Negus became one of Australia's most popular and respected public-affairs reporters, with a strong internationalist perspective. Then, after a stint as co-host of Today, Negus left network television to set up with partner Kirsty Cockburn their own production company. The first project was G'day Comrade (1989), a three-hour look at the effects of perestroika on Soviet citizens. This was followed by the hour-long Kids First (1990), which celebrates the first-ever UNICEF World Summit for Children held at the United Nations in New York.

Negus' latest venture is Across the Red Unknown: A Wilderness Journey in Russia, a two-hour record of a journey from Nahodka, south of Vladivostok, to Moscow. Undertaken in August and September last year, the six-week adventure covered 13,000 km of some of the world's least-travelled roads.

While in the depths of Siberia, filming where no one had before, dramatic events Overtook the Soviet Union with the failed coup to topple Gorbachev. Negus' journey thus became one of filming ordinary Soviets reacting to the extraordinary changes in their country as news slowly filtered through. By the time Negus reached Moscow, the Soviet Union existed only in name, the fragmentation well begun.

The following interview, conducted by Scott Murray in late December, discusses first that dramatic journey, then moves on to a discussion on the coverage of socio-political journalism on television, including the role of the presenter.
RED UNKNOWN

Journey in Russia
Why did you undertake to cross the Red Unknown?

Because the Russians asked me whether I would be interested in trying to drive across the Soviet Union. I found the idea an irresistible challenge, especially since nobody had filmed it before. In fact, very few people had actually done the journey, fullstop.

My automatic inclination is to analyze what’s going on in a place through ordinary people, not through official channels. So this idea appealed to me. If I couldn’t drive across the Soviet Union and, by talking to ordinary people, find out what perestroika and glasnost were all about, then I couldn’t do anything. I literally just had to stay on my feet and keep breathing to get something worth watching.

What I didn’t expect was that, ten days into the trip, the Soviet Union would come to a screaming halt and the whole tenor of the journey would be different. I started in the outer limits, as far away from Moscow as I could get, to find out what the Gorbachev factor had been and what the Yeltsin factor was; instead, I found myself in the middle of a tumult which set the country off on another amazing tangent.

So, while the film started out to be a political odyssey, it finished up being a piece of living journalism, of watching a country change before one’s very eyes. The screenline summary is that “We started the journey in the Soviet Union and finished it in Russia”, or “We started it in the Red Unknown and finished it in a Pink Uncertainty” – not that people regard it as being pink uncertainty. They regard it as no longer even pink. But that is a very simplistic view.

Most of that country is still operating, if it’s operating at all, under the auspices of the old communist structure. They don’t want it, but they have no choice except to keep using it. You can’t change from a centrally-controlled totalitarian system to a free-market economy overnight. But that’s what we ratbags in the West have asked them to do.

Why did the Soviets approach you in particular?

Because of G’day Comrade. Rightly or wrongly, they regard me as something of a Kremlinologist, as an observer of their country who takes it seriously. They think I understand what’s going on there. They may or may not be right.

Do the Soviets feel there are few Westerners with a real interest in and knowledge of their country?

Because they are far more politically sophisticated than their critics, yes they do. They also know that I have none of the conventional prejudices and predeterminations about Russia, the Soviet Union, communism, etc. They would regard my politics as being as critical of the West as they are of totalitarianism.

Because I am occasionally verbally violent about what I see as being wrong in the West, in the old days they probably saw that as my being pro-Communist. I’m not, but I’m certainly not anti-Soviet or anti-Russian. I have always regarded them as a huge group of people stumbling around like the rest of us, trying to find a way of organizing their society. They happened to get it very wrong in the first instance, but they’ve had the guts to recognize that. The difference between them and us is that we haven’t had the guts to recognize that ours doesn’t work either. We still rush around with blinkers on, pretending that all the ills of Western capitalism have nothing to do with capitalism, but that they have something to do with people.
"The Russians are caught between a system that didn’t work and one they haven’t got, which they’re not even sure they want. They’re caught between a rock and a rock, the poor bastards. And all the West does is gloat and say, ‘Isn’t it wonderful that capitalism works better than communism.’ Bullshit; neither of them works."

It has always amused that when the Communist Bloc started to fall apart it was because “the people were wonderful and the system was dreadful”. When Western capitalism is in crisis, as it is now, it’s not because there’s anything wrong with the system, it’s because “people are fucking”. What we will find is that the people who overthrew the Eastern Bloc system will have just as much difficulty in getting another system up as we have. We’re hearing already about the crime, the corruption, the inefficiency and the shortcomings. We rushed to tell them all that was wrong with their system, encouraging them to knock it over, and now we sit back watching them flounder in this awful never-land.

The Russians are caught between a system that didn’t work and one they haven’t got, which they’re not even sure they want. They’re caught between a rock and a rock, the poor bastards. And all the West does is gloat and say, “Isn’t it wonderful that capitalism works better than communism.” Bullshit; neither of them works. The only reason capitalism has survived longer than communism is because we propped it up with trade unions, governments and social welfare systems. Had we not had those three things, capitalism would have fallen on its face decades ago.

The reason communism didn’t succeed is because they stuck pigheadedly to a system instead of adapting it. Had they let Gorbachev have his head and adapt their system, they would probably have had far less chaos than they’re going to have. But no, we had to see the end of communism.

It is simplistic and superficial to say you can solve people’s problems after 75 years of an inadequate system by simply killing that system stone dead. I’ve travelled the world too much to imagine that kind of nonsense would ever be effective. Yet that’s what we’re doing, and just about all that’s going to be wrong in the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc countries over the next decade is our fault. We encouraged them to take that path when we knew damn well the trouble they were going to get into.

I have a sneaking suspicion that there might be a little bit of self-interest involved in a fragile, chaotic Soviet Union. It makes it much easier for Western countries to justify their enormous defence bills. There are a lot people in the world who still need the world tense. Now that the communist bogeyman has disappeared, the only two things that will keep things tense for the militarists of this world are an unstable Soviet Union and an unstable Middle East with an aggressive Islam. Without those things there are no justifications for the extent of military spending and activity in the world. There are a lot of people who stand to lose a lot if the world is too peaceful.

How big a crew did you take with you?

Television-wise I’ve always worked with a bare minimum. But this time, apart from myself, we had a cameraman, a sound recordist and a production supervisor-cum-second cameraman, plus a stills photographer for the book of the journey (to be published by Weldon Publishing (International)). We also had three Russians: an interpreter [Grigori Davydov], a guide [the famous Russian adventurer, Feodor Konikikhov], and a mechanic.

So, the television operation was four, with three other people as interested observers. The stills photographer made it eight and
George Negus

the mechanic nine. That was more people than I've ever had to work and deal with before, so it was an education in itself. I probably could have done it with five: four of us and one Russian.

**How many vehicles did you have?**

Four. We couldn't have done it with less. We had to carry enough film stock and equipment for what amounted to twenty hours of film. That in itself was enough of a load, but we also had to take fuel and water in case we couldn't find any. Then there was the camping equipment and some extra food.

It would be difficult enough for anyone to drive across that country with those roads without filming, so it was a pretty delicate balancing act between travel and filming. We managed to pull it off because of the huge amount of journalistic research done beforehand on what I thought we could get along the way and dovetailing that with what we didn't expect to get. They came together fairly well.

**Were you given freedom to travel wherever you liked?**

The only place we were told we couldn't film was a military zone called Cheliabinsk, which for many years was a munitions manufacturing area and is still KGB controlled. They told us not to film there, but we tried them on when we came across some of the 40,000 KGB agents who have been turned into an anti-corruption squad. We ran across them at a roadblock, where they were looking for drugs and gun-running. They were wearing black uniforms and looked very dramatic, very *Miami Vice*. We started filming, and eventually they got into the spirit of things. We got a very funny piece out of it.

A lot of what I have done in my work, apart from tilting at the odd windmill, has been to hopefully break down mythology. And let me tell you it has never been as difficult to film in the Soviet Union as people would like you to believe. It's part of the romance of the old Cold-War mentality that everywhere there is restriction and surveillance. I've filmed in Russia three times and you really have to go looking for trouble. Also, I've never met obstruction from Soviet intelligence and the military outside the Soviet Union, whereas I've had obstructions from the Americans just about everywhere. Basically, the Russians don't stop you filming anything that the Americans wouldn't stop you filming.

**What other myths about the Russian people do you want to break down?**

That they're dour, that they've been brainwashed. They are, in fact, the most good-humoured, innovative, politically-sophisticated group of people I've met in a long time. They are anything but brainwashed. Anybody who has the impression that under the so-called yoke of communism they stopped thinking independently and politically is just too ridiculous for words. They are politically very sophisticated because they were living in a system they didn't agree with. We live in a system we agree with and we are very apathetic and lethargic about it all. We kid ourselves that we have more freedom than we really do. We don't recognize the economic constritions that our own system places upon people.

The Soviets are ingenious because they had to be. They remained good-humoured under the most dire of circumstances; they are politically fascinating. Now they have become even more of all of those things, because the opportunity is there for them to express themselves. Before it was so constipated and constricted.

They are the nation - the nations - of the future. I just hope they don't hurtle themselves towards the West. I don't think they will. Maybe the Baltic states will, but Russians are very cagey.
They're not going to accept lock, stock and barrel Western industrialized capitalism as the answer to a maiden's prayers. They can see the deficiencies in our system, like they now know about their own. I don't think that they're so stupid as to fall into the same employment, inflation, high-interest, high-debt, mortgaged trap that the West has.

There are lots of aspects of their system worth keeping. They should go through a sifting and a blending process now. They are ideally placed to create a whole new way of organizing power, money and people. To merely superimpose a defective Western system on theirs would be asking for trouble. I'd like to think that they're too bright for that. I also hope they don't get influenced by every oil-can Harry from the bloody West who tells them he has the answer to their consumer dreams. If we don't try to force them to go down our path without question, they could create a new society.

Gorbachev was on the right track when he talked about a regulated socialist market economy at one stage. I think it is one of the most fascinating and original politico-economic phrases to have emerged. It suggests a combination of systems which also suggests an acknowledgement that both are open to serious question. I don't know what a socialist market economy is, but, by Christ, I'd like to be around when they try to make one work. It would be amazing.

So, you are basically an old-fashioned, romantic humanist.

[Laughs] Yes, I am, and I think there's a place for them.

Having said that, I'm also a very political and ideological animal. I don't just waltz into the situation saying, "All we have to be concerned about here is the human factor." I see humanity in political and ideological terms. Or, if you like the other way around, I see politics and ideology in human terms, which is the only way to see it.

In this bloody country, all we ever see is politics in economic terms. We have no social or human goals, just an idiotic preoccupation with economic matters. This doesn't exist anywhere else in the world. No other country has the same level of self-interested preoccupation with economic matters. In sophisticated countries, West and East, they regard economics as being something you have to cop depending on whom you elect to govern you.

In Australia, there is an ideological desert with no political values at all. Politics is purely a battle by politicians who hope they can appeal to the self-interest of the voter. We all just stumble through life, voting every few years and wondering why the hell we're disappointed. Our politics are vacuous.

Politics in the rest of the world is a search for meaning. If a politician said that in this country, he'd be laughed out of town.

So, are you going to do a film on Australia?

Strangely enough, we have one on our books. I never thought we would, because I'm an internationalist. But I think it's possible to take an internationalist view of Australia. I want to make a series on Australia which appeals to an overseas audience as well as an Australian.

That internationalist perspective is not that common to the feature film industry, especially if one takes away films such as
Walkabout and Wake in Fright, which were made by foreign directors. Yet every culture needs that perspective and most countries other than Australia have it.

Yes. And what a wonderful idea it would be to have an Australian director and a foreign director work together on something. The Australian director could tell the foreign director what he obviously doesn’t know about Australia, and the foreign director can tell the Australian director what he thinks he knows about Australia and has got wrong.

There is a kind of parallel situation to that with yourself and Vitali Vitaliev: you on Russia, he on Australia.

Yes, though I disagree entirely with Vitali’s view of Russia. And I think he has to get his rose-coloured glasses off as far as Australia is concerned. But I’ve read some of his pieces about Armco and the demos at the armament factory. He reveals there a picture of a different Australia, so I think he’s waking up.

TELEVISION AND THE REPORTER

This is your third documentary. Why did you branch out into what is for you a new field of reportage?

I don’t consider them documentaries, rather television journalism. To me, the word “documentary” immediately connotes a certain sort of project, in a certain kind of timeslot, with a certain sort of viewing audience. That’s not the sort of television I’ve ever been involved in. What I’ve done, and am still doing, is prime-time journalism. I have taken from what has always been regarded as a current-affairs approach and turned it into a lengthier format.

Has the increased length meant you are able to go into greater depth and cover different sorts of subjects?

I’d be dishonest if I said that for years and years I wasn’t frustrated by the constraints of the current-affairs format. At 60 Minutes, we had progressively turned the whole encapsulation process into an art form. But there are some things that you can’t deal with in that stylistic structure and time length. What I do now is give things the length and approach they deserve.

Do you intend to make programmes of a particular style, or are they going to be fairly eclectic?

No, I am not eclectic. I am very socio-political. Having said that, I’d like to think the treatment we give things is not just straight socio-political analysis. They’re not treatises at all, but socio-politics seen through the daily lives of the inhabitants of the particular area of the world. If you like, it’s socio-politics with a human face, for the want of a better cliché.

Which raises the role of personality of the presenter. To what degree is your being presenter a factor in what you’re intending to do?

In Australia it’s probably a plus. Internationally, at this stage, it’s more likely a minus.

I’ve always been quite unapologetic about presenter-led television journalism. The usual accusation about the presenter and the reporter becoming more important than the story is just a heap of spurious shit. It’s usually uttered by people who have never really sat down to think about the philosophy behind what is called “personality cult” journalism.

Television is a very visual and audience-oriented medium. Audiences identify with characters they see on television, whether they’re actors, newscasters, soap stars or journalists. That being the case, a presenter-led style of programme-making is a huge advantage. The audience can identify with the subject matter through another human being. If it’s a human being that they know, that’s even better, and if it’s someone they trust and regard as having credibility, then that’s an enormous advantage.

So, while I understand the accusation about reporters becoming more important than the story, I’d like to think that it’s never been true in my case. People know that I am there for a reason, to be, if you like, the audience’s emissary in a situation. That’s why I’ve always intruded into my own stories quite consciously: it stops them from becoming a lot of pictures vaguely related to a subject matter, with a disembodied voice floating around the top that doesn’t really relate to an audience.

Having said that, we’re making products for the international market and we have to be careful of how we introduce a journalistic character to an uninitiated audience.

Given that you’re less known overseas, are audiences going to wonder who is this person they see wandering around?

The same could have been said of David Attenborough at some stage of his life. But now he’s become a character, a part of his stories, and not as many people would watch his material today if he weren’t involved.

I’m not so precious as to suggest that I am absolutely essential to my stories, but I do think that I add to them. If the sort of journalistic character I’ve become — in the nicest sense of the word character — is transportable, then I think that’s a marvellous
“I’ve always been quite unapologetic about presenter-led television journalism. The usual accusation about the presenter and the reporter becoming more important than the story is just a heap of spurious shit. It’s usually uttered by people who have never really sat down to think about the philosophy behind what is called ‘personality cult’ journalism.”

thing. I would be delighted if Across the Red Unknown turned myself and my product into an export product.

Whereas Attenborough is English and comes from what is perceived as a prominent culture, do you think there’s a resistance to a presenter coming from Australia? World audiences may well query why they should listen to what an Australian thinks about Russia?

My reaction to that is: Why should we only listen to what a Brit or an American says about Russia? We do because we’ve become used to it, but, has our cultural cringe also become an intellectual, journalist and professional cringe to the point where we really believe that the Poms and the Yanks are better equipped to tell us about what’s going on in the world than we are ourselves? We are as qualified to speak to the rest of the world as they are to us.

I don’t think the transporting of Australian talent at the popular level should be restricted to Paul Hogan, John Cornell and Crocodile Dundee.

But there is still the reality of marketing your product overseas.

So we have to bite that bullet and be prepared to say to people in New York and London, “We understand your prejudice; it happens to be wrong. The people at the top end of our market are as good as anyone you have.” I’m not necessarily talking about myself. I’m talking about the cameramen, sound recordists, producers, researchers, writers. I’ve been floating around the world now for twenty years and we have absolutely nothing to be ashamed of at that level.

We don’t have to go cap-in-hand to the international market saying, “Sorry, sir, that we have an Australian presenting this; we really wish he were an American or Englishman.” It’s a tough nut to crack. It requires clever, persistent, courageous marketing. People like Bob Loader, our executive producer, are more capable of pulling this off.

In Kids First, you shared the presenter role with Sir Peter Ustinov. Was that by coincidence or design?

It was a lucky coincidence. Having Peter involved, we hoped, would make the product more marketable internationally. But it was also the case that Peter was the UNICEF Ambassador for Children, so having him in there was a totally legitimate exercise journalistically.

To put the two of us together was a way of easing into the international market, rather than beating them around the head in the first instance. But that was a particular sort of product: it wasn’t a general market product; it was largely a humanitarian response rather than a journalistic effort.

In Across the Red Unknown, was it difficult finding the correct balance of how much George Negus to put in?

My approach to everything I do is, quite deliberately, naturalistic and realistic. There should be no credibility gap between what you do if there’s a camera around and what you do when there isn’t. That being the case, I guess I set out to let my presence find its own level, and I think it has.

How naturalistic can one get when, seeing some Russians drinking vodka in the middle of the Siberian wilderness, you stop your caravan of vehicles, turn on the cameras and film yourself getting drunk with them?

Let me assure you, drinking vodka anywhere in the Soviet Union, whether you’re Australian or not, is very natural!

The other people on the trip were there to make the journey; I was there to make a television programme. It was never meant to be a boys’ own adventure across the Soviet Union; it was meant to be a geographic and political expedition.
t was almost like a mythical Hollywood tale, or perhaps a running joke: Steven Spielberg wants to do a contemporary Peter Pan. Of course, like no other American filmmaker of his generation, Spielberg seems enthralled by the possibilities of eternal youth, by the cosmic resonances not only of childhood in general but of his childhood in particular. It would only be fitting that he would be the one to transport these visions – so cleverly expressed by the Disney animators in its late-1950s Peter Pan – to live action.

But the years passed and Spielberg’s most obvious project never seemed to come to fruition. And as he explains in this interview, that has more to do with personal psychological reasons than with the usual Hollywood pitfalls of complicated negotiations, tangled deals and high-rotation production executives.

Steven Spielberg
interviewed by Ana Maria Bahiana
Finally, in late 1990, it was announced that Hook, a modern-day retelling of James Barrie’s Peter Pan myth, was firmly under way, with Spielberg at the helm, Dustin Hoffman in the title character, and Robin Williams - a natural Pan, if ever there were one - as a 1990s Boy Who Wouldn’t Grow Up (but eventually did and here lay the twist in the tale).

Written by Jim Hart (with additional material provided by several other writers, even though only Once Around’s Malia Scotch Marmo gets on-screen credit) and based on an original idea of his eight-year-old son (“What would happen if Peter Pan left Neverland and grew up?”), Hook proved to be a more arduous task than anyone envisioned. “We didn’t really realize the size of the project until we were smack in the middle of it”, says Hart, who is also the film’s producer.

Building Neverland according to stage designer John (Cats, Miss Saigon) Napier’s luxuriously complex blueprints was a gigantic task in itself. But then there were the matters of making grown-ups fly in a convincing way, controlling a dozen utterly uncontrollable pre-teens (who play the new, multi-ethnic Lost Boys) and, last but by no means least, handle the tangled overexposure of Julia Roberts (who plays Tinkerbell), her momentous unmarried and sudden illness, right in the middle of the shoot.

Was it worth it? On the opening week in Los Angeles, Spielberg shows up for this interview wearing his signature pilot jacket and baseball cap, with the relaxed and glowing attitude of a content man. He brought Hook in at a whopping cost of $75 million (and counting) but the film, in spite of lukewarm reviews, is a hit in the rich holiday market: almost $100 million in tickets over a mere 6-week period. It is enough to make anyone fly.

**What are your earliest memories of Peter Pan?**

My mom read Peter Pan to me when I was, I guess, three-years-old. When I was eleven-years-old, I, along with other kids, directed a shortened version of James Barrie’s Peter Pan in my elementary school, with all the parents watching in the audience. I actually staged it and did it as a kid, just like in the opening scene from Hook. I put that scene in almost only for that reason.

Peter Pan stayed with you throughout your career. There are many references to it in *E.T.: The Extra-terrestrial*, for instance. In a way, it is surprising that you didn’t do this movie earlier.

I was going to do it as early as 1985. I had been pursuing the rights and in 1985 I finally acquired them from the London Children’s Hospital. I was going to make a Peter Pan movie based on the novel, a live-action version like the 1924 Peter Pan silent movie. But then something happened: my son (Max) was born and I lost my appetite for the project.

**Why?**

Because suddenly I couldn’t be Peter Pan any more. I had to be his father. That’s literally the reason I didn’t do the movie back then. And I had everything ready and Elliott Scott hired to do the sets in London.
In a way, my son took my childhood away from me. But he also gave it back to me. When he was born, I suddenly became the spitting image of my father and mother. All the parental clichés, all the things I said I would never say to my kids if ever I had them, I began saying to my own kids.

But, as I was raising my kids, the appetite for Peter Pan came back, and stayed with me. What kind of childhood did you have that you seem to celebrate it so much?

I don't know that any of our childhoods were completely happy — from our own memories. My childhood was bad and it was good. It was chaotic; it was noisy; it was real loud. I have a big family, with three younger sisters. People yelled and screamed at each other.

Now that I'm a dad and have four kids — the fifth is on its way, actually — they scream and yell at each other all the time. I guess now I can appreciate even more whom my parents were.

What is, for you, the most enduring quality of the Peter Pan myth? Eternal youth, perhaps?

It's actually flying. To me, anytime anything flies, whether it's Superman, Batman or E.T., it's got to be a tip of the hat to Peter Pan. Peter Pan was the first time I ever saw anybody fly. Before I saw Superman, before I saw Batman, and of course before I saw any superheroes, my first memory of anybody flying is in Peter Pan.

What does flight mean to you? There is a tremendous amount of flying in your films.

I am absolutely fascinated and terrified by flying. It is a big deal in my movies. All my movies have airplanes in them. You name the movie — they all fly.

To me, flying is synonymous with freedom and unlimited imagination but, interestingly enough, I'm afraid to fly.

I have two hundred hours in flight simulators, I love them, and once I even landed a two-engine Cessna based on my experience in the flight simulator. But it was more out of fear, abject fear, and the need to control that fear that I did it.

I'm only not afraid to fly in my dreams and in my movies, but, in real life, I'm terrified of flying. Just like the Peter Banning character in the beginning of Hook. That scene in the airplane? That was me; that's how I fly. I get white knuckles.

Have you ever analyzed your relationship with flying?

You mean psychoanalyzed? No, I haven't. I'm aware of the psychoanalytic implications of flight but, no, I have never been analyzed. I think we all need it, though. I think I need it, but I'm always afraid that if I get psychoanalyzed my movies will suffer because I'll become more intellectual about them. I'll all of a sudden figure out what it is I do and then I would probably screw it up.

What made you pick up this specific project, Hook, after all these years not tackling Peter Pan?

I decided to do it when I read the Jim Hart script. It was a great idea, even though my first reactions was "This isn't exactly what
I want to do, but this is a great idea for a movie.” But then I took the idea and I rewrote the script with Jim and another writer [Malia Scotch Marmo] and, based on the rewrite, I went ahead and made the movie.

What was it about it that attracted you so much?

I guess I related to the main character, Peter Banning, the way Jim wrote him – a “type A” personality.

I think a lot of people today are losing their imagination because they are work-driven. They are so self-involved with work and success and arriving at the next plateau that children and family almost become incidental. I have seen this happen to friends of mine. I have even experienced it myself when I have been on a very tough shoot and I’ve not seen my kids except on weekends. They ask for my time and I can’t give it to them because I’m working. And I’ve been both guilty and wanting to do something about it.

So, when Jim Hart wrote that script, and wrote a “type A” personality in Peter Banning, I related to it. I said, “Gee, that’s quite a character arc for this character. Could this person ever have been Peter Pan? Wow, what an interesting challenge!”

Could it also be that you were interested in returning to youth-oriented pictures after a couple of adult projects?

It’s not conscious. I don’t sit down and say, “Now I have to look for a movie that is just for families”, because I had made three films for adults. And we only got adult audiences, actually, for the last three films, except that I didn’t think of them that way.

When Hook came by I was actually planning to direct Schindler’s Ark, which is very much an adult film, and which I’m finally going to direct early in ’92.

Hook was also an extremely expensive movie to make. Was that a concern of yours at any point during the shoot?

I’m real apprehensive about finances on every movie no matter what it costs. E.T. cost $10 million, and I was saying, “Gee, why can’t we make it for $8 million?” But basically once a movie starts, the last thing you want to have to be aware of is the responsibility to the financiers because that would completely interrupt the idea that we’re making a movie, that we’re telling a story together. It would get in the way every day, so I don’t think that was in my mind at all in the making of this movie.

When the movie is done the studio reminds me how much I’ve spent making the movie, and then, of course, I start to worry. I worry at the end but not during the making of the movie.

What was so expensive about it?

Well, creating a world is always expensive. And this is what I was trying to do: create a world. When George Lucas created a world for Star Wars, nobody had ever seen anything like that before. It was the same thing here. We all have expectations for Neverland so we needed to put our heads together to create a Neverland that you would believe in, that would look like Neverland and not Laguna Beach [a beach suburb of Los Angeles].

You mentioned Schindler’s Ark as your next project. Would that be before Jurassic Park?

Yes. I bought the book eight years ago, but I haven’t been able to get a writer to do a script.

It’s a drama about the Holocaust, about the real-life story of Oscar Schindler, who was a German Catholic profiteer who saved twelve hundred Jews in Poland. It’s a fascinating story.

It’s also interesting that I would pick, of all the Holocaust stories I could tell, the one that has one glimmer of hope. Schindler’s Ark has a very interesting statistic: there are six thousand descendants from the twelve hundred Jews that Schindler delivered to safety, and that out-numbers the surviving Jews in Poland. That’s an idea worth making a movie about, I thought. We’re shooting in Poland and Czechoslovakia, in black-and-white.

Why black-and-white?

Because I don’t see the Holocaust in colour. I’ve been indoctrinated with documentaries and they’re all black-and-white. Every time I see anything in colour about World War II, it looks too glamorous, too antiseptic. I think black-and-white is almost the synonymous form for World War II and the Holocaust.

A last and maybe obvious question: Are you Peter Pan?

No, no. I think my mom is the quintessential Peter Pan. She even looks like him. Seriously. My mother has a restaurant and she literally flies around it. She’s 72 years old and she moves faster than I ever could.
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CINEMA PAPERS 87 • 17
Richard Lowenstein has always been a wunderkind of the Australian film industry. Since he won the Erwin Rado Award at the 1980 Melbourne Film Festival for his half-hour, dramatized documentary *Evictions*, Lowenstein has been something of a golden boy. His recreation of the evictions that took place during the Great Depression, when tenants could not pay their rent, indicated that Lowenstein could combine historical verisimilitude and the art of storytelling to create powerful cinema.

In 1984, Lowenstein burrowed once more into history with his first feature, *Strikebound*, this time recreating Australia's first ever sit-in strike in Wonthaggi, Victoria. The film went to the New York Film Festival and was nominated for an astounding nine Australian Film Awards at home. He has also made innumerable rock music videos, for such artists as INXS, U2 and Belinda Carlisle.
Say a Little Prayer

But Lowenstein is perhaps best remembered for Dogs in Space, his evocation of the post punk sub-culture which had its brief 'moment' in Melbourne in the late 1970s. Starring Michael Hutchence, Dogs in Space got good exposure for a relatively low-budget film in both the U.S. and Britain, and looked set to buffet Lowenstein's career abroad.

Since then there have been endless murmurs in the press that Lowenstein was set to direct the big-budget "Crimes of Patriots" — about the Nugar Hand Bank scandal and its alleged links with organized crime — with Hollywood producer Ed Pressman. But funding proved to be a problem. In the meantime, Lowenstein received offers to direct teen films in Hollywood.

However, Lowenstein did not get sucked into Hollywood's maw by either directing teen pics or making big-budget bonanzas. Instead, it would appear, that Lowenstein's career has gravitated back towards Australia where he is currently working on his latest home-grown venture, Say a Little Prayer. The $3 million film, based on Robin Klein's award-winning children's book, Came Back to Show You I Could Fly, is being funded by the 1991 Australian Film Finance Corporation's Film Fund scheme.

There is a lot riding on this film and Lowenstein knows it, for Say a Little Prayer marks Lowenstein's directorial return to features after five years. Moreover, the film signals a departure for the director who has always anchored his work, in one way or another, in history. Lowenstein, who adapted the screenplay, acknowledges that the project represents new turf for him:

Dogs in Space and Strikebound are both based on social history, on chronicling an era. Say a Little Prayer is a different thing. It is a conventional, fictional narrative and is quite a challenge for me. It is an exercise in the direction of action and the direction of character. It's very rare to get a film where there are basically two leads and almost no supporting cast, as in this film. Dogs in Space was an ensemble piece, whereas in this film I am telling a story about two people. I have concentrated on getting a performance out of them and developing the characters.

Say a Little Prayer is a story about an introverted 11-year-old boy, Seymour (Sudi De Winter), and his growing friendship with a spirited young woman, Angie (Fiona Ruttelle). Angie is a 20-year-old drug addict learning to cope without her boyfriend while she endures the miseries of life on a methadone programme. Seymour, who inhabits a barren, lonely environment, flees his home by day and meets up with the effervescent Angie. Together they escape into a fantastical world of their own design. However, Angie does not tell Seymour that she is a drug addict. Instead, she tells him she is "sick". Seymour takes it upon himself to nurse Angie through her 'sickness', and their bond intensifies.

While Say a Little Prayer explores Angie's heroin addiction, Lowenstein is quick to fend off suggestions that the film mines similar terrain as Dogs in Space.

With Dogs in Space the drugs were very literally handled. In Say a Little Prayer, the drugs are seen from Seymour's point of view and it isn't the focus at all. This isn't a social issue: it is part of the plot development which relates to the pivotal question of whether Angie should lie to the boy, and threaten their friendship, or explain that she is sick, because she's taking heroin. The film is about what is important in a friendship, about trust and respect,
and that is where the conflict comes from.

The film charts the growth of a friendship between the classic ‘odd couple’: Angie, the tireless extrovert, and Seymour, the boy crippled by a debilitating inwardness. The film charts Seymour’s journey towards growth.

The best way to describe Seymour is that he is very much like a spirit waiting to break free. The winged idea, the idea of flight, is very important in the film. The flying horse is an important thematic thread that keeps coming back visually and represents Seymour’s unleashed spirit. Angie is the one who gives Seymour the wings so that he can fly.

Much of the film’s potency is to be derived from the fact that the audience sees the world from the mind’s eye of a little boy. The film is not over-the-top fantasy, but it is from the boy’s point of view, and that is interesting. I have gone for touches of fantasy, playing with the light and shade and sparkles.

Also, it is always his perspective of the drug-taking, which is something he doesn’t really understand.

The film explores the way children distort the world in sometimes unpredictable ways. It is something, according to Lowenstein, that adults lose:

Seymour is always trying to make something fantastical out of the mundane, which is a very idealistic and naive thing, and which we tend to lose when we grow up. When Angie first meets Seymour, she takes him into her world full of colour and light, and everything between them is fun. Together they have this ability to make the ordinary somehow extraordinary. Kids have a sense of wonder about the world. I think the film really takes a good look

at the things in life that are worth idealizing and wondering about.

Lowenstein was attracted to the story primarily on account of its sharply-delineated, idiosyncratic characters. While he has added scenes and changed some of the original novel, he believes that he has been faithful to the essence of the characters:

The characters are not archetypes. They are very idiosyncratic. They are not like the girl or boy next door. Seymour is not even able to go into a shop and ask for what he wants because he’s too scared. Angie is the opposite. She almost accosts people in the street with her extroversion. The contrast between them is wonderful. What they do share is that, with their intense characteristics, the world doesn’t have much time for either of them.

Casting the pair proved to be a difficult task. Lowenstein interviewed more than 1500 boys for the part of Seymour and saw countless female actors for the part of Angie. Says Lowenstein:

Casting took ages. It didn’t just need a good actress; it needed the right person. There might have been only two or three people in Australia who would have been right for the role, and because our population is so small it’s very hard for people to play these idiosyncratic characters. We tend to get homogenized actors and we tend to see the same good faces playing this type or that. We don’t have the selection of character actors as they do in America and England.

In the end, Lowenstein chose Fiona Ruttelle for the role of Angie because he recognized traces of Angie in her.
The book describes the character in extraordinary detail, so it was very easy to pick Fiona. It was all there in front of you. No one else really had it, though we tested many girls. She has a childlike naïveté about her. Once you work around her a bit longer, you realize she has an upfrontedness. You’ll be walking along with her in a crowded street and she’ll be going up to people and talking with them at the top of her voice, and this is very much the character as well. She’s a real extrovert who wears very loud clothes. It’s very much like a child who hasn’t yet learnt the rules of society, so she doesn’t know that she’s breaking them.

Sudi De Winter, who has worked in television before, was the very first boy that Lowenstein saw. In the end, Lowenstein came back to De Winter on account of his intensity. “Sudi seemed to have these adult eyes in the body of a ten-year-old, which is exactly what we wanted from Seymour”, enthuses Lowenstein.

Sudi was very aware. There is a part of him that is and there is a part of him that isn’t Seymour. He has a lot of understanding and he has incredible control over his facial expressions. His eyes are a big plus. I tend to go on visual appeal. With some boys it would not be believable that he would be hanging around with this girl. It just seemed with Sudi that he had this incredible depth and intensity behind the eyes. He seemed to have this incredible knowledge just from a look that could break through all the stupidity and senselessness of the adult world.

Lowenstein believes that while Say a Little Prayer has a simple, linear storyline in the final account, the film’s strength is derived from its quirky characters. Moreover, he believes that it is precisely this new emphasis being placed on characterization which is fuelling the ‘new wave’ of quality films coming out of Australia.

In the past, I think we were so excited that we’d made a wonderful period film, for instance, that we thought maybe that was all we could do. Now characterization is suddenly being thought about in Australia. We suddenly realize that not everyone is the girl on Neighbours. The archetypal Australians just aren’t there anymore. People are weird and now we’re letting them be weird on screen. That’s a change for the better.

The film also boasts Ben Mendelsohn in the role of a nursery attendant and Rebecca Smart as Angie’s impudent little sister.

Lowenstein, who is renowned for favouring fluid camera movements, has opted for more static frames in Say a Little Prayer. He explains:

In Dogs in Space, I tended to use a lot of moving cameras but, because there is a lot more intense acting in this, I tend to let the characters pull that off in a lot more static frames than I normally use. I’m tending to use a lot more tripods in this film. But when Seymour escapes from his little world, I have tried to go for some height and use lots of cranes. We start to soar and use more exciting angles and moving cameras.

Shot in and around Richmond, production designer Chris Kennedy has gone for a naturalistic look, highlighting the suburban setting. Notes Lowenstein,

We have put a lot of effort into Angie’s bungalow, which was built in the studio. We’ve tried to create a magic wonderland, transforming something mundane into something whimsical, with all her little knick-knacks and coloured ornaments and things that attract light.

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EUROPA

The true story of a Jewish boy's struggle to survive Nazi Germany.

a film by AGNIESZKA HOLLAND

AUSTRALIAN PREMIERE SEASON APRIL 1992
SYDNEY - Greater Union Pitt Centre.
MELBOURNE - Hoyts Forest Hill • Longford Cinema
Nineteen Ninety One was a bonanza in Australia for those interested in Jewish cinema as an art form, as well as a vehicle for a rich and diverse commentary on Jewish experience, past and present.

In October 1991, the Festival of Jewish Cinema, presented by the Jewish Film Foundation in association with Premium Films, screened 19 high-quality features and documentaries. A month later in November, the Australian Film Institute's Second Austral-ian Jewish Film Festival showed 25 features and documentaries of a similar high standard and breadth of view, as well as several Israeli shorts and a welcome Children's Programme.

A breakdown of where these 44 films came from is revealing but hardly surprising. Eleven were from the U.S. and eight from Israel, the two post-Holocaust epicentres of Jewish culture which have come to dominate the Jewish world. Four were made in the UK, three in France, two each in Canada, Austria and Germany, while one each came from Australia, Holland, Belgium, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Italy and the USSR. Two films were pre-war co-productions between the U.S. and Poland, two were co-productions between Germany and France, and one was a historic USSR-Israel-France collaboration.

What is disappointing is the realization that Australian-Jewish culture has not been as forthcoming as other comparable cultures, Canada for example, in producing films which characterize and celebrate either the unique features of Australian-Jewish life or the coming of Jews to this country, a notable exception being Ben Lewin's mini-series, The Dunera Boys.

Stimulated by the AFI's successful screening in 1990 of the...
Yiddish classic, *Dybbuk* (*The Dybbuk*, Michael Waszynski, Poland, 1938), 1991 saw the screening of four pre-Holocaust films, all of them painstakingly restored by the National Centre for Jewish Film at Brandeis University, Massachusetts, which was founded in 1976 following the acquisition of a private collection of Yiddish feature films.

The Second Australian Jewish Film Festival (JFF) screened two films produced and directed by Polish-American Joseph Green, and filmed in Poland: *Yidl Mit'n Fidl* (*Yiddle with his Fiddle*, U.S., 1936), the classic Yiddish musical which became an international hit, starring the famous Yiddish actress-comedian Molly Picon as a young woman, forced to take to the road with her father, who cross-dresses to join a band of wandering musicians (*klezmerim*) and falls in love with one of them; and *Der Purimspieler* (*The Jester*, Poland-U.S., 1937), a whimsical romantic comedy set in a Jewish village in Galicia, about a dreamer who falls in love with a shoemaker’s daughter during Purim.

Green went to the U.S. in 1923 as a member of the renowned Vilna Troupe, a company of Yiddish actors who were influenced by Stanislavski’s Moscow Art Theatre, and who themselves became famous for their avant-garde performances of such European and Yiddish classics as Ibsen’s *The Ghosts*, and S. Anski’s *Dybbuk*. After working in Yiddish Theatre in New York for some years, and in Hollywood playing small parts in films, Green set up his own international production company, with offices in New York and

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*ABOVE: SOLLY PEREL (MARCO HOFSCHEIDER), THE POLISH-JEWISH BOY WHO BECAME A GERMAN WAR HERO IN AGNIESZKA HOLLAND'S EUROPA EUROPA.*
Warsaw, and returned to Poland in the mid-1950s with a small troupe of New York Yiddish actors, where he produced four films. His first was *Yidl Mit'n Fidl*, which he wrote especially for Picon, and co-directed with Jan Nowina Pryblski, his co-director on *Der Purimspieler*. His fourth was *A Brivele der Mamen* (*A Little Letter To Mother*, 1939), one of the last films made in Poland before the war.

The first Jewish films made with Jewish actors were produced in Warsaw at the beginning of the century. Invariably these were film versions of Yiddish plays and novels. In 1910, the Jewish producer Aleksander Hertz, considered the father of Polish cinema, founded Sfinks, Poland's first film production house. Few of the thousand features and shorts produced by Sfinks had Jewish themes. Nonetheless, Yiddish films continued to be made in Poland during the 1920s, many of them finding their way to America where they were considered superior to the cheap melodramatic Yiddish films being made in the U.S., and then subsequently distributed in Poland.

Quality Jewish films continued to be made in Poland up to the moment when war erupted in 1939, and it is this persistence of Jewish filmmakers to continue to make Jewish films on Jewish themes in the face of mounting, virulent anti-semitism throughout Europe that gives such films as *Yidl Mit'n Fidl, Der Purimspieler* and *The Dybbuk* their particular poignancy and power.

*Yidl Mit'n Fidl* and *Der Purimspieler* reflect the illusion of self-containment. Both were shot in small peasant towns in the Polish countryside and, in the case of *Yidl*, in nearby Yiddish-speaking Warsaw. But because we watch these films with a prescience born of hindsight, the innocence of the surroundings, the otherworldly quality of the restored prints and the simplicity and quaint humour of the stories take on the quality of denial. They remind the audience that what we are watching are the last moments of a doomed civilization caught in celluloid, like insects trapped in amber.

One of the most interesting films screened at the Festival of Jewish Cinema (FJC) was Eleanor Antin’s contemporary silent film, *Man Without A World* (U.S., 1991), a post-Holocaust homage to the East European Yiddish silent films of the 1920s. It is a black-and-white melodrama about an aspiring young poet in a Polish shtetl who falls in love with a Gypsy ballerina and absconds with her, thereby creating emotional havoc in his family who see him as forsaking his roots. Not only are all the traditional themes of Yiddish theatre and film present in the story – the humour and colour of shtetl life, weddings, funerals, seduction, a dybbuk – but so too are included the realities: racial hatred, poverty and repression.

Antin, an artist-filmmaker from University of California, San Diego, uses the traditional silent film genre, complete with intertitles, rudimentary cinematic techniques and exaggerated facial expressions to recapitulate and reconstruct her Jewish past through a vehicle which for her is the most potent expression of that past. She causes the doomed Jewish Eastern Europe to live again and, by doing so, grafts onto it a virility that was seldom expressed in its films.

Something of this sense of a vanished culture is also present in the two American Yiddish films screened at the FJC: *His People* (U.S., 1925), a silent melodrama on the theme of the Prodigal Son, set in New York’s Lower East tenements, and directed by Edward Sloman, a silent film master who directed more than fifty Hollywood features between 1916 and 1938; and *Uncle Moses* (Sydney M. Goldin and Aubrey Scotto, U.S., 1932), a powerful, Yiddish early-sound classic, based on a play by Sholem Asch, about a Lower-East-Side sweat shop boss who employs workers from his old shtetl in Poland, starring the famous Yiddish actor Maurice Schwartz in a complex, bravura performance.
Over three hundred films were produced during this 'golden age' of Yiddish cinema from 1927 to 1940, the majority in the U.S. It is interesting to note, however, that although many of the key figures in the emerging Hollywood film industry were European Jews, their names rarely appear on the credits of these Yiddish films. Nonetheless, these films are reminders of the connection between America and East-European Jewry, which from the great influx of the 1880s onwards saw not only the burgeoning in the U.S. of a new Jewish culture, but also the establishment of a film industry in which Jewish producers, directors and screenwriters played a vital role as architects of the celluloid version of the American Dream.

The other non-Israeli features screened at the two festivals were based on true stories about the Holocaust and related events, or dealt with problems of Jewish identity or the resurgence of anti-Semitism. Of the Israeli films, more later.

_Docteur Petiot_ (FJC, Christian de Chalonge, France, 1990) was the most stylish of the Holocaust films, a real-life horror story about a Parisian doctor, Marcel Petiot (Michel Serrault, in the performance of his life), guillotined in 1946 for the mass murder of Jews and others on the run from the Gestapo. It is brilliantly conceived in the genre style of such early German horror classics as F. W. Murnau’s _Eine Symphonie des Nosferatu_ (Nosferatu, 1921) and Fritz Lang’s _Doktor Marbuse, Der Spieler_ (Doctor Marbuse, _The Gambler_, 1922).

During the German Occupation, 'Dr Eugene' lured 27 desperate Jews and members of the Resistance to a deserted house on the Champs Élysées on the pretext that he could arrange their safe passage to Argentina. For a handful of money and the contents of their suitcases, he killed them with a cyanide 'vaccination' (for their journey) and disposed of their bodies, partially dissolved in acid, in a furnace. It was the clogging of the chimney and the belching of foul smoke that finally alerted the authorities to his crimes, which bore an uncanny parallel to those of the Third Reich. De Chalonge's master stroke is to use this parallel as a metaphor to illustrate the criminality and moral bankruptcy of both the Nazi genocide machine, and those in France who collaborated with it.

The impact of Petiot as a Nosferatu, preying on his victims and spreading the contagion of Nazism, is heightened by the decadent, expressionist poetry of the visuals, drained of colour and tinted. Natural colour impinges only at the end of the film, where in a chilling reminder of the mountains of shoes, spectacles and shorn hair at Auschwitz, the families of Petiot’s victims file past tables crowded with the clothing taken from 53 suitcases, searching for the belongings of their loved ones.

Without question, _Docteur Petiot_ is an impressive work of art, yet, strangely, it distances the audience from the full horror of genocide by suggesting genocide is an aberration. It locates the culpability for evil in the mind of a deranged individual, rather than confronting the realization that for terrible regimes to function it is ordinary people who have to be persuaded to do horrible things.

The actions of ordinary people who manage to be decent in terrible times is the focus of _Martha and I_ (JFF, Germany-France, 1990), a witty, acutely observed, warmly affectionate memoir of growing up immediately prior to the war, by Czechoslovakia’s leading filmmaker of the 1950s and ’60s, Jiri Weiss.

Emil (Vaclav Chalupa) is sent by his abandoned mother to stay with his sophisticated, urbane Uncle Ernst (Michel Piccoli) in Prague. Ernst, a gynaecologist with a passion for Boccaccio and Bach, scandalizes his family when he divorces his unfaithful young wife, and marries his hefty German housekeeper, Martha (Marianne Sägöbrecht), who is a Gentile. A nice touch is the deft

**LEFT TO RIGHT:** JOSEPH GREEN'S CLASSIC YIDDISH MUSICAL, _YIDDL MIT‘N FIDL_ (YIDDLE WITH HIS FIDDLE); MICHEL SERRAULT AS THE SINISTER DOCTOR IN _CHRISTIAN DE CHALONGE'S DOCTEUR PETIOT_; JIRI WEISS' MEMOIR OF GROWING UP IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA BEFORE THE WAR, _MARTHA AND I_.

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depiction of Ernst’s Jewish sisters as narrow-minded and selfish. The years which see Martha’s awkward transition from servant to wife, and Emil’s growth from adolescence to manhood, also sees the Anschluss, tensions within Martha’s Sudeten-German family and the Nazi invasion.

Martha and I, though conventionally structured, has memorable performances by first-class actors who are the vehicles for the director’s deeply-liberal humanist observations about human nature. Piccoli conveys with consummate skill and subtlety a man who loses his professional and social position, yet still retains his compassion and kindness despite impending tragedy, while Sägebrecht’s Martha personifies decency, as innate in her as evil is in Dr Petiot.

Agnieszka Holland’s Europa Europa (France-Germany, 1990), screened at both festivals, is the story of how a Polish-Jewish boy born in Germany survived the war by becoming first a member of a Communist youth organization, then a German war hero, which led to him being sent to an elite Hitler Youth school. This extraordinary tale, more amazing in its details than a Steven Spielberg story, is based on the life of Salomon (Solly) Perel, who now lives in Israel.

Solly survived because of a combination of instinct, personal charm and luck. When his sister is killed during Kristallnacht, his family decides to relocate in Lodz, a fatal move which sees Solly separated from his family, seemingly forever. Born with quick wits and a pretty face (as played convincingly by Marco Hofschneider), Solly has several opportunities during the war to abjure his Jewishness, but the reasons he does not do so, the film suggests, lie as much with his tell-tale circumcision as with his loyalty to his former upbringing.

Holland, as she demonstrated in Angry Harvest, sees contradiction as the essence of human nature. She handles the complexities of Solly’s youthful situation sympathetically and with lightness and humour, but she is also clear-sighted. When Solly weeps for the death of his friend, a German soldier, and asks himself later in confusion, “Who are his friends? How can they be so kind to him and so horrible to others?”, he is asking fundamental moral questions. Holland understands his conflict and without labouring the point, as Solly’s story unfolds with mounting suspense, she describes skilfully (through his encounters with all those who are drawn to him: the female Komosol leader, Horvath the German, the German captain who adopts him, his Nazi girlfriend Leni and her sympathetic mother) his loneliness and his ambivalence, his desire to belong and his need to live.

In his foreword to Annette Insdorf’s book on Holocaust films, Elie Wiesel says of such films as Das Boot ist Voll (The Boat is Full, Markus Imhoof, Switzerland, 1981) and Obchod od na Korze (The Shop On Main Street, Jan Kadar, Czechoslovakia, 1965): “They reveal to us, like a secret imprint, human beings undergoing the curse of the gods, and that’s all.” Without doubt, this applies to Couturier (JFF, Leonid Gorovets, USSR, 1990), the most moving feature at the two festivals, which captures, in the great tradition of Russian cinema, 24 hours in the life of a Jewish tailor and his family prior to their certain death at Babi Yar.

Couturier, taken from Alexander Borshagovsky’s play and with the screenplay written by the playwright, makes no attempt to portray the massacre, which resulted in the murder, in 1941, of more than 33,000 Kiev Jews. Rather, from the outset, the film is stamped with poetry and dream. In a series of lyrically-lensed establishing shots, an old Jew is seen praying, then packing his bag. He stands at the door and hears the sound of marching soldiers. A little girl steals the old Jew’s cart. “If you need it badly, take it”, he tells her. Leaves flutter to the ground. It is autumn. There are fires in the street, and people are picking over piles of debris. Birds sing. The old Jew’s hat blows off in the wind, and he retrieves it from under a soldier’s foot. Across the road some soldiers pull down an old man’s trousers, and shoot him. The Jew is shocked. Through the doorway of a house, a woman, the Jew’s married daughter, is kneading bread.

These are dream fragments which cloak the nightmare to come, which the audience never sees. Two homeless Russian women and a child are skulking in the shadows outside the house.
at night, waiting for the Jews to leave. They have been promised the Jews’ house, and Isak (Innokenty Smoktunovsky), the ladies’ tailor, invites them in. This encounter between the two families provides most of the substance of the film, and allows for its most poignant moment: Isak measures the older Russian woman for a winter coat that he will cut for her from his most precious cloth. He will never see it made, but in measuring the arms and bust of this handsome woman, Isak, for the last time, gives expression of his former self as both a man and tailor.

Michel Piccoli’s performance in Martha and I is masterly, but it is one thing to portray an urbane, cosmopolitan Jew, and quite another to capture a shtetl or traditional Jew, without resort to caricature. Smoktunovsky accords Isak both his dignity and his Jewishness.

The film has a powerful final sequence: Isak and his family are joined on the road to Babi Yar, first by a trickle of Kiev’s Jews, then by a torrent which becomes a sea. As they advance upon the camera, our gaze is distracted by the sight of modern sedan cars waiting for them to pass, and the road suddenly becomes modern as they walk into history. Gorovets was prompted to direct Couturier out of a concern for rising anti-semitism in the Soviet Union and, once his debut feature was made, he left the USSR to live in Israel.

The most fascinating feature screened, because it confronts head-on the problems of Jewish identity in the Diaspora, was David Mamet’s Homicide (JFF, U.S., 1991). As with Mamet’s House of Games (1989), nothing is what it seems: life is filled with irony and surprises.

Bobby Gold (Joe Mantegna) is a homicide cop, and he defines his very existence by his job. When he is drawn off an important case to investigate the murder of an old Jewish lady who owns a pawnshop in a black neighbourhood, Gold suddenly feels very uncomfortable. The old woman’s family, wealthy and influential, see Gold as one of ‘them’, and, fearing an anti-semitic conspiracy, they pull strings to get him assigned to the case. Gold is annoyed and protests. He wants to be where the real action is, back where he really belongs, with his team and his Irish partner Sullivan busting a black murderer.

Mamet admits to seeing himself as a Jewish Spike Lee. He has recently rediscovered his Jewishness, and, with the veil lifted, he is brutally honest about what he sees. Gold doesn’t want to be a Jew. He’s insulted, frightened at the thought of being tarred with Jewishness.

For Gold, the opportunity to rid himself of self-doubt, and exchange the stereotype of the passive Jew, the pawnbroker feeding parasitically off the poor, for that of the virile Jewish patriot, machine gun in hand, is irresistible. He jumps at the chance, but by doing so he becomes more firmly immured in a no-man’s land. When he takes part in an attack on premises publishing anti-semitic literature, Gold experiences a giddy sense of belonging, of having ‘come home’ at last. But it is soon made clear to him that being Jewish involves more than planting a bomb in an empty building. Total loyalty and commitment is demanded of him, which Gold, the Jewish cop, cannot give.

Gold may have rediscovered his Jewishness, but the result of his actions leads to disillusionment: the militant Jews reject him because he refuses to betray his loyalty to the police force; and he is rejected by his police ‘family’ because his involvement with the ‘Yids’ results in the death of his partner Sullivan, for which Gold is blamed, and subsequently ostracized.

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Dramatically, Gold’s instant conversion to militant Jewishness is clumsily handled, but psychologically it is profound and convincing. Like Solly in Europa Europa, Gold’s essential Jewishness is under siege. He wants desperately to belong, but he rejects his Jewish past because it brings him trouble and he believes it to be shameful. He is not on the run like Solly is, facing extermination. Gold can realistically attempt to lose his Jewishness by burying himself in the police force as one of a team comprising blacks, whites, Latinos and Asians – or so he deludes himself.

Early in the film, a black member of the FBI, senior to Gold, calls him “a kyke”. What Mamet is doing here and elsewhere in the film is bringing to the surface the growing tension between blacks and Jews, and exposing the unfairness of the black identification of the Jew as being responsible for their oppression.

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Mamet’s film is radical, handsome and brooding. It is the first American film to demythologize and explore the situation of American Jews, who find themselves under attack for their Jewishness, through traditional anti-semitism, and its offshoot, anti-Zionism. Divided loyalties, Mamet is suggesting, isn’t the answer. Jews must get off the fence, shed their blinkers and come to grips with who they really are. In this light, Homicide can be seen as having a similar significance for Jews as Spike Lee’s films have for Afro-Americans: to raise Jewish consciousness and combat negative self-images.

Two Austrian films were screened, Axel Corti’s television adaptation of the Jewish writer Franz Werfel’s story, Eine Blassblaue Frauenchrift (A Woman’s Pale Blue Handwriting), and Paulus Manker’s screen version of Joshua Sobol’s play about the Jewish-born Viennese philosopher Otto Weininger, Weininger Nacht (Weininger’s Last Night).

Weininger was a crackpot who wrote a book called Sex and Character, in which he stated his belief that neither Jews nor women were capable of having ideas. His deeply pessimistic ideas had a profound influence on the intelligentsia of fin de siècle Vienna, prompting Wittgenstein, so it is said, to write a great work proving both his own manhood and his Christianity (Weininger was a homosexual and a Protestant convert). Weininger committed suicide at the age of twenty three, in the same room in which Beethoven died. Manker’s film (JFF, Austria, 1989) is a noisy, repetitive, sensationalist version of Weininger’s life which verges on incomprehensibility.

Corti’s film is altogether different. Though not as rich and original as Corti’s great trilogy Wohin und Zurück (Where and Back), A Woman’s Pale Blue Handwriting (FJC, Austria, 1984) is a limpid examination of an opportunist, a man without qualities who, despite his affectation of introspection, has no comprehension of the depths of his own shallowness. In confessional tone, Corti narrates how Tachezy (Friedrich von Thun), a civil servant in the Austrian Ministry in 1936, believes the truth has caught up with him at last, when he receives a letter from a Jewish woman with whom he had an affair eleven years ago, requesting that he help her with the schooling of an eleven-year-old boy.

At first he is shocked. How is he to explain this? Everything is at stake: his marriage to his rich wife, his job which he manages to maintain through juggling and appeasement, his self-esteem. After the panic comes the accommodation, the adjustment. Guilt assails him and atonement beckons: what better time than now to become the man he always could be. Once the danger passes, however, and the Jew can be put in her place, Tachezy reverts to being the man he always was: “With the necessity for changing his life gone, the superiority he had lost that morning came back to him.” This is a masterly interpretation of Werfel’s cynical story which illuminates the Austrian soul.

Two films from Canada were among the most entertaining films: True Confections (JFF, Gail Singer, Canada 1991), a polished, quirky, coming-of-age story about growing up Jewish and female in Winnipeg in the 1950s; and Falling Over Backwards (JFF, Mort Ransen, Canada 1990), a wry, accomplished comedy set in Montréal, about a thirty-something Jewish man who yearns for the security of living with his parents again.

The Jewish element colours both of these Canadian films, which revolve around personal growth and the struggle for independence from family, towards whom the central characters in both films – one female and the other male – have strong attachments. The key issues touched upon – class, sexism, abortion, sexual violence towards women, racism in True Confections, and safe sex in Falling Over Backwards – are not the preoccupations of Jews alone, but issues of general concern. However, in both these films, the Jewish content adds flavour to the stories, a Jewish lens through which aspects of contemporary society can be perceived.

Mel (Saul Rubinek) in Falling Over Backwards and Verna (Leslie Hope) in True Confections are comfortable with their Jewishness. Unlike Bobby Gold (Homicide), they are at home in the world. They exhibit none of Gold’s paranoia or angst about being Jewish. This prompted me to wonder whether Canadian Jews, like their Australian counterparts, feel more at ease about being Jewish and, if so, why? Asking this question led me to feel the lack of Australian films that capture the unique flavour of Australian Jewish experience: an amalgam of gum trees, elderly Holocaust survivors, Glick’s bagels, Caulfield and Bondi. Literature has made a start. Why has the feature film not become a medium for Jewish self-expression in this country?
The dominant aspects of Jewish life in Australia that we believe characterize the Jewish community here seem to be irrelevant, or at best peripheral, to the major preoccupations of Israeli filmmakers. Israel has become a militarized culture out of necessity, and as its film industry has come of age, weaning itself from foreign dependency and developing good scripts, the most interesting films are those made by left-wing filmmakers which address the social and political issues arising out of Israel's numerous wars, and the claims of the Palestinians.

Avanti Popolo (FJC, Rafi Bukace, 1986), Israel's entry for Best Foreign Film at the 1986 Academy Awards, was criticized at the time in the Knesset by cabinet minister Ariel Sharon, who called it self-destructive. Set in the Sinai Desert in 1967 at the end of the Six-Day War, the film's central figures are two Egyptians, the lone survivors of a routed company of soldiers whose only desire is to reach the Suez Canal and home. There are two powerful metaphors in the film: the desert, which represents the human state, and Haled, one of the Egyptians, an actor who once played Shylock in a production in Cairo of The Merchant of Venice ("a Jew sent to fight Jews"), who becomes a potent symbol of the futility and absurdity of war, humanity at war with itself. Despite technical roughness, Avanti Popolo is a remarkable film, an eloquent, powerful plea for human solidarity and sanity. Haled is played by Salim Daw, a well-known Palestinian actor, and his delivery of Shylock's most famous speech — "I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes ...?" — is at once mocking, ironic and profoundly disturbing.

G'mar Gaviya (Cup Final, FJC, Eran Riklis, Israel, 1991), the most popular film at the Jerusalem Film Festival in 1991, though not as poetic in concept as Avanti Popolo, is similarly powerful. Set during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, it tells the story of Cohen (Moshe Ivgi), an Israeli soldier and soccer fan, who is captured by retreating Palestinian guerrillas and taken with them as a hostage as they pick their way north to Beirut, through terrain patrolled regularly by Christian and Israeli troops. The film's focus is the seven days Cohen spends with the Palestinians, and the friendship that grows between him and his eight captors, based first on a shared love of soccer and support for the same World Cup team, Italy, and, later, on a recognition of a shared humanity.

Like Avanti Popolo, Cup Final's sympathy is directed at the vanquished and dispossessed. The Palestinians are shown as dignified, decent men: Ziad, the tall, light-skinned leader of the unit, lives abroad in Italy, and was trained as a pharmacist; Omar, intelligent, dark and bespectacled, is nearly a doctor; Mussa is a wiry-haired, quick-witted family man; Abu Eyesh, with his heavy, ambling gait possesses a kindly soul; Fatri, young and vulnerable, is a diabetic. Only one of the group is needlessly violent, and he is restrained by the others. Stereotyping has been rigorously avoided. So convincing are these portraits, in fact, that we are numbed by their deaths, and, like Cohen who weeps for them at the end, we find it difficult to emotionally adjust to their being picked off, one by one, by bullets and mines that randomly snuff out their lives in an instant, without regard to personality.

Echad Mishelanu (One of Us, JFF, Uri Babash, Israel 1990), set in the Occupied Territories during the Intifada, offers a complex, sometimes confused, perspective on the impact of the Arab-Israeli conflict on young people. When Rafa (Dan Toren), a young military police officer, is sent to a paratrooper base to investigate the death in custody of a Palestinian prisoner, he is unaware that the Palestinian, said to have been shot while trying to escape, was responsible for the horrifying death of his close friend. Rafa is expected by his friends at the base to be loyal to the memory of his dead friend and his old unit, and only conduct a routine examination. Rafa, however, feels morally bound as an investigator to discover the truth, even if it means implicating his friends and impugning his past.

Babash handles several themes in One of Us: the primacy of male friendship in group solidarity, sexism in the army, peer-group pressure and the abusive behaviour of officers. As a consequence, the film loses focus at times, and the story becomes muddled. The ending is ambivalent: Does Rafa bow to the demands of group loyalty and burn the tell-tale tape implicating his friends, or does he follow the dictates of his conscience and become an outcast forever, no longer 'one of us'?

For all its faults, however, One of Us has energy, and a finger on the pulse of what is happening in Israel today. It pits abstract
notions of principle against the reality of how military culture operates, and exposes the pressure on individuals within the group. Young Israelis, in order to survive physically and psychologically, turn to each other and form strong bonds, a tradition developed in the Zionist youth movements in Europe and very much alive in civilian society, as well as in the army. Faced with the choice of obeying a distant command, or betraying a friend, primary allegiance is to the group. This makes the ambivalence expressed at the end of the film understandable.

Other notable Israeli features were Gesher Tsar Me’od (On a Narrow Bridge, JFF, Nissim Dayan, 1985), set on the West Bank, which explores the intractability of Arab: Jewish hostility through a Romeo and Juliet story; and Shuru (FJC, Savi Gavison, 1990), a semi-serious comedy about a self-help group, led by a small time entrepreneur (Moshe Ivgi of Avanti Popolo) trying to come to terms with sexual dysfunction and loneliness in Tel Aviv.

The most interesting documentaries screened at the two festivals were odysseys in search of new information and fresh insights.

Diane Perelsztejn’s attempt to come to terms with her own response to the Holocaust led to the making of Survivore a Shanghai (Escape to the Rising Sun, FJC, Belgium 1991), a documentary about 20,000 Jews who found refuge during the war in Shanghai, one of the few places in the world that could be entered without a visa. Perelsztejn tells the story of the Shanghai Jews through interviews with 15 elderly survivors, and retracts with them on film the circuitous route they took to Shanghai via Vilna, Russia and Japan. Some extraordinary facts emerge that may forever reshape the way we view Japanese behaviour during the war. To reach Shanghai it was necessary to travel via the Soviet Union and Japan. To enter Japan a visa was needed, and unless one had a visa for Japan it was not possible to enter Russia from Vilna. Thousands of Jews owe their lives to the Japanese Consul in Vilna, who against express orders from Tokyo continued to issue visas to desperate Jews up to the moment of his recall to Berlin. A forest has been planted by Vashem in Israel.

Pierre Sauvage’s Weapons of the Spirit (JFF, U.S., 1986), seen first at the Melbourne Film Festival in 1988, is one of the most inspirational documentaries ever made about the Holocaust. Sauvage returned to Le Chambon-sur-Lignon in 1985, to understand better his own history and to pay tribute to this small French Huguenot village which during the war saved the lives of 5,000 children, Sauvage included. Following their Pastor in the simple belief that it was the right thing to do because Jesus was a Jew, each family in the village harboured a Jewish child, participating in a monumental act of resistance which could not have escaped the cognizance of the Gestapo located a small distance away in Vichy. Sauvage doesn’t try to explain goodness, or the Gestapo’s inaction. He simply shows that sometimes goodness has the power to paralyze evil, and makes the point that 75,000 Jews were handed over to the Germans by French collaborators.

Les Derniers Marranes (The Last Marranos, JFF, Frederic Brenner and Stan Neumann, France, 1990), a visually engrossing film embued with respect for its subject, sheds light on the secret religion of a contemporary Marrano community in a village north of Lisbon. Its rituals, orally transmitted, date back to the time when the Spanish and Portuguese Jews of the 15th Century publicly converted to Catholicism during the Spanish Inquisition, and practised their Judaism underground. Interviews with gentiles and Marranos alike from the village of Belmonte give a fascinating picture of a world not so removed from the dangerous past: a painting behind glass doors in a church depicts Judas betraying Christ with big-nosed Jews mocking him; a local priest describes Jews as “fat, obese. Anyone who is used to Jews can recognize them by their physical appearance [...] their sibilant pronunciation, their noses, the way they curse and swear”; a Marrano, Emilia, a large pensive woman with a small nose, describes how as a child she would enter a church for a christening and wedding and say silently, “I enter this house but I worship neither wood and stone. I worship only the 73 names of the Lord who rules over us.”

Cut off from their culture for hundreds of years, the crypto-Judaic religion practised by the Marranos is female-centred and ecletic, an amalgam of half-remembered stories and prayers, tailored by their experience. As the women prepare the unleavened bread for Passover, their most important festival, they pray that they may be delivered from “evil, torture and death”. During the baking of the bread they cover their eyes and sing, “Harm no man with telling lies [...] Above all, honour your parents, they are respectable people who brought you into the world.” An old woman with a lined face gives a Jewish perspective on history: “The Lord gave the Jews Jesus, but he betrayed us.”

These Belmonte Jews are the last Marranos in Portugal. For centuries they have kept their faith alive without a synagogue, rabbi or books. Recently, however, things have changed. Ashkenazic Judaism has come to the village, dispelling mystery and shame at the same time. The Marranos of Belmonte are now prepared to circumcise their sons, observe the ‘new’ festivals, wear hats and yamulkas in the home, and jettison the ‘goy’ calendar to follow the Hebrew. “This is good”, says Elias, Emilia’s son-in-law who has been to America and Israel. “The men were estranged from religion before. Now men are in charge.” Emilia thinks it is right for the young to move on to the new rites, but she will continue to practise her parents’ religion. “It’s all the same,” she says, “but the prayers are not ours.”
This Supplement is the first step in an examination of various aspects of Australian cinema from an indigenous or ethnic perspective. Aboriginal writers Archie Weller and John Harding look at Koori (Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander) cinema, but not from the usual viewpoint of how whites have represented blacks. Rather, both look forward to a time when black filmmakers will be part of the mainstream, when Koori stories are told by Kooris without any pretence of a “white face”. Already there are positive signs, not only in film but Aboriginal broadcasting (here examined by Philip Dutchak). Australia’s cultural attitudes to Asia is another area explored (by Sylvie Shaw). When will Australian film and television learn to represent our Asian neighbours in an intelligent and non-stereotyped way? Will Australia ever see itself as part of that Asian neighbourhood? Finally, Craig Brown examines the use of stereotypes on Australian television. Also in this issue, but not specifically part of this Supplement, is coverage of other multi-cultural, or related, issues. Specifically, there is George Negus’ account of filming in Russia and Jan Epstein’s look at Jewish Cinema. Thus, this Supplement is not only a partial attempt at commenting of some multi-cultural issues, but also a catalyst to new ideas, new forms of coverage.

THIS SUPPLEMENT WAS MADE POSSIBLE BY A GRANT FROM THE MYER FOUNDATION, FOR WHICH CINEMA PAPERS IS EXTREMELY APPRECIATIVE.
As the federal government moves closer to Asia economically, will this new policy shift Australia closer to Asia culturally as well?
What will be the response of the film industry? Can it pass the Asian Screen Test?

Sylvie Shaw, an independent filmmaker and film consultant to Asialink, investigates.

In the past 12 months, the Australian film and television industry has begun to open up links towards Asia. Suddenly it seems production companies are devising scripts with Asian themes, and creating films and television programmes that are helping to raise the profile of Asia in Australia. Already some sectors of the industry are looking to Asia, especially Japan, as the new fairy godmother of film finance.

The changes come in the wake of the federal government’s commitment to strengthen our ties with the Asian region. Our destiny lies with Asia and there is a real need, based on economic imperative, to move Australia’s focus from Europe closer to home. But economic imperative (and government rhetoric) alone will not bring about a change in attitude.

Asialink, a small Melbourne organization committed to raising the profile of Asia through film and television, wants to speed up the process and believes the media, particularly popular-culture media, is one means to this end. But it won’t be easy as the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Senator Gareth Evans, suggested recently: “How do you instil that feeling of ‘belonging’ into the hearts of 17 million people? How do you make an entire population feel comfortable with its neighbours?”

Perhaps Neighbours is the appropriate word. Asialink asks if and when the popular shows on television will begin not only to have an Asian perspective, but also a face which represents the broad community in this country.
Evans was launching the new Asia-Pacific Policy of the Australia Council which earmarks fifty per cent of the Council’s international budget to projects involved in the region. The decision recognizes how important cultural understanding is to economic success and sets the scene for an exciting, new cultural perspective for Australia. The Chair of the Performing Arts Board, Carrillo Gantner, puts it this way: “Now we have the opportunity and responsibility to create a new and powerful Australian culture that truly bridges East and West.”

If the Australia Council can introduce such a progressive policy change, what about the film industry? There is cause for optimism, with collaborative projects, worthy of support, in their infancy. But care should be exercised in case this sea change becomes another vehicle for an unequal power relationship – Australia to Asia, rather than a real East-West fusion.

KANGAROOS AND SCENIC VIEWS

The federal government’s Garnaut Report, *Australia and the North-east Asian Ascendancy*, commissioned research on Asian attitudes about Australia. The report concluded that Australia was better known for its furry animals, wide-open spaces and beaches than its intellect.

But in trying to improve our image in Asia, how do we move away from yet another documentary of the great outback, or our curious koalas? How can we encourage Asian filmmakers and broadcast networks to programme something different about Australia, especially contemporary Australian drama?

WARS, WHORES, SECTS AND SEX

While the Garnaut Report states that our perceptions of North-east Asia are increasingly better informed, the image of Asians in the media is largely still based on the traditional stereotype: the enemy, the gaoler, the thug, the prostitute or the victim.

Professor Annette Hamilton of Macquarie University is one of the very few academics to look at the image of Asians in our films. In her paper “Fear and Desire: Aborigines, Asians and the National Imaginary”, she makes the point that, “right back to the original Tarzan films, it is apparent that any Asian native can substitute for any other.”

This is also confirmed by our attitude to shooting films in Asia and we have been guilty of what Sydney producer, Mike Fuller, describes as “steamrolling the host culture”. While it is not solely the domain of the Australian film industry, we have a track-record of painting all of Asia with one brush – of shooting a film about one country in another, of transplanting one exotic Asian landscape for another (all paddy fields look alike), of replacing one specific ethnic group with another (all Asians look alike) and of transposing one culture for another (no one will know the difference). The local population and landscape serve only as an exotic yet interchangeable backdrop where a country’s own cultural, historical and ethnic diversity has been annexed by the Australian film industry for convenience. But while we continue to paint all Asians with one brush, we should remember that they too have trouble telling us apart.
EXOTICA / EROTICA

The mystery of Asia tugs at our primitive heart strings. Tropical beaches, magical cultures, exotic landscapes, sexual encounters – an escape from our everyday lives. But in many of our films the exotic also becomes the erotic. As Freda Freiberg suggests, the heroes go troppo and awaken the “hidden native in themselves.”

Sometimes like in The Year of Living Dangerously (Peter Weir, 1982) or Far East (John Duigan, 1982), the lead characters fall in love with each other, but generally they suffer what Freiberg calls the “native as stud” mentality (cf. Echoes of Paradise, Phil Noyce, 1988). They unleash the repressed sexuality of the suburbs and, after a whirlwind holiday romance, or flirtation with spirituality, they return to their families and their mundane existence.

Only rarely are Asians ‘real people’, or stars in their own right. Films like Aya (Solrun Hoaas, 1990), the short Tigers Eyes (Teck Tan), or the far-sighted mini-series In Between (Chris Warner, Maureen McCarthy and Kim Dalton) are leading the way. But beware the token Asian, particularly the stereotyped version.

MORE BAD GUYS?

There is now a fear that a new genre of films will emerge depicting Asians again as the bad guys. The Triads and Yakuza might become popular images on our screens, and we should be wary of this development. Already proposals are being submitted to film-funding bodies about shady Japanese businessmen buying up potential tourist treasure islands off Australia’s sunshine coast, or portraying Chinatown as a hotbed of nasty Triad drug dealers. Perhaps there is a lesson here from the American film Year of the Dragon (Michael Cimino, 1985), where the Chinese characters are both goodies and baddies, and where the intrepid, female Chinese-American investigative reporter tracks down the inscrutable drug barons.

The way we represent Asians in our media comes in for scrutiny from our near neighbours. The Malaysian government to openly dissociate itself from the production. As well, the Australian Film Finance Corporation (FFC), which was an investor in the film, has withdrawn its logo from the film’s credits. According to the FFC’s chief executive, John Morris,

The FFC took this step because it might be hard for the Malaysians to comprehend that a government agency, such as the FFC, is a strictly ‘hands off’ investor and maintains a completely independent position on the contents of films and programmes in which it invests.

TWO STEPS FORWARD ...

Our political and cultural naïveté is transparent. How do we improve that?

Both the Australian Film Commission (AFC) and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) organize Australian film festivals and visits of Australian filmmakers to the Asian region. In 1991, DFAT sponsored Cascade Films (Nadia Tass and David Parker) to travel to India, while Curtis Levy and Chris Olsen organized a documentary festival across Indonesia and ran workshops in Jakarta with Indonesia filmmakers.

But the involvement of these two government bodies in such ventures has been criticized on the grounds that the left hand does not know what the right is doing. The AFC promotes the Australian film industry, while DFAT develops cultural relations. If we want to improve our image in Asia via showing Australian films, then whose responsibility is it? Is it marketing or better cultural relations?
By raising the profile of Asians and Asian themes, there can be a tendency to overlook the ‘cultural specificity’ of the different Asian nations and ethnic groups within those countries. A drama series dealing with a non-specific Asian country runs the risk of ignoring the nuances that make each country special.

Films travelling to Asia have to be chosen with care, taking into account the political, moral and religious sensitivities of the countries involved. The same considerations need to be followed when Australian crews are working in Asia: making positive contacts, breaking down stereotypes, enhancing good relations – on both sides.

Bangkok Hilton provides a good example. Part of the series was shot in India where the crew could not disclose they were making a film about “drug-running – the Indian connection”. So while they were shooting, the crew wore T-shirts printed with the words “East meets West and they fall in love. A 12-part documentary.”

At the moment, there is sparse knowledge about the best ways of working in various Asian countries. Australia does not have a specific film industry agency that offers advice about working in Asia. Where do you go for precise information? What are the pitfalls to watch out for? Should one offer ‘financial incentives’ and how much? What about our attitude to cheap labour in Asia? How do you avoid exploitation? How does one avoid religious, moral, cultural and political faux pas and so on? Is it the role of DFAT, Austrade or the AFC to provide such information?

Action-movie producers favour Asia because of the low labour costs, though working in Asia can also have huge disadvantages, the most obvious being that Australia is seen in a negative light. Filipino filmmaker Nick Deocampo from the Mowel Film Institute points out that, in his country, Australians are either identified as Americans or as ugly tourists only interested in the sex trade.9

In a sense, this negativity has been reinforced by the legacy of films like The Year of Living Dangerously (set in Indonesia but made in The Philippines) and the mini-series on Cory Aquino’s rise to power, A Dangerous Life. By shooting in a different country from the setting, the film loses its credibility. For political reasons, A Dangerous Life finished production in Sri Lanka, but the local Filipino audience could not take the film seriously when a crowd of Sri Lankan extras shouted “Cory! Cory! Cory!”

To avoid such problems, The Philippines government is now considering setting up a ‘One Stop Agency’ for all foreign films made there. It is easy to see why. What is our response when we see Australia wrongly or narrowly interpreted by overseas media? Can we blame the various countries in Asia for being disinterested in our product if we do not represent them correctly?

By raising the profile of Asians and Asian themes, there can be a tendency to overlook the ‘cultural specificity’ of the different Asian nations and ethnic groups within those countries. A drama series dealing with a non-specific Asian country runs the risk of ignoring the nuances that make each country special. And while we continue to set films and mini-series like Far East, Bangkok Hilton, Vietnam and Turtle Beach in Asia, they tend to be more about our search for identity and say more about Australia than they do about Asia.

NEW TREATIES

In an exciting development by the AFC, Charles Hannah from Pacific Link Communications has been employed as a consultant for the next two years to open up markets in Japan and Korea, and lift the profile of Australian film and television there. Already, through the newly-opened Pacific Link Communications Office in Tokyo, he is negotiating the sale of Yoram Gross’ Blinky Bill (1992), as well as Japanese involvement in a children’s drama series from Grundy’s Mission Top Secret, an international drama about a group of computer smart kids in different countries out to save the world from environmental and other destruction.

The AFC is also pursuing the area of co-productions with Japan. This was one of the major recommendations to come out of Asialink’s No Koalas Please Conference in 1990. Because Japan has no equivalent organization to the AFC, there were some teething problems, but now links are being forged with both the Japanese broadcaster NHK and with the government itself. Peter Sainsbury (AFC) comments that his initial investigations have been encouraging enough to warrant a request to the federal Minister for the Arts, Tourism and Territories to enter into formal negotiations with the Japanese Ministry of International Trade and Industry.9

STREET GANGS AND DRAGONS

Another exciting development this year has been Children of the Dragon, a television co-production between the ABC, BBC and Xanadu Productions. This mini-series, based on Nicolas Jose’s novel Avenues of Eternal Peace, revolves around the fate of an Australian doctor who gets caught up in the democracy movement in Beijing in 1989. Tiananmen Square was reconstructed in a disused airfield on the outskirts of Sydney and one of the most rewarding aspects of the production was uncovering the wealth of talent in Australia.
The Asian Screen Test

Two thousand extras were needed to re-create the scene in Tiananmen Square and they were gathered through advertisements in local newspapers, radio shows, via Chinese organizations and student associations. On one occasion, the casting agents took over a disco and hired the 400 patrons as extras.

The producers employed Melbourne director Wang Ziyin (New Gold Mountain) to act as a liaison between the crew and the cast, especially with the huge number of extras. Megaphone in hand, she translated the directions to the enormous cast. It was an exhausting process. Line producer Wayne Barry, who coincidentally was in Beijing the day after the massacre, and Wang Ziyin were able to evoke a strong feeling among the extras, many of whom were also in Tiananmen Square that night. As the fires and the explosions started, the cast began to re-live their experiences and acted out their roles with extraordinary passion.

Wang Ziyin tells the story of one of the extras, who, knowing he was to re-create the scene in Tiananmen Square, wore exactly the same t-shirt he had worn on the night of the massacre. He found it hard to understand that wardrobe wanted him to wear something else. He thought the drama was supposed to be real. And while the title Children of the Dragon has been criticized as yet another stereotyped vision of China, it is in fact the name of the song the students were singing in Tiananmen Square.

One of the recommendations of the Asialink No Koalas Please Conference, which brought together filmmakers from Asia and Australia, stressed the importance of hiring a consultant to avoid social, cultural or religious misunderstandings when working in Asia. The smooth production on Children of the Dragon showed just how important this is even when working in Australia — for solving language problems and for bridging cultural gaps as well. Wang Ziyin also mentioned having to raise awareness with the crew that “not all Chinese are the same.”

People from Mainland China, from Taiwan, Singapore or Malaysia all have different backgrounds and experiences, and these cultural differences should be respected. Congratulations to the producers for their foresight in employing a sensitive cultural-liaison consultant.

Another local feature with an Australian-Asian theme is Romper Stomper (Geoffrey Wright, 1992), a film about neo-Nazi skinheads angry that Vietnamese gangs are taking over their territory.

In casting the Vietnamese actors, the production company, Seon Films, said they had “no problems whatsoever”. Casting agent Liz Mullinar advertised for and found experienced actors from Vietnam. She took ads in the local Vietnamese newspaper and spoke to leaders of the Vietnamese community who put up flyers around the area. A mixture of good research and community support and networking.

And next year there will be more. The ABC has also commissioned Sydney writers Nicolas Jose and William Yang to research and write a six-hour drama series about the Chinese in Australia called The China Story. The series, set in Darwin, focuses on one Chinese family and spans several generations from 1910 to the present. Production is still twelve months away.

Warring Factions No Longer

The recent films Blood Oath (Stephen Wallace, 1990) and Aya still have their roots in the turmoil of World War II, but Ayatackles something different: the experiences of a Japanese war bride in Australia during the 1950s. Director Solrun Hoaas believes:

Our media are obsessed with the war, neglecting the occupation and the treatment of the Japanese war brides, who were the first Japanese allowed to enter Australia after the war.10

But while Aya was selected for screening at many prestigious film festivals around the world, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade would not sponsor Solrun Hoaas to participate in the Singapore Film Festival because, it is suggested, the film does not depict Australians in a sufficiently positive light, despite the fact that the film won a special jury prize for art and innovation at the 1990 Torino Film Festival. Hoaas feels that perhaps her representation of the leading Australian male characters — one violent, but sensitively portrayed, the other gay — is perhaps the reason.

Hoaas speaks fluent Japanese and this eased many potential problems and language misunderstandings in working with the leading Japanese actress, Eri Ishida. Although Hoaas says it was an exhausting process switching back and forth constantly, the rewards are shown in Ishida’s sensitive portrayal of a woman in an alien culture.

Japan is being viewed as the film finance bank of the world and we are having some success in gaining access to their coffers. Aya and the mini-series Rose Against the Odds — the story of Lionel Rose’s boxing fame — were partly funded by Japanese sources. Blood Oath was able to corner a slice of the Japanese market, grossing $250,000 within six weeks of opening in Tokyo thanks to the amazing efforts of publicist Toshi Shioya, who Charles Hannah says, “almost single-handedly cajoled and bullied the film’s distributors, and the Japanese media, to share his belief in it”.11
Despite pressure on television networks to produce stories which reflect both the multi-cultural and Aboriginal mix of the Australian community, the changes have been minimal. There seems to be a suggestion that ‘middle Australia’ will turn off if it sees a multi-cultural society. But has any real market research been done or is it just the ‘gut feeling’ of the executive producer?

The feature film *Greenkeeping* (David Caesar, 1992) is a comedy about “sex, drugs and lawn bowls”. It also has an Asian focus. Caesar says the inspiration for the film came from a radio broadcast of the Commonwealth Games lawn bowls final between a 17-year-old Chinese boy from Hong Kong and an older Italian-Australian. He believes the film is “a metaphor for the way Australia is changing”.12

The 1991 Melbourne Film Festival further expanded Australia’s Asian links with the screening of several films of the Hong Kong genre of martial-arts films. But the highlight of the Festival was the session for the film *Ju Dou* by renowned Chinese “5th Generation” director Zhang Yi-Mou. Festival-goers turned up in droves. The organizers could not control the crowd and the police were called in. Demand for Chinese cinema is very strong in Melbourne and this rush to see a banned Chinese film, incidentally bankrolled by the Japanese, flies in the face of cinema chains which believe there is no market here for Asia film. There is an audience and it can be fostered.

**MARKET PLACE REALITY**

But if cinema chains are slow to change, television networks are even slower. Despite pressure on them to produce stories which reflect both the multi-cultural and Aboriginal mix of the Australian community, the changes have been minimal. There seems to be a suggestion that ‘middle Australia’ will turn off if it sees a multi-cultural society. But has any real market research been done or is it just the ‘gut feeling’ of the executive producer? How often have we heard that there are “no good story lines”, “no actors available” or “the image isn’t good for our overseas markets”.

Ian Bradley from the Grundy Organization believes that television executives are often motivated by fear – “fear of not getting ratings, fear of offending the advertisers, and in the end fear of losing their jobs”.13 In other words, fear of doing something different.

Other producers argue it is important to see beyond the rhetoric and concentrate on the dramatic and passionate elements of a story, regardless of its authenticity or worthiness. But do we have to wait until network executives understand that programmes with an Asian focus can be dramatic and passionate, ratings-positive, not offensive to advertisers and keep them in their jobs. Do we have to wait until the decision-makers themselves are Asia-literate?

**6 O’CLOCK SHOCK**

News and current-affairs programmes are supposed to present accuracy and truth. But the image of Asia we see is limited to natural disasters, riots, drug hauls, plane crashes and wars. And this occurs only if there is a news crew to shoot it. Similar images of street fighting in South Korea, mud-slides in The Philippines and poverty in Bangladesh inure us to the real problems. The viewer becomes bored and desensitized to events in that country.

“PLEASE CONSIDER”

Advertising still represents stereotype images – of women, of Italians and of Asians. “Can you keep a Secret?” and “Sunright Lice” make fun of Asian pronunciation of English words; Singapore Airlines advertisements refer to its “girls” as a “great way to fly”; and Fuji Films present a bow-tied, smiling, cutesy image to make us choose its product.

Where do you draw the line between what is gently funny and what is racist? “Mr Okimura” (NEC) and “Not So Squeeezy” (Mitsubishi) are parodies of Japanese national characteristics, but the ads are also made for Japanese companies. When will
the advertising industry see the real person behind the big smile?

**IT'S ALL IN THE GAME**

If advertising presents a skewed view of Asians, game shows rarely include Asians in their programmes. While an Australian Broadcasting Tribunal survey found that game shows are near the bottom of viewer preferences, there is no obvious reason why Asian or Australian-Asian contestants can’t be chosen. Apparently an Australian-Chinese student did very well on *Sale of the Century* this year, but examples are few and far between.

**SOAP**

An interesting change has been taking place in some of the soaps and let’s hope that it is a taste of things to come. Congratulations to *A Country Practice* for recently including a storyline about a Chinese-Australian acupuncturist who performed an operation on the matron of Wandin Valley hospital and had a love affair with one of the nurses. While Dr. Yip left the show after only a couple of episodes, executive producer James Davenport says it is possible he may yet return.

A number of scriptwriters have spoken of some fascinating stories about scripts they’ve written and how the programme producers have reacted with the same old response. Where do we get the actors from?

This was one of the issues raised at meetings of writers and actors in Melbourne and Sydney in December, organized by *Asialink*. Actors Equity in Sydney reports that it now has a database listing actors by ethnic group, so one more excuse bites the dust.

Several writers mentioned that, although they would like to write about Asian themes, they are not familiar with the community involved. They recommended that residencies in Asian countries be provided by the AFC, along the lines of the Australia Council, and that special ethnic consultants be employed to give back-up research and expertise at storyline meetings. Another possibility would be to have writers working in tandem: collaboration between a native speaker with a writer from a particular ethnic group.

Most people at the meetings believe that the decision-makers, the executive producers and the network owners, need to be made aware just how damaging discriminatory or stereotyped views of Asians are, especially when it comes to the image we present in those countries considered so important to trade relations. As Melbourne writer Yu Ouyang pointed out, many Asians view Australia as “a cultural desert”.

**... ONE STEP BACK**

On another level there have been disappointments, too. The educational series *Asiawise* has been one of the victims of the ABC’s cutbacks and the current-affairs programme *Asia Report* has been dropped by SBS.

There is a real need for more educational background material for schools. Last year I prepared a filmography, *Visions of Asia*, which lists the availability of about 1000 films and videos throughout Australia. But very little of it is made specifically with education in mind, particularly for primary schools. What curriculum-specific material is available is now hopelessly out of date.

As Australia moves closer to Asia both economically and culturally, it is essential that the Australian community has a solid understanding of life in Asia. Teachers have expressed a real interest in visual material that will assist children open their eyes to Asia and assist them to become Asia-literate. Teachers are looking for updated and accessible information, in a language that the children themselves use and understand.

So how do children view Asia? When one teacher asked her students to draw pictures of Asians, most drew Ninja Turtles and Ninjas, the horrors of war or old-fashioned images of Chinese wearing straw hats and pigtails.

There is a desperate need to develop an awareness of who Asians really are and to break down the old stereotypes.

**MISSION IMPOSSIBLE**

In December 1991, the Screen Production Association of Australia (SPAA) looked at the developing Asian television market. It’s no coincidence that the South-East Asian market is still looking for American-style action movies, CNN-style news and current-affairs programmes, sport and documentaries which can be dubbed into Asian languages about Australia’s marvellous sea-world and our cuddly koalas.

So it’s a two-way process. While we are looking to enhance the image of Asia in Australia, we can’t overlook the image of Australia in Asia. It seems that all too often the tourist image is the only one represented abroad.

This image will not advance until the perception of Australia as a people changes. Many in Asia still see Australia as a country of whites, when in fact we are a dynamic mix of Aboriginal, European and Asian ethnic and cultural backgrounds growing together in this huge southern continent. The easy clichéd image that we are westerners is both literally and metaphorically wrong. We are not Westerners. If anything, we are "Southerners".

There is an exciting evolution within our film and television industry, and it is gaining momentum. There is no doubt that things will change. Even the television executives say so. The opportunities are there now. Can the Australian film and television industry take them up and pass the Asian screen test with flying colours?

**NOTES**

5. Freda Freiberg, Monash University Department of Visual Arts, in conversation with author.
7. In letter from Judith Rich, Public Relations Manager at the FFC, in response to a faxed query from the Editor.
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Aboriginal-Islander playwright and performance poet John Harding queries the definition of “Black Films”

There’s a question out there in here
Through a camera it would blur,
or sink to the bottom of obscurity with its leadweighted ironies.
A spotlight would not assist, as the pain reflects light back
into your narrow vacant eyes, more help than needed will paralyse.
To stand motionless is to be shot, wrapped cut and sold, yet
our cloud of fluidity will not be housed.
When the question is in the eyes that can tell the story, the
story will speak, and the question will begin to be answered,
and the camera merges and blurs with sudden forward motion.

UNTITLED, JOHN HARDING

I am constantly amazed at how often in my life I have watched
the simple path be sacrificed for the long and conflict-ridden road. Maybe it is because along simple paths there are simple truths, and life wasn’t meant to be peaceful or over that quickly.

Having said that, to look at Kooris* and film a necessary step is to see how this country reflects itself and the international arena. Is the cultural cringe alive and well and commuting between Sydney and Melbourne? Will we forever rate the perfection of imitation higher than the development of local creativity and fund it accordingly? The optimist in me says that the current upswing in the support of Australian content may be something more than temporary.

The Melbourne film industry is thriving on producing stories that reflect the societal idiosyncrasies, the sexual tensions and the cultural contradictions that this great city was built on, and winning awards in the process. It is also encouraging to see that the gap between the general public and the Australian film industry is continuing to slowly close. I remember not so long ago, when attending a cinema complex, that I would look straight past known Australian film titles to see what Hollywood had flung across the seas for our cultural gratification. Yet here I am in 1992 knowing that, out of the four films I want to see at the present moment, two of them are local product.

Now if this a genuine plateau we have reached, and the local and international production partners are starting to believe that the general public can tolerate Australian content, then does this mean, dare I say it, that Koori issues could even be on the shopping list when new ideas are being bought and sold in the marketplace for feature films?

Even if this were so, it presents one of the many problems that exist in the processes of depicting Koori issues and images. I always have great difficulty making it clear to non-Kooris the inappropriateness of them writing Koori characters or issues into a story. There is often disbelief that I have any right to impinge or stem their creative juices, whether they be writers, playwrights or poets. It may be a different situation if they made it clear that the images they conjure are their perceptions, their reality, but this is rarely the case.

Instead, white values and perspectives are put on black characters and issues. This serves to reinforce the one-dimensional view that white Australia has of Kooris, when the physical aspect of being one is put up there on the screen alone.

The film industry should not be singled out here, as it encompasses the wider community, and is reflective of the fact that a very different perspective and psyche exists between the black and white communities in this country in 1992, and has always been there.

One of the strongest elements of Koori life is the totality of our world view. Everything is interconnected and affects everything else. The arts in general for White Australia seem to be a very separate entity to the mainstream community. Elements of accountability and responsibility do not bind the two together.

Thus, a community sees no link between the arts body and its taxes pay for — spending the majority of its funding supporting activities that a minuscule percentage of the population participate in — and the fact that they should be irate about it.

Koori arts has never been a separatist ideal, refining for its own sake, but more a vibrant, integral component on which our culture was based. It was as important to the social cohesion of a family as a steady supply of food; and elevated to the status of ceremonies.

As we have adapted into the 1990s, the one thing we cannot afford to lose is our artists, and their place in the scheme of the struggle we face. I place Koori filmmakers firmly in this group.

Of course, in these liberated times, it sounds almost fascist to say that black artists should be accountable to their community. If a Koori filmmaker’s work is adored by the wider community, what possible weight would the black community’s disapproval carry? It would seem the potential for retribution is minimal. The Koori filmmakers have the ball in their court in regards to this aspect. Only they can know to what extent their work reflects the Kooriness in themselves. This sense of accountability is something

* Read Aborigines/Torres Strait Islanders.
that Koori artists carry in their hearts, rather than fear as an enforced decree.

Here I would like to touch on the politics of the film industry, in reference to Kooris and films, as I see this as flowing on from the previous point. I feel the time has come where we have to begin to define what a "black film" or a "Koori film" is, and when does it become one. Is it a black film due to the material it presents or the origins of the filmmaker, or both?

The reason I have decided not to turn this article into an historic look at "Aboriginal films" is because the distinction must be made loud and clear by Koori filmmakers between "Kooris in films" and "Koori films". While there have been several decent films about Kooris by non-Kooris (albeit with Koori consultants), the agenda must be written by us. I feel enough has been written about them. When they are not films made by Kooris, but simply films in which Kooris appear, why is the Koori community always made to feel so grateful? So grateful, in fact, that some of these films are given black money, so the black actors can be paid, while less acclaimed black filmmakers are denied. The continuance of this helps create the dangerous illusion that a lot of time and effort and money has gone into the areas of "blacks 'n' films", when in fact it has not.

Books on "Aborigines in Film" add to the distorted view, albeit unintentionally. Let's spell it out: "Films made by non-Kooris about Kooris!" There, now we can all get some sleep.

At the other end of the spectrum, there is the equally confusing issue of Kooris who make films that aren't necessarily about Kooris, and so may classify themselves as filmmakers who happen to be Kooris. Perhaps it is to the Koori filmmakers and the funding bodies that we will leave the problems of definition, as it may be through the development of this relationship that the Koori community may find its niche.

The importance of the Koori filmmaker maintaining credible links with his/her community is evident in the self-development of the artist, but also in providing a medium whereby stories that have to be told are told accurately, and interpreted from a Koori perspective. The third benefit is the opportunity to train other Kooris, thereby building up our resource base. All this can come from one Koori making one film.

Another stepping stone in the river of Koori filmmaking is whom do you make the film for? As a playwright, I was often asked whom do I pitch my play at? My reply was that I write for Kooris, as I can write no other way when I am writing for myself. If the non-Kooris don't get the jokes or jargon, they can come up and ask me later. But putting a "white face" on a black message is as outdated as Al Jolson.

If a Koori filmmaker has it in mind to accurately reflect and interpret a community issue or issues, whether it be through drama, documentary or animation, the logical yardstick is the community itself.

A real black film is a political expression because its mere existence, despite accolades or criticism, means we are still here, reclaiming the images of our identity, and still at war for land rights and compensation. A thought-provoking reminder of this is the fact that the federal government has recently established the Reconciliation Council, made up of black and white members of this multi-cultural society. Their mission, should they decide to accept it, is to come up with a list of policies/recommendations on how we can reconcile the past, in time for the centenary celebration of federation. Although it will permeate all aspects of Aboriginal Affairs in its ten-year life-span and $10 million budget, how could it affect Koori artists?

Although the Reconciliation Council may prove to be a toothless tiger, an enterprising Koori filmmaker could suggest for reasons of equity that the AFI allocate a percentage of its annual budget to Koori communities, in line with the population ratio (i.e. 2.5%). This principle could be applied to all government-funded arts bodies across the country. The logistics of distribution could well be a long and complex one, but it at least would be our problem.

It will only be when economic justice of this kind is achieved that the stories will unfold that have been kept for so long in the heart of the country, and in her caretakers, the oldest race in the world. And they will be able to be told at the qualitative level that they should be, because they will be researched adequately, and Koori filmmakers will have the resources needed to enable them to achieve their full potential.

To achieve this, the pooling of resources will eventually become essential to the development of Koori film. The Koori concept of "caring and sharing" must extend into the arts arena, where it has been replaced by competition. Koori artists are adapting and hopefully recognizing the difference between getting caught up in the politics of the arts, and utilizing the arts for the politics of survival. Arts for art's sake? We haven't the time!

P.S. What are we going to be reconciled to accept? There's scope there for a sci-fi: one million people mysteriously disappear off the face of Australia in 1770 headed for the planet Terra Nullius...
Having just come back from South Africa and observing, among other things, the use of black South Africans on television and in cinema, I have an added interest in studying the images used by white Australia for black Australia. The white manipulation of the European-controlled media, television and cinema outlets has, of course, an effect not only on Aboriginal issues but on Asian, Eastern Mediterranean, Arabic and other non-white races. But it is the Aboriginal race that is most affected.

It was interesting to learn that the Zulu people (who are the ones most portrayed on television) have their own television station, where Zulu is the official language and Zulus are the principal characters. But despite this – and despite the fact that blacks outnumber whites some 20 to 1 – they are still portrayed as foolish people. There is something more to be desired in the plots written about and for them.

This situation is solely because, despite apartheid being dismantled bit by bit, the administrative positions in all walks of life are controlled by whites. However, because whites are in a minority, there are powerful voices in the newspapers, political parties and the unions to speak up for the black majority.

In Australia, there is a greater discrepancy of power, where the Aboriginal population is outnumbered some 100 to 1. There is very little chance of the Aboriginal nation getting a clear, fair and objective portrayal on either television or in film. In fact, shows like Prisoner would have been an ideal forum for Aboriginal issues, since it is well known prison populations are heavily based on the Aboriginal people. Yet there was only ever one Aborigine in the whole show, a type of token black, if you like, reminiscent of the American television shows of the 1960s and early '70s before Afro-American Civil Rights enforced a better code of conduct for television and film - as in In the Heat of the Night. Also, in Bellbird there was only ever one Aboriginal actor, who played the town drunk.

There have been many essays and talks about these specific problems over the years, ranging from outright racism in the early days (as in the argument that Aborigines cannot act as they don't have the will-power to do the strenuous work) up to the paternalistic journals and comments of today. So, I will not dwell too long on this subject. But, even today, we still get white people portraying Aborigines and editors cutting out a scene of one of the main white actors kissing an Aboriginal woman because it is believed ratings would fall. It really is time to look at ourselves as creators and realize that for Australia's indigenous population there is a lot to be desired on the cinema front. For, as I have said elsewhere, film is the white man's dreamtime - and more often than not it turns out to be the Aborigines' nightmare. The time has come to portray a true picture of Aboriginal life. This is especially so on television, which reaches outwards to a greater variety of people.

It is not to say that this is not happening now. There are several good programmes on SBS and the ABC, and there is, of course, the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association, all of which are positive and informative. As for film, there are people like Tracey Moffatt, Michael Riley, Jerry Bostock, Ricky Shields and Lorraine Mafi-Williams – to name a mere few – who are busily making small-budget films and winning awards with them.

However, it is the big-budget films that are going to be seen by the majority of the world, films like The Last Wave, (Peter Weir, 1977) The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith (Fred Schepisi, 1978), A Faithful Narrative of the Capture, Sufferings and Miraculous Escape of Eliza Fraser (Tim Burstall, 1978) and so on. We see the same old stereotypes again and again, with Aborigines relegated to second fiddle. Where is the interest in making big-budget Aboriginal films, such as Kevin Costner’s Dances with Wolves (1990) about the Sioux, which most Hollywood producers said would never work? And yet, there are at least four big-budget native American films in production right now.

The native Americans have the same problems as the Aboriginal people with no real conference with those whites who make
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Mel Gibson, John Waters, Ian Pringle, Agnes Varda, copyright, Strikebound, The Man From Snowy River.


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1984 Women's Film Unit, Solrun Hoas, Louise Webb, Scott Hicks, Jan Roberts

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films about them. Indeed, for many years the 'bad Indians' in those Westerns we all loved to watch as kids were really Italians and Mexicans because it was thought the real Indians were too demoralized and drunk to ride horses. And no wonder since they always got the sharp end of the stick with any encounters they had with John Wayne and his like. Where are all their heroes? They no longer existed as neither did a single native American actor, except for Chief Dan George.

Dances with Wolves, although not perhaps a masterpiece, is a more-than-usually-fair portrayal of Indian life. It can only be hoped that the other films follow the same path. After all, the more feet that go down a path, the sooner it becomes a highway. It will be great seeing native Americans making films about their champions and people and ways of life, of how they cope with modern life. It is to be hoped they make it out into the big world of Super Movies to be seen the world over.

This is what has just happened with Day of the Dog. Although it is still not strictly speaking an Aboriginal film, it is close enough to be held proud in any Aborigine's eyes as our film. The producer (David Rapsey) and the director (James Ricketson) are necessarily white, but it has a huge amount of Aboriginal input into the film.

To begin with, it is from an Aboriginal book and also the author (myself) worked very hard with the writer-director to develop the script. We worked for about three years, although the actual beginning of the process was even earlier. In fact, there was interest ten years ago in making the film. Many times the script changed either abruptly or subtly, and there were many fine ideas from many fine people in those hectic days spinning around and gradually coagulating together into a workable film. Even though the final draft had many people's ideas in it, it was still essentially an Aboriginal story, and not a story about magicians or people rushing about in their skimpy outfits, but a story of ordinary city people who just happen to be Aboriginal (or Nyoongahs, if you like).

This is the second big breakthrough, for Day of the Dog is the first commercially-made film that shows there are urban Aborigines living a different type of life within the greater confines of the city, with their own laws, rules and language kept from days of old when Aborigines were a nomadic peoples living in the bush. In this respect, we resemble the Gypsy people of Europe and, more especially, England who face the same problems of police harassment, trouble from councils and distrust from their neighbours as do Aboriginal people.

The other aspect that will help the Aboriginal cause is that behind the scenes there was quite a bit of Aboriginal input into the sound, lighting and camera: indeed, every aspect of the administrative and technical sides of making a film had some input. This was great for Aboriginal people because now we can build up our own technical staff so that the day we reach the third stage (Aboriginal producers using Aboriginal money) we can truly make our own films for the wider market.

This film is also a breakthrough in that there are more Aboriginal than white main roles. Actually, there are only two main white roles: Mrs Dooligan (Julie Hudspenth) and Silver (Attila Oszdolay). That wonderful actor John Hargreaves plays a small though important part as a Detective Sergeant, and that will only add spice to an already enjoyably bubbling stew. Of the five main Aboriginal roles, only three are professional actors and this adds a fresh new look to a fresh new concept.

I personally am glad it was made in my home city of Perth and so, I think, was the rest of the Nyoongah cast. However, I’m sure everyone will agree that there were no better or worse actors in this film, that they all did their best. The film was made by our people about our people for our people, and that really is the crux of the matter.

Much thanks should be given to Barron Films for stepping into this production, because as one television executive told our director, "No one wants to see a film about Aborigines." I believe we will be the first to prove him wrong.
Archie Weller’s novel, *Day of the Dog*, has been recently filmed by writer-director James Ricketson (*Candy Regentag*, 1989). It tells of a young Aboriginal ex-con who is torn between the bad influence of old friends, the love of a young woman and the threat of gaol if he returns to his old ways.
Filmed in Perth from October to December last year, the film stars John Moore (as Doug Dooligan), David Ngoombujarra, Jaylene Riley, Lisa Kinchela, John Hargeaves and Ernie Dingo. The director of photography was Jeff Malouf and the editor Christopher Cordeaux.

Produced by David Rapsey, for Barron Films, Day of the Dog was financed by the Australian Film Commission and the Film Finance Corporation.

Photographs by Skip Watkins
There was a tribal matter that needed the elders from one community to talk with the elders of another community some distance away. At the time, we had a test transmission set-up between these two places. So instead of travelling to a meeting, the parties decided to try the set-up. The two elders where I was came in, sat on the floor in front of the video camera and started talking to the elders of the other community via the monitor. They weren't camera conscious or intimidated by the technology. They just got on with it as if it were a normal occurrence. It was a magic moment.

- IAN PICK, SENIOR TECHNICIAN WITH THE TANAMI NETWORK

Using satellite transponders, compressed video signals and computer-enhancement technology, a number of Aboriginal communities in the centre of Australia are moving to link up their transmissions. This networking promises vast cultural and social benefits to those in the system, including medical diagnosis by video camera, education via television monitor and allowing broadcasts from one community to another. On a broader level, it is part of, and one solution to, the entirety of Aboriginal film and video.

In the film Satellite Dreaming, Philip Batty from the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association (CAAMA) goes further when he makes the point that the most powerful tool ever put into Aboriginal hands has been the video camera. That Aborigines want to be working in the medium comes from cultural and contemporary motivations: cultural, in that Aborigines can lay claim to a visual and oral tradition which surpasses any European heritage; contemporary, as a way of telling their stories to other Aborigines and anyone else.

How Aborigines are gaining the equipment and training necessary to work in this medium, or the projects they are undertaking, cannot be neatly summed up in a sentence or two. Aborigines in film and video are operating at many different levels. In the bush and city, in groups, associations and individually, Aborigines are involved in a vast media footprint.

For the moment let the unfamiliar terms glide by. There are places such as Yuendumu, Bidyadanga and Batchelor. There are the organizations with initials like CAAMA, TAIMA, DEET, CDEP, BRACS, BIMA, NIMA, AFC, FFC, ABC, ABT and SBS. There are advanced technologies, business deals, government strategies, television networks and overseas film festivals. The range of what is happening goes from isolated Aboriginal communities using a video camera to record an event of cultural importance for themselves to an individual filmmaker of Aboriginal birth directing a feature for commercial release. It is tribal and federal, black and white, independent and dependent, big and small—all at the same time.

Part of the reason for this situation is that Aboriginal film and video is reliant on forces outside its control. While this arguably applies to anyone working in the field, the Aboriginal media has to keep one foot in its own world (with its own aims, problems and solutions), and one foot in the commercial and technological world of the white media (for the technology, money and training). More and more, Aborigines are making inroads into these areas but when, as in the case of the Tanami Network, the technology used is extremely sophisticated, the gap becomes obvious. Add in the involvement of government bodies like AUSSAT, for the satellite hook-up, or business for the hardware, and the Aboriginal screen starts splitting up into a number of screens.

At Ernabella Video Television (EVTV) in South Australia, there is no technological gap. As Neal Turner notes for the Pijantjatjara Yankuntjatjara Media Association,

In April 1985, EVTV commenced local broadcasting on the world’s cheapest community television transmission system (less than a $1,000 worth of equipment purchased from a 10 cent surcharge on cool drinks in the store).

What was at issue was the need for locally-made videos and transmissions to strengthen the community’s culture, language and history. At present, EVTV, apart from producing 125 hours of community television a year, offers a list of cassette videos. Ernabella carries titles such as Kampurarpa (on wild tomato collection and grinding), or Tjukurpa: Oral History (first contact stories: Tommy Manta, Nellie Patterson, Armunda). It is very unlikely that these cassettes and the many others are to be found at your local video store. Yet, they are important and sell in the Aboriginal market, and commercial video never could or would make them, given the small returns.

EVTV’s videos are an Aboriginal answer to an Aboriginal need. As Marcia Langton, Aboriginal lecturer from Macquarie University, pointed out in a paper given at the Second Australian Documentary Film
Conference, these videos “cannot be judged by white standards”. They may use the tools of all filmmakers, but how they are made, why they are made and the stories they have to tell are uniquely Aboriginal.

The Ernabella, Bidyadanga, Kintore and eighty other communities are part of the Broadcast for Remote Aboriginal Communities Scheme (BRACS). In 1984, the now-defunct Department for Aboriginal Affairs published Out of the Silent Land, the findings of its Task Force on Aboriginal and Islanders Broadcasting and Communications. It has been the blueprint which has guided government policy on Aboriginal communications.

BRACS is one of the fifty recommendations to come out of the report. Simply, it allows isolated communities to receive the television signal off the satellite. It has the further facility of allowing each community to interrupt the satellite transmission and insert material of its own, should it find the incoming transmission culturally inappropriate. In some instances, this may mean the community playing a videotape.

Ernabella’s making of its own videos and programmes for broadcast is in some ways a particular case. The Aborigines of Ernabella quickly realized the opportunities and dangers of television, and created a media association to take charge of the situation.

Another community that is involved in making its own videos is the Warlpiri Media Association (WMA) in Yuendumu. A letter from the WMA states the association usually “broadcasts a couple of hours a day”, and they make “the children’s television programme in [their] language, Manyu Wana”. Not all communities create their own videos or programmes due to reasons of training or money. Still, BRACS has allowed some Aboriginal settlements to become involved in video and programming production, if only on a VHS scale.

At the other end of the spectrum is the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association and Imparja TV Pty Ltd. CAAMA is one of the five Aboriginal media resource centres created for the outlying BRACS stations. Quoting from a 1989 CAAMA information brochure:

In 1980 the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association was run by three volunteer workers, capital assets consisted of a second-hand car, some donated equipment, and a typewriter[...]
Today, nine years later, CAAMA operates a Radio Broadcasting network servicing all of Central Australia; runs a thriving Aboriginal Arts and Crafts business; has a Television Production company; and holds a major shareholding in Imparja Television Pty Ltd [...]

Located in Alice Springs, CAAMA is the Aboriginal face that the general public is most likely to recognize. The previously noted Satellite Dreaming came from CAAMA Productions with assistance from the Australian Film Commission. A separate unit within CAAMA Productions, its Aboriginal Unit, made up of four Aborigines and one white, is responsible for making Ngarampa. Made as a series of thirteen, half-hour programmes "mostly in one of four main Aboriginal languages in Central Australia with English sub-titles", it is screened regularly on Imparja Television. SBS currently airs a series of the programme as well.

CAAMA has further expanded activities past any Aboriginal production by moving into corporate video production. The recently-completed discussion paper, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Broadcasting, noted that CAAMA was "ambitious" and "opportunities" existed for it in the production of commercial videos, but "a lack of capital" and "limited resources" were hindering CAAMA's efforts. The shortage in funds has been partly caused by the Department of Education, Employment and Training (DEET) reducing its financial assistance for CAAMA with recent changes to its guide-lines.

Here again is the situation of the Aboriginal media, in this case CAAMA, having to be in two places at once. CAAMA has an obligation to train and employ Aborigines. To do this it needs government support. When that funding is reduced, it must try to find the monies from its own limited budget. As things are stretched in these recession times, cutbacks in personnel and an inability to take on an "opportunity" have resulted.

The whole matter comes into sharp focus when talking about the CAAMA-owned Imparja Television. Imparja "commenced operations [...] on 2nd January, 1988. Imparja is a 100 per cent Aboriginal owned and controlled private company incorporated in the Northern Territory". Its broadcast area covers most of Central Australia, from north of Darwin to south of Adelaide (excluding those centre covered by commercial broadcasters). Out of a potential viewing audience of 120,000, the station estimates that approximately 30 per cent are of Aboriginal descent. It is one of the three Remote Transmission Commercial System licensees (the other two being the Golden West Network in Western Australia and Queensland Satellite Television). Like CAAMA, Imparja is in a dilemma. As a commercial broadcaster, it must try to service all of its viewers, but its Aboriginal ownership gives it the added responsibility of providing Aboriginal programming while trying to be commercially viable. It is a high-wire act made more complex by Imparja's being regulated into satellite transponder usage.

At present, according to station manager Mr Dion Weston:

Imparja presently broadcasts two first-release Aboriginal programmes. The primary Aboriginal programme telecast at 8.00 pm each Thursday and re-screened on Sunday afternoon is Ngarampa/Anwernhe (Ours [Pitjan tjântjara] /Our Way of Culture [Arrente]).

The other Aboriginal programme currently on air is called Mana-Wana (Just for Fun [colloquial Warlpiri]) and is aimed at pre-school and early primary school children. This award-winning programme is produced by the Warlpiri Media Association at Yuendumu.

Imparja has only recently completed screening of a festival of documentary and dramatic film and video, either made by Aboriginal people or, by far the bulk, about Aborigines by others. This series titled Talking Strong was telecast over a seven-month period each Saturday night at 9.00 pm.

While Imparja does not produce any programmes itself, apart from a well-received news programme, it does provide money for the production of Ngarampa. The station, with the Department of Education, Employment and Training, has "an on-going training agreement" and 10 of its 35 full-time employees are Aboriginal. Weston notes that one per cent of Imparja's air time is specifically for Aboriginal programmes while costing over 30 per cent of "total rights purchasing expense".

This one per cent is roughly equivalent to the amount of telecast time given Aboriginal programmes by the other two Remote Transmission Commercial Service licensees. The Golden West Network, operating throughout Western Australia, excluding Perth, broadcasts roughly an hour of Aboriginal programmes a week. It makes the half-hour Aboriginal programme Milbindi. Having an Aboriginal presenter and some crew, the programme is concerned with important Aboriginal issues. It also makes Marrum, a short news insert for Aborigines which appears twice a week. It screens the Canberra-made Aboriginal Australia, and an Aboriginal special about once a month.

Queensland Satellite Television used to make the Aboriginal programme My Place, My Land, My People as a thirteen-part, half-hour series until budget cutbacks forced its closure. In 1989-90, QST was showing up to about two-and-a-half hours of Aboriginal programmes a week, but now does about an hour a week. It has
Aborigines in film and video are operating at many different levels. In the bush and city, in groups, associations and individually, Aborigines are involved in a vast media footprint.

created the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program Committee, an all-Aboriginal advisory panel to help in the making and screening of Aboriginal material.

Apart from CAAMA, there are four other regional media centres funded by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Commission (ATSIC). Of these four, only the Townsville Aboriginal and Islander Media Association (TAIMA) is actively engaged in video production. TAIMA "was incorporated on the 8th of June, 1982, and then had three [radio] broadcast and production staff, an administrator and a secretary". Today video titles include Moments like These, part of a three-part series made for Australia Post, and Dancing in the Moonlight, which was sold to the ABC. TAIMA runs training schemes in conjunction with the Australian Film Television & Radio School in Sydney, supports four students attending Batchelor College in Northern Territory and helps in training for the communities involved with BRACS in Northern Queensland.

The remaining centres have varying degrees of involvement with video. The Broome Aboriginal Media Association acts as a centre for BRACS in Kimberley and the Pilbara, Western Australia. For a time, the training and making of videos was done with the Broome Musicians Aboriginal Corporation. The Torres Strait Islander Media Association, based on Thursday Island, supplies its media co-ordinator training for the seventeen communities involved in BRACS. According to Aven Noah, seven of these seventeen are making their own videos. Finally, the Western Australian Aboriginal Media Association is largely focused on training in radio production, though there are plans for video training and production.

Before leaving regional media altogether, two community media organizations should be made mention of: Open Channel in Melbourne and Metro Television in Sydney. Both have conducted training courses specifically for Aborigines. Open Channel has a continuing dialogue with TAIMA in assisting with its video productions, and has recently completed Blackmen’s Houses about Tasmanian Aborigines. Metro was recently responsible for showing a collection of Aboriginal films at the Australian Film Institute Cinema in Sydney called “Control Track, Colour Black”. It has also been involved in making a series of videos for the NSW Health Department called Koories Have a Say and Have You Got What it Takes?

The ABC is the other television service which beams its signal into BRACS communities and across Australia. The ABC, through its Aboriginal Film Unit, makes the Aboriginal series Blackout. With a staff of six Aboriginal director-producers, one researcher and a production assistant, it is one of the few places where Aboriginal work is part of the mainstream media. As well, the ABC runs the series First Australians as part of the Aboriginal programming. The ABC and SBS both regularly screen films and videos by and about Aborigines. And both are committed to training and equal employment opportunities for Aborigines. SBS was responsible for making the Aboriginal series First in Line. At present, its Aboriginal Unit of three full-time staff is in pre-production on the four-part drama-documentary series Blood Brothers. SBS has also published guide-lines for producing film and television on Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders entitled The Greater Perspective.

In film, all state film bodies have the stated policy of considering submissions solely on their merits. At a quick glance, the Western Australia Film Council co-funded with the Australian Film Finance Corporation Day of the Dog, with an attachment scheme for six Aborigines. The NSW Film and Television Office gave initial funding for Blood Brothers and Film Victoria was involved with Koori Culture, Koori Control. The Northern Territory, via the Office of Aboriginal Communications, used to regularly produce a magazine format video on Aboriginal news and issues.

The AFC has been involved on a number of levels with Aboriginal film and video. It provides funds to CAAMA for its programme Ngarampa. It has funded films by Aborigines such as Tracey Moffatt’s Night Cries: A Rural Tragedy and has given funds for Aboriginal film festivals overseas. At present, the AFC is working through an Aboriginal consultant to develop guide-lines and policies for Aborigines in relation to film and video.

While the FFC receives any number of submissions that for cultural or national interests deserve funding, by its guide-lines it becomes involved in projects on the strength of the financial package offered. Still, it has been involved in a number of ventures either by or about Aborigines. They include Holding On, Holding Tight with CAAMA, Deadly Blood Brothers and the mini-series on the life of Lionel Rose, Rose Against the Odds.

There are a number of Aborigines working individually in commercial film and video. For example, Wayne Barker in Broome continues his involvement with the Aboriginal media as
At present, no one body exists which can tie all the different well as making documentaries, information videos and television advertisements for various clients. In 1991, he was invited to exhibit four of his films at the Festival de Cinéma de Dourannec in France. Tracey Moffatt, apart from making films and videos for various Aboriginal organizations, has done her own films and photography. She is currently preparing her first feature, Bedevil, which she hopes will be funded by the AFC.

With a large body of ethnographic films surviving from as far back as Baldwin Spencer’s 1901 trip into the desert of Central Australia, and the growing body of Aboriginal-made film and video, the preserving and cataloguing of Aboriginal work also needs to be considered. At present, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies is the official archivist for some material. But, as Aboriginal projects appear from so many different places, there is a danger that some of the more valuable or creative work may become “lost” unless collected and organized as soon as they are made.

At present, no one body exists which can tie all the different threads of the Aboriginal screen together. There is the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, which is the government’s primary administrative and funding body. However, ATSIC falls short of having a sweep large enough to encompass all of Aboriginal activity in film and video. The best option for the moment is the National Indigenous Media Association. NIMA has already expressed the need to develop a system of representatives on a state level to act as a co-ordinating body for Aborigines working in the various media.

Some of the Aboriginal centres like CAAMA, TAIMA and TSIMA have training programmes in conjunction with other bodies such as DEET, the AFTRS or state educational departments. The only institution offering a course expressly for Aborigines in media is the above-mentioned Batchelor College. The three-year course offers varying levels of accreditation in either of radio or video and enjoys full enrolment. Students are primarily from communities that are part of BRACS, James Cook University in Townsville is planning to offer a similar course in the near future.

Finally, the Second Australian Documentary Film Conference, held in Canberra in late November 1991, started by asking an Aboriginal representative for permission to hold the conference at the Australia National University. It ended with a National Aboriginal Media Conference planned for non-Aborigines working on Aboriginal land or with Aboriginal people, and a recommendation that non-Aboriginal filmmakers should employ Aboriginal filmmakers as consultants or trainees on related films. The conference also held sessions by Aboriginal filmmakers and representatives. The high profile of Aboriginals and Aboriginal film and video at the conference, while encouraging, is still a few steps away from Aboriginal work becoming simply part of mainstream film and video.

AUTHOR’S NOTE It should be mentioned that there exists a large body of film and video made by non-Aborigines about Aboriginal people. While not meaning to suggest that this material does not form part of the whole Aboriginal film and video picture, for the purpose of this article it was necessary to put some limits on what was to be included in this survey.

As well, Aboriginal actors working in both Aboriginal and commercial film, video and television are very much part of the Aboriginal screen. This article, then, is not a comprehensive overview, but a look at the prominent elements and players. To all those deserving mention, and there are many who have not been so accredited, my apologies.

The author also wishes to express his appreciation to the many parties, organizations and individuals who provided information and advice in the writing of this article.
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The potential for the television industry to portray the Australia is enormous. However, most of the networks Craig Brown reports.

Only SBS, partially designed to cater for a "new" Australia, has any sort of active participation in the concept of multi-culturalism. For the most part, the more mainstream networks—including the ABC—are still languishing in the misguided belief that Australia is populated almost solely by white Anglo-Saxon-Celts. According to these networks, there are not enough members of ethnic groups in Australia to bother representing them on television.

The proof is in the viewing. Turn on the television and try to find evidence of a multi-cultural Australia. Most dramas are under the impression that no ethnic groups would live in their mythical suburbs: for instance, how many minorities live in Ramsey Street or Westside? Also, there are very few members of any ethnic group lolling about on the beaches of Summer Bay currently, which is quite ironic. The last ethnic character of major standing on an Australian soapie was *Home and Away*’s Ben Luciano, played by the very Australian Julian MacMahon. To make matters worse, there were few examples of ethnic representation before Ben, and fewer since.

Consequently, the view of Australia that television presents is severely distorted. Occasionally ethnics and their contribution to society might be referred to in a glib, accidental manner: for instance, an involved couple in a soapie might argue over whether they should eat Chinese or Italian that night. This seems to sum up the ethnic content on most programmes; minority representations are pushed out of mind, out of sight, particularly in their human form. Ethnics—as opposed to ethnic ideals or culture—may sometimes bob up in a crowd scene, but even then you would be doing well to spot them.

Not only do we rarely see ethnic groups of foreign descent, but it would be even rarer to see significant Aboriginal representation on our television screens. Ernie Dingo made a regular run of appearances on *Fast Forward* during 1990, but that hardly classifies as a significant Aboriginal component in Australian television. This is rather surprising considering that one successful Australian drama is set in the outback. That is not to say that all Aborigines live in the outback but, one would suggest, if a series is trying to present a realistic view of life in the outback, it might think to include an Aboriginal input on a regular basis.

Not so *The Flying Doctors*. Although an episode late in the 1991 season did feature Ernie Dingo in a guest role, an Aboriginal presence in this series is still weak. Quite possibly the producers have mistaken the area in which they shoot the series (rural Victoria) for where the series is set. Or maybe they are trying to suggest that the white invasion of Australia is so complete that the Aboriginal nation has been wiped out from the very heart of the country? If not, why don’t Aborigines feature more prominently in the series? Surely no one is suggesting that central Australia is devoid of a significant Aboriginal population; if so, this is the most misguided of representations—it ceases to become careless as it borders so closely on racism in its dismissiveness. The question arises: Who initiates this lack of representation: we, the viewers, who won’t watch anything that isn’t predominantly Anglo-Saxon, or is it the industry, reluctant to try anything new for fear of offending their sponsors?

It is my belief that the television industry has been most reluctant to present ethnic cultures, characters or beliefs on our television screens. On the odd occasion that this has actually happened, the representations are almost claustrophobic in the
ypes in Television

The reality of multi-cultural issues have ignored this potential.

way they are stereotyped: perhaps this is merely a “bridging” process on behalf of the networks, as they test to see whether audiences will respond to, and accept, ethnic minorities during prime time. Unfortunately, that is wishful thinking of the highest order. Programmes such as Acropolis Now have been running long enough – and successfully enough – to have acted as that bridge for multi-cultural programming in its truest form.

So far we have been stuck with the most appallingly obvious stereotypes: Aboriginal park rangers, Chinese acupuncturists and Greek waiters. This careful avoidance of representation out of the norm is synonymous with the lack of innovation Australian television is suffering from on the whole. The position of ethnics on television appears to be this: obscure or stereotyped.

Unfortunately, when it comes to analyzing ethnic stereotypes on Australian television, one is forced – by the lack of examples – to look closely and critically at Acropolis Now, which is the only current Australian series to place ethnic characters and culture at the forefront of popular television. Although as likeable as Jim (Nick Giannopoulos), Effie (Mary Coustas) and Mimo (George Kapiniaris) are, it cannot be said that they break many stereotypical traits.

Jim in particular falls most easily into a stereotypical grouping: he is portrayed as a product of the “Monaro sect”, which is perceived to be common among Greeks and Italians. This is to say that Jim’s only concerns in life are cars, “chicks” and fluffy dice. Although a charmer and good natured, he does not work well as a positive example of an ethnic group; looking at Jim, one might be tempted to feel that his culture centred on superficial values. The same criticism can be levelled at Effie, although she is more concerned with hair gel than cars.

This “light and fluffiness” could be considered dangerous if it were not for the fact that Acropolis Now is comedic – its main purposes are to make people laugh, and to possibly bridge that gap.
Ethnic Stereotypes in Television

between ethnic and Anglo-Saxon-Celtic cultures on television. No serious examination of the ethnic lifestyle could be possible within the confines of Acropolis Now’s humour; after all, it is busy sending up the very stereotypes it is portraying. Possibly this accounts for its success, the fact that it does not challenge the perceptions of the Australian public about ethnic minorities: narrow concepts of culture are only reaffirmed.

That is, of course, a general view of the characterizations on Acropolis Now; on closer inspection, there needs to be a recognition that this programme has given Australian television one ethnic character that has broken the stereotype significantly. The character of Rick (Simon Palmores) is a more well-rounded and believable character due mainly to the fact that his function within the series is to play the straight man to Jim and company. Rick is a sensible, intelligent, university-educated character who generally keeps the café from going broke. This character outline is one television would normally grant to an Anglo-Saxon character, not an ethnic one. In this light, Rick is one of the most important ethnic representations that Australian television has produced: his character was given human traits first, rather than forced into the limited mould of the ethnic stereotype.

Attitudes towards women by ethnic males on television are also portrayed uniformly. Women are nothing more than sex objects and potential conquests – just look at the attitudes of Jim and Mimo, as well as of Wayne, from All Together Now. Here again, Rick is presented as someone quite different: he actually has some sensitivity towards members of the opposite sex. Still, the bulk of male ethnic stereotypes on television could be described as “sleaze” regarding their attitudes towards women. Certainly Jim and Wayne pride themselves on this characteristic, but, without many examples of the opposite, we have a distorted view of male ethnics as portrayed on television. And female ethnic views of men? Well, female ethnics are so under-represented on television that it would be ridiculous to attempt an overview on their perceived attitudes with only the comedic Effie as an example.

One of the main problems with ethnic representation on television is that its history is both recent and predominantly comedic. Kingswood Country, which also dealt with Australian stereotypes, such as Ted Bullpit (Ross Higgins), included an ethnic character (Lex Marinos) to bring forth Ted’s – and possibly Australians’ – xenophobic attitude. It seems strange to say that, for its “time”, Kingswood Country was a brave series, which may have paved the way for such shows as Acropolis Now – strange because Kingswood Country was first run barely a decade ago. Aside from it, the only ethnic offering before Acropolis Now was the rigidly stereotypical Home Sweet Home, which attempted to show the clash between “old country” parentage and children intent on shedding their traditional values and culture. Although clumsily written and exaggerated, Home Sweet Home was the first Australian series to place ethnic issues in such a prominent position. Again, it was a comedy, which is by its nature overplayed for the sake of making people laugh, or to simply poke fun at popular perceptions about stereotypes.

Australian “drama” has long consisted mainly of soaps, and it would be very rare for that genre to include a realistic representation of an ethnic group, considering most don’t deal with realism fullstop. One could possibly expect a drama series, on the other hand, to include an ethnic group in anything but a stereotypical form. Although The Flying Doctors has neglected Aborigines as a group, it does include a Greek radio controller, imaginatively called D. J. (George Kapiniaris). While one could not call D. J. stereotypical, neither could you say that he was a major character, or even a particularly well-written one.

As yet, no Australian drama series has strayed from middle-class Anglo-Saxon views of Australian society; most are more concerned with the portrayal of the medical profession than with ethnic minorities. When ethnics are slated in, usually as minor characters, they are generally stereotyped as totalitarian upholders of tradition.

It seems more likely that a drama series is going to be able to break the ethnic stereotype, balancing the concepts of tradition and “Australianism” to give a true account of the ethnic experience in Australia. Comedy sitcoms such as Acropolis Now are acting as successful bridging programmes, getting the networks, the public and sponsors used to the idea of ethnic culture on popular television. However, comedy is limited as it can most easily draw laughter from stereotypes, whether of an ethnic, religious or occupational nature. Without an accurate, or at least a balanced, portrayal on television most likely via a dramatic vehicle – the television audience may still exclusively link the sounding of a Monaro’s horn with ethnic contributions to Australian television.
It could be argued that the filmmaking team of Joel and Ethan Coen alternate genre films with genreless ones. Both Blood Simple (1984) and Miller’s Crossing (1990) are films steeped in the history and conventions of particular story-telling genres (both cinematic and literary), respectively the ‘pulp’ thriller and gangster fiction. Raising Arizona (1987) and Barton Fink (1991) are a different proposition; they do not trace out the lines of a single genre, nor are they cut-and-paste assemblages of successive ‘quotations’ from different genres, which would be a fashionable but woefully inaccurate description of their method.

Calling Barton Fink a “film with no genre” (in the way that Raymond Durgnat described Robert Altman as a “man with no genre”) does not mean that it is a film without references to previous movies, their genres, plots, auteurs, iconographies and oft-told tales. Indeed, like all the Coens’ work, it is stuffed with such references almost to the point of being wholly constituted from them. It is as if the Coens see their essential artistic vocation as one of an elaborate ‘rewriting’, reweaving, re-imagining of other, pre-existing books and films. Thus, Barton Fink would be the residue of a dream-work that brings together the novels of Nathanael West, Stanley Kubrick’s The Shining (1980), biographical stories about famous writers in Hollywood, Roman Polanski’s Repulsion (1965) and doubtless much else. But, in essence, it is faithful to no particular model or genre.

Barton Fink is a film that burns up bits of many genres as fuel for its maiden voyage into a zone without genre. A certain kind of quietly wild, hallucinatory fiction-spinning is a higher principle for the Coens here than genre. The film has an anything-might-happen-next air and a faith in strange associative leaps that take the plot in unforeseen directions, qualities which recall another of Durgnat’s remarks on Altman.
Audrey (Judy Davis). The 'real people' beyond gone-to-seed novelist, Mayhew (John 58 • CINEMA PAPERS 87

Indeed, it is a frankly psychoanalytic film, in observe the life of the 'serious' writer Barton

For a dream is never simply an illusion, Tom Ryan has argued) a sly, modernist exposé for the same old 'big themes', nor exactly (as

Thus, against the "life of the mind" — too much head — the film arrays the signs of a reality which is all body: peeling wallpaper, leaky ears, an unstoppable ocean of blood. In Barton's phantasm (which is the film itself), troublesome heads get chopped off by Charlie as he obligingly metamorphoses into a serial killer, while sex and death swirl and grow around together at the bottom of a hideous drainpipe down which the camera travels. As Barton struggles ever more fiercely to hold his ego or his 'self' together, the world around him fills up with mock-horrific images and revelations of a 'truth' according to which no self is whole or secure or singular: Audrey confesses to being Mayhew's ghostwriter; the rushes of a random 'wrestling picture' obsessively replay the same brute signifiers of obscene shouting and bodies crashing to the canvas.

Egomania forgets the real world — at its peril, as we discover in Barton's case. It travels to the extremes of narcissism, self-delusion and paranoid projection. Yet Barton Fink explores still another fact of this dream-logic when it admits the possibility that, at the height of his individual delirium, disintegration and psychosis, Barton might in fact receive privileged access to a true vision of the madness and horror of History itself. This is the extraordinary insight that the film grasps at in its climactic apocalypse, no doubt inspired by a comparable fatal vision in both novel and film of Nathanael West's The Day of the Locust (John Schlesinger, 1975): we could call it a kind of social or political psychoanalysis, aiming to express the profound interconnection (so hard to convincingly locate) of the large-scale forces of history and the small-scale actions of ordinary individuals. Barton Fink's epigraph could be this phrase from James Joyce's Ulysses: "History is a nightmare from which I am trying to awaken."

Much of the latter half of Barton Fink revolves around a certain mysterious box. I will be neither the first nor the last critic to invoke psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's theoretical concept of the petit objet a (small object a) to discuss this pesky prop. The petit objet a is like the famous MacGuffin of Alfred Hitchcock's films; it is that curious plot device, that little nothing, which seems so empty and banal, but by which, nonetheless, the whole story and all the ambivalent desires of the characters are driven. For Lacan, it is a symbol (which can be equally tragic or comic) for that which eludes our feverish attempts to comprehend it, that which forever gratefully escapes our clumsy and doomed attempts to map and confine our 'selves'.

I don't expect the Coens are avid readers of Lacan, but they certainly have their own poetic understanding of the petit objet a. The box in Barton Fink not only remains a damn mystery as it moves from hand to hand and place to place, it also never really 'belongs' to anyone who gives or receives it. Charlie's ominous remark ("By the way, it isn't mine") and the off-hand query of the girl on the beach to Barton in the final scene ("Is it yours?") mock the attempts of the protagonist or ourselves to definitively attach any 'identifications' to this impossible

the critical discussions of the Coen œuvre which have so far appeared are rarely interesting or persuasive. This is because, on the one hand, when reduced to bare (and painfully familiar) thematic propostions, the films can seem astonishingly banal. Blood Simple's about the 'return of the repressed'. Raising Arizona shows simple folk dreaming of a better life. Miller's Crossing dramatizes the paradoxes of trust, loyalty, friendship and love. Barton Fink invites one of the great non-questions of art cinema: How much really happens and how much is Barton's fantasy? On the other hand, the post-literary invocation of the mannerist, hyper-kinetic Coen-Raimi 'house style' as a pure cinematic event complete unto itself is clearly wearing thin both as a critical stance and a mode of filmmaking (viz. Sonnenfeld's The Addams Family, 1991).

What is so difficult to pin down and adequately account for in the Coens' work is the strange form that their films take — a form that might be described as the simultaneous combination of an apparent meaningfulness with an inconsistent hollowing out of any directly articulable meaning. This form gives their work both its dreamlike ephemerality and its uncanny emotional resonance. This is not a new form in cinema, but it is certainly one that has evaded most styles of criticism. We find it, supremely, in Luis Bunuel (whose Belle de Jour, 1967, like Barton Fink, makes air nonsense of the question "What's really happening?"). And also in Bernardo Bertolucci's least assimilable films, like Luna (1978) and The Sheltering Sky (1990).

Indeed, Robert Philip Kelker's typical critical slur on the former — that in it "the recurrence of the image of the moon [...] raises it to the point of symbol with nothing to symbolize" — should be taken as the triumphant motto of this almost subterranean filmmaking tradition.

Thus, one must approach the matter of what Barton Fink is 'about' with caution, if not trepidation. For it is not simply 'about nothing' — neither just a joke on those critics out hunting for a meaning. This form involves a certain blind disorientation — a kind of social or political psychoanalysis, aiming to express the profound interconnection (so hard to convincingly locate) of the large-scale forces of history and the small-scale actions of ordinary individuals. Barton Fink 's epigraph could be this phrase from James Joyce's Ulysses: "History is a nightmare from which I am trying to awaken."

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these characters of tinsel town are represented by Barton's neighbour, Charlie (John Goodman, in a marvellously physical performance). For a long time, the film plays out a fairly elementary diagram of mainly comic contrasts: Barton's hypersensitivity against the system's callousness; then, from another angle, Barton's self-importance and probable artistic delusion against Charlie's salt-of-the-earth naturalness, and Audrey's down-to-earth pragmatism.

All this turns out to be an elaborate set-up for a much more interesting film. Once the story tips explicitly into the territory of dream, fantasy and psychodrama, everything before it takes on a different, retroactive function. Suddenly, it becomes nightmarishly clear that all the elements of the story exist as various sorts of projections of Barton's inner complexes and problems. Barton brings all events into being, whether as wish-fulfilment fantasy, compensatory mechanism or pure speculative projection. Like Severina (Catherine Deneuve) in Belle de Jour, Barton's unconscious curs those around him into damnation, and then benignly rescues them, willy-nilly, so that, in one especially improbable scene, Lipnick kisses Barton's feet after firing his assistant, Lou (Jon Polito), while later it appears that Lou has been miraculously re-hired.

Jean-André Fieschi has said of Bunuel that "this cinema of manifold fictions is not a narrative cinema", since any attempt at synopsis inevitably and artificially lines what is in fact a complex dream-logic. "Unfolding" narrative analyses (what most film critics pursue) offer "verdicts on a meaning still under litigation" and "reduce that meaning to meaningful intent"5.

Barton Fink is very alive to the superimposing, backward and forward, paradoxical hyper-logic of the unconscious. In one brilliant associative chain of sequences, the trauma of Audrey's death unexpectedly breaks Barton's writer's block; yet (as Richard Jameson has observed), the film maintains a perfect delicate ambiguity over whether this passionately outpourued script is 'really' genius or junk. The Coens know that, since either judgement would be purely subjective (the script is bound to be genius to Barton and junk to Lipnick no matter what's actually in it), neither position can be endorsed as narrative 'truth'. And this strategy takes us to the very heart of the film. Barton Fink is about an individual subjectivity that grows so big it believes it comprehends, contains and creates the entire world — in short, egomania, or, as the film calls it, the monstrous "life of the mind". Barton as writer, richly comparable to Jack Torrance (Jack Nicholson) in The Shining and Clive Langham (John Gielgud) in Alain Resnais' Providence (1977), stands for all artists who share in what has often been construed as the fundamentally 'evil' impulse of art — to steal from the world and make it the mere material of an egocentric design. The Coens simultaneously follow the path of Barton's mad ego as it hauls in the same brute signifiers of obscene shouting and bodies draining to being Mayhew's ghostwriter; the rushes of a random 'wrestling picture' obsessively replay the same brute signifiers of obscene shouting and bodies draining to being Mayhew's ghostwriter; the rushes of a random 'wrestling picture' obsessively replay the same brute signifiers of obscene shouting and bodies draining to being Mayhew's ghostwriter; the rushes of a random 'wrestling picture' obsessively replay the same brute signifiers of obscene shouting and bodies draining to being Mayhew's ghostwriter; the rushes of a random 'wrestling picture' obsessively replay the same brute signifiers of obscene shouting and bodies draining to being Mayhew's ghostwriter; the rushes of a random 'wrestling picture' obsessively replay the same brute signifiers of obscene shouting and bodies draining to being Mayhew's ghostwriter; the rushes of a random 'wrestling picture' obsessively replay the same brute signifiers of obscene shouting and bodies draining to being Mayhew's ghostwriter; the rushes of a random 'wrestling picture' obsessively replay the same brute signifiers of obscene shouting and bodies draining to being Mayhew's ghostwriter; the rushes of a random 'wrestling picture' obsessively replay the same brute signifiers of obscene shouting and bodies draining to being Mayhew's ghostwriter; the rushes of a random 'wrestling picture' obsessively replay the same brute signifiers of obscene shouting and bodies draining to being Mayhew's ghostwriter; the rushes of a random 'wrestling picture' obsessively replay the same brute signifiers of obscene shouting and bodies draining to being Mayhew's ghostwriter; the rushes of a random 'wrestling picture' obsessively replay the same brute signifiers of obscene shouting and bodies draining to being Mayhew's ghostwriter; the rushes of a random 'wrestling picture' obsessively replay the same brute signifiers of obscene shouting and bodies draining to being Mayhew's ghostwriter; the rushes of a random 'wrestling picture' obsessively replay the same brute signifiers of obscene shouting and bodies draining to being Mayhew's ghostwriter; the rushes of a random 'wrestling picture' obsessively play
object, whether personal or symbolic. The box behaves as if it were an item in one of those especially irritating and endless dreams where every bundle of elements uneasily comprising a person, thing or situation slowly becomes "unglued" — and there's also a lot of glue that won't stick to the wall or hold any two things together in Barton Fink.

This is not the first petit objet a in the Coen œuvre. Mark Horowitz recounts in Film Comment how, when actor Gabriel Byrne inquired as to the significance of the fugitive, windblown hat in Miller's Crossing, Joel Coen merely, drolly, replied, "The hat is very significant" — which returns us to the essential meaningful meaninglessness of the Coens' work. The petit objet a is not just a recurring device in their films. It is the very emblem of the cinematic form which they practise, this form which artfully raises all to the point of symbol with nothing to symbolize. In the last, unforgettable moments of Barton Fink, there suddenly materializes before the hero's eyes a tableau he has often stared at on his wall: a woman on the sand, with her back turned, looking out into the ocean. Still, mysterious and disquieting, this apparition is like a perfectly abstract diagram of the drama of identity we have so far witnessed, distilled down to the bare bones of a witness, a scene and an elusive signification. Left abruptly at the calm centre of Barton's storm we may, however, detect the faint echo of a larger and no less calamitous reality. For, to again adopt Jean-André Fieschi on Bunuel, "This fictitious setting in which the unremitting prosecution of ignorance is played out is a surrogate for other stages, where other forces clash with other arms."

1. Ed.: The films discussed as being by the Coens have been directed by Joel Coen, produced by Ethan Coen and written by both.

BARTON FINK


BLACK ROBE

GREG KERR

Black Robe is a visually stunning, bloody and relentless film that engrosses one to the point of believing there can be no other world. Set in Quebec in 1634, it tells the story of a Jesuit priest, Father Lafortgue (Lothaire Bluteau), who travels into the wilds of North America to convert Indians.

The film is the culmination of Australian Bruce Beresford's talents as a director, technician and storyteller. With an $11 million budget, a hard-working crew and an exceptional cast, Beresford has created an outstanding period piece which recalls the potent eloquence of his 1979 film, "Breaker" Morant.

Intrinsically, Black Robe reworks a familiar theme: the conflict of Christian ethics versus the pragmatic concerns of mortal life. The film does not break much new ground on this well-worn topic; its strength lies more in the manner it weaves the journey of its protagonist into the frontier it recreates.

In the opening, two senior Jesuits discuss plans to send one of their own 2500 km up river by canoe to spread the word of God. "Death is almost certain," one says.

The young Father Lafortgue is chosen, with a group of Algonquin Indians and a young French carpenter and translator, Daniel (Aden Young), to accompany him.

The journey into New France commences with a masterfully establishing scene of canoes heading into the silver-grey of the unknown. The fluidity of the paddle strokes and the symmetry of the canoes suggests a resolute desire to accomplish; yet a powerful scent of apprehension hangs in the air, promising danger for all involved.

Black Robe is a work of economy and accuracy due largely to a thorough production team, and a taut screenplay by Brian Moore, whose novel of the same name is based on 17th-Century accounts of Jesuit missionaries. The huts, costumes and canoes are authentic; even the campfires are real. While the French spoken by the Jesuits in New France has been replaced by English for commercial reasons, original dialects are used by the Indian-speaking characters.

Shot in Quebec, Black Robe is the first feature film co-production by an Australian-Canadian crew. The locales afforded director of photography Peter James the opportunity to capture wilderness footage which is integral to the story rather than a brahuristic distraction. Each jagged mountain backdrop, icy river and forest reinforces the unquestioning power of nature over humans. In this department, James' evocative style echoes the camerawork in John Boorman's Deliverance (1972) and Mikhail Kalatozov's Neotpravlennoye Pismo (The Letter That Was Never Sent, 1962) about four geologists searching for diamonds in Siberia. The Montréal-born actor Bluteau was chosen for the key role after Beresford saw his portrayal of a tormented homosexual in the London stage play, Being at Home with Claude. In Black Robe, Bluteau is a tormented hero whose ill-fated mission to show the Indians "the way to paradise" dramatically alters the destiny of those around him.

By degrees, the black-robed Jesuit learns his mission is failing; he, too, is doubting his own faith and his ability to fend off earthly desires, such as the sin of "intent" over an Indian girl, Annuka (Sandrine Holt), who has fallen in love with the French translator.

In Black Robe, there is not one cathartic moment to rival that of Roland Joffe's The Mission (1986), when a novitiate (Robert De Niro), liberated from the burden of sin, coll-
apse and weeps at the feet of his mentor (Jeremy Irons). Father Laforgue’s battle to keep his personal demons beneath the surface might seem too restrained to some, but it faithfully reflects the customary Jesuit obsession with self-denial.

Beresford demands that one go the distance with Father Laforgue, and be sustained by his ability to endure. This is made somewhat easier by the tensions Laforgue arouses with his accompanying expedition party. The paganistic Algonquins live only for the moment and their next meal; in their afterlife, the souls of men can see in the dark and hunt animal souls. The sceptical Indians frown and mutter when Father Laforgue tells them of a paradise where the love of God prevails. The negative karma surrounding the Jesuit graduates to outright suspicion among the Indians when a sorcerer pronounces him a “demon.”

Ultimately, Black Robe becomes more a quest for survival than a test of faith. Death strikes fast and brutally; the survivors are left to rely on their base instincts and an element of good fortune. As the drama escalates, so to do the themes: betrayal, honour and sacrifice, among them.

Father Laforgue is a Christ-like figure whose mission to preach and convert seems no less extraordinary than Bluteau’s portrayal of the 20th-Century Messiah in Denys Arcand’s Jésus de Montréal (1988). Certainly, the biblical allegories abound. Jesus’ journey to Calvary is evoked by a torture scene in which Father Laforgue and two other captives are beaten and ridiculed as they stumble through a human crush. Later, and depending on one’s point of interpretation, there are veiled references to the scourging at the pillar and the crucifixion.

A highlight of Black Robe is the strength of its acting. The brooding Lothaire Bluteau is the perfect incarnation of the Jesuit martyr, Father Laforgue. Two notable secondary roles are that of a dying priest played by Frank Wilson, and the dwarf sorcerer played with menacing menace by Yvan Labelle. Overall, the roles are drawn to believable conclusions, although the unknown but seemingly gloomy fate of the story’s lovers may leave some viewers cold.

Technically, the film cannot be faulted. Beresford does not deviate far from orthodox filmmaking techniques, yet any scenes that demonstrate by a flash-forward depicting the dream of an Indian chief. White-washed images of a stark hill, a raven and death mask convey a subliminally disturbing picture.

In charting the early colonial experience in North America, one might have expected a predictable indictment of the Jesuits and their well-meaning but destructive harvest of colonization. Thankfully, the story develops free of such emotional leanings. In one trenchant double blow, an Indian chief laments that he is “as stupid and as greedy as any white man”.

Black Robe is a serious film which does not offer much in the way of comic relief. In one scene a trio of young Indians pinch Father Laforgue’s hat and begin using it as a frisbee, but even here confrontation and conflict is lurking a frame away.

It is perhaps fortunate that some scenes depicting human cannibalism were omitted from the final cut. For one, the film could not have withstood the weight of this grim subject on its already bleak canvas; second, even a few more minutes on top of its 100-minute duration could have rendered the film a little long for many.


DINGO

RAYMOND YOUNIS

Dreams, according to Freud, are the symbolic expressions of a person’s innermost desires. Now it must be said that filmmakers have not been slow to grasp this point. Indeed, the relations between subconscious and conscious desires, dream symbolism and wish-fulfilment are salient aspects of Dingo, and the extent to which the film succeeds depends on whether or not the filmmaker has succeeded in avoiding hackneyed themes and clichéd structures. Marc Rosenberg, the scriptwriter, has said that the “masterpiece” took eight years to complete, and the extended effort is evident in the final product.

The initial setting is Poona Flats, 1969. John Anderson (Colin Friels), who will be known later as Dingo, is talking to his friends, Peter (Joe Petrucci) and his future wife, Jane (Helen Buday), when a strange sound is heard. Significantly, John is the first to hear it. Even at this early stage, the three children are clearly differentiated: John is more sensitive to sound, a point that is worth remembering; Jane is interested in being kissed (especially, it seems, by Peter); Peter, though he seems to like kissing, insists that he is not a kissing machine (a claim that will be explored in terms of his life as an adult). What John and then the others hear is the sound of a jet approaching and landing on the runway at Poona Flats.

Billy Cross (Miles Davis), acclaimed jazzman, steps off the plane and performs a number in front of the motley but undoubtedly perturbed pubgoers and the children. Significantly, once again, it is John who is most responsive. It is an experience that will shape his life.

The entire scene is one of the highlights of the film: the townspeople who gather and disperse as if nothing unique has happened are quite amusing, and the arrival and departure has the force almost of an epiphany, a vision of culture and creation in the desert (wilderness). What is offered to John is the opportunity to transcend the banality of life as a “dogger”—in short, an incentive to pursue his most fanciful dream, a gig with Cross in Paris.

But the film, thankfully, is not just about a dream that is realized. It makes some interesting points about the effects of such things on the life of a family, and about the effects of learning and the ways in which pain and adversity can lead to a greater capacity to endure. The latter point is made quite forcefully in relation to a dingo which has had a leg injured in one of John’s traps. It is never clear whether the title of the film refers to Dingo the aspiring musician or to the injured animal, but this am-
bigness is not a problem because the two are often linked by implicit or explicit analogy in the film. The animal, it turns out, is somewhat too clever for John: it uses stones to release the traps. But John is too clever to be what he is, too clever for John: it uses stones to release the sheep (in its literal and metaphorical senses).

The film, though, is not the perfectly portioned edifice that it is sometimes made out to be. The first problem - though, to be fair, this portioned edifice that it is sometimes made out to be. The first problem - though, to be fair, this length - is a certain element of contrivance, especially towards the end, when the transformations seem to occur with bewildering speed (to say more would be tantamount to giving away the ending). Moreover, the contrasts between the naive outback boy and Peter, the cynical city dweller, seem to be too neat and familiar. And, though it is a source of some pain to say this, Miles Davis' career as an actor was not particularly successful.

But Dingo stimulates on a number of levels. The central performances by Colin Friels, Helen Buday and Joe Petruzzi are carefully crafted. The drama is enriched by a streak of larrikin humour and by the employment of irony (too many films about dreams and the pursuit of fulfilment are weakened by the absence of this). The film also raises some tantalizing possibilities inasmuch as it includes the tension between fate or determinism, individual freedom and coincidence, but these are not really developed. Cross insists that there is no such thing as accident whereas Dingo likes to consider other possibilities - the paths not chosen or traversed. And it is striking that the film tends to reinforce Cross' view. For example, the car crash in Paris occurs in front of the nightclub where Cross made his debut as a jazz trumpeter. Events which seem to be accidental become, in fact, parts of an overarching but mysterious scheme which is quietly but unambiguously affirmed, at least by Cross.

Finally, of course, there is Miles Davis the performer and his music. The soundtrack, for which he and Michel Legrand were responsible, is a vivid and vividly functional part of the film's drama. Though it does not really recapture the glory of Davis' performances with Charlie Parker, Coltrane and Cannonball Adderley, the music does provide some moments of illumination: "The Dream", used as a leitmotif, evokes the insistence of memory, desire and the song of the siren in Dingo's life; the "Jam Session" provides a dazzling and concentrated summation of the unfolding drama; and so on. Indeed, the film gains extra poignance from the fact that the lives of Billy Cross and Davis intersect at various points: like Cross, Davis may have thought of himself as a "museum piece" in the early 1960s when he was playing the same old material; like Cross, he suffered from ill-health and the fear that his creative powers were in decline. But, of course, the film is affirmative: what it suggests is that Dingo and Cross are transformed by their fateful relationship and by the inscrutable workmanship that rejuvenates one and fulfils the other.


FRANKIE & JOHNNY ROSE LUCAS

Gary Marshall's Frankie & Johnny opened in the U.S. just a few weeks after the nationally televised senate hearing for Clarence Thomas' nomination to the Supreme Court and the allegations of sexual harassment brought there by Anita Hill. The irony is marked and tragic in its ramifications, for, while Frankie & Johnny may serve the purpose of providing an evening's lightweight entertainment, its covert ideology actually reinforces some of the more insidious aspects of sexual harassment, especially in the workplace, which the Thomas-Hill debacle brought briefly and dramatically to national attention, before being swept away again under the political carpet.

On one level there is nothing apparently complex, let alone disturbing, about Frankie & Johnny. It is a relatively straightforward boy-meets-girl romantic melodrama, where, after a few insignificant hiccups, all is relatively (at least in this fallen, urban world) happy ever after. There are even some quite sensitive and witty portrayals of the labours of love the second time round, perhaps epitomized in the rather poignant gift by Johnny (Al Pacino) of a potato rose, dipped in beetroot, as an offering to his lady love (Michelle Pfeiffer). However, despite the depiction of these characters as somewhat older than the romantic norm, despite their struggling working-class lives and their chequered pasts, and the details of urban verisimilitude - such as run-down apartments, prostitution, AIDS anxieties, "rear-window" views into other people's lives - the rosy glow of idealized Hollywood love actually remains unartificial in all its false and deceptive glory.

But the film's narrative never leaves us in real doubt that romantic resolution will take place, thus offering a clear indication of this ideological impulse towards the disguised bourgeois, heterosexual, fantasy conclusion. The first few minutes consist of parallel alternations between the two main characters: although they haven't met yet, both are clearly dissatisfied with their pasts; both are travelling, searching for a way out of the mire of old patterns. As the alternations continue, the likelihood of intersection and the integration of their lives and aspirations becomes more and more blatant, and expected. In addition, these down-at-heel characters also happen to be recognizable to audiences as Michelle Pfeiffer and Al Pacino, who signify as potent sexual symbols within the Hollywood star system, despite the film's portrayal of them as a greasy-haired, depressed waitress and a desperately lonely ex-cop.

However, by evoking the popular song about famous star-crossed lovers, the film's title perhaps contains the only possible narrative barb or obligatory uncertainty: that is, although in the Hollywood honoured tradition of romantic love, love may be "true", "right" and "forever", such potent intensity may not always translate into an easy-going, day-to-day relationship. Ostentatiously carrying a copy of Romeo and Juliet in his pocket, Johnny reinforces this one potential narrative hitch in the progress of true love - in melodramatic terms, neither of them may survive such passion, and they may in fact pull each other down.

Frankie & Johnny is not merely entertainment, and, as any examination of the products of popular culture reveals, there is no ideologically-innocent statement or work of art. Like most Hollywood inspired romantic melodramas, it reeks with the dangerous ideology of romantic love itself - that fantasy system which appears to promise that all sexual dreams will suddenly come true in a socially acceptable fashion; or, as Frankie's fellow waitress, Cora (Kate Nelligan), longingly puts it, where women are always waiting for that "one Mr Right", and where once that "right" person is found, love occurs at first sight and all miraculously falls into place. In addition to clogging the lives and relationships of real women and men with these skewed and unreal expectations about intimate interactions, Frankie & Johnny is also an appalling indictment of the confusion regarding gender roles, and expression and the extent to which this is romantically and sexually exploitable in social interactions, particularly within the workplace.
When Johnny first asks Frankie out – and, in conventional gender terms, it is unsurprisingly predictable that this will be the direction of the initiative – it is over the body of a convulsing customer in the Apollo restaurant. Despite the gross inappropriateness of this situation – and Johnny’s “You’re so cute when you’re efficient” response to Frankie’s knowledge of how to manage the epileptic – we are asked to see this intrusive proposal as winning, as reflected in the dewy-eyed comment of another customer and in defiance of Frankie’s clear refusal. And like Johnny, we the audience are asked not to be discouraged by the woman’s “No”. She may say “No” now, the narrative suggests, but really, being possessed of the superior knowledge of their inherent “rightness” for each other, which justifies no end of badgering and harassing, Johnny is arrogantly confident that the “No” will eventually give way to a “Yes”.

Thus, Johnny’s “courtship” of Frankie may be seen to consist of a series of intrusions upon her privacy and her integrity: for example, he looks up her address on private work records, turns up uninvited at her apartment, arrives at her bowling evening when expressly asked not to (this is a particularly insidious example as we are asked to see it as perfectly reasonable because he has had a hard day), pursues her into the ladies room, and stops only at the cubicle door while yet hammering her verbally and emotionally with assertions of “love”, and demands for marriage and children.

Even in the film’s final scenes where, in sudden desperation for him to leave, Frankie throws something across the room, breaking one of the “good luck” elephants whose cadial trunks are raised in homage to her absent father, Johnny insists on “just one phone call”, and drives her, literally and metaphorically, back into the toilet while he rings the late-night radio to romantically request a song for lovers. The film’s prevailing ideology of romantic love and its attendant, pervasive gender roles asks us to see these intrusions as acceptable because they are ostensibly done in the name of true love, and because the narrative outcome – Frankie’s final capitulation to Johnny’s romantic demands – would seem to validate them.

Interestingly, Johnny’s style of ‘desirable’ courtship is at several points contrasted to what can be easily identified as the “unacceptable” style of physical coercion and violence – that employed by Frankie’s ex-boyfriend who hits her on the head with a belt buckle, and the man in the opposite apartment who beats his female partner. Although this comparison is no doubt consciously designed to boost Johnny’s character as more caring and concerned, thus qualifying him as the trustworthy “Mr Right” for Frankie (when she finally allows herself to “recognize” it), there is, nevertheless, seeping through this structural opposition, an uncomfortable residual similarity between the two modes of male-to-female wooing. After all, both Johnny and the “uncaring” earlier boyfriend harangue Frankie and battle over her body and her mind in an attempt to impose their desires and perceptions upon her.

In the final analysis, we must ask if there is such a significant ethical difference between the imposition of emotional harassment and the physical battering of a body? There is certainly no difference in the attitudes towards power and domination which constitute the actual motivations of both behaviours and which, although perhaps cloaked in the garb of intimacy and relationship, in fact have nothing in common with love.

Johnny’s behaviour partly results from a conception of love as something fixed and determined, as a priori truth that needs to be brought to the attention of the suspecting – or otherwise – recipient of that love as an already self-evident fact, and not as something which emerges from the dialectic of relationship. His attitude towards Frankie also assumes a conventional gender position where the male has the active role, and where the expression of such active desire is not seen as a lust for power or as symptomatic of an almost pathological neediness, as Frankie tentatively identifies, but rather as the culturally desired stereotype of a virile and romantic masculinity. However, at least in the 20th Century, in order for the unrequited Romeo figure, who serenaded under the beloved’s window at all hours, to be seen as lover rather than harasser, he needs to have some positive response from the cloistered, passive lady in her urban tower.

This is where Frankie & Johnny is most revealing about why both sexes seem to be utterly and dangerously confused about what constitutes sexual harassment. If we read this film as almost entirely taking up the narrative of courtship from the perspectives of a distorting romantic love and an anachronistic quasi-courty love tradition which positively thrives upon the apparent unavailability of the lady, and if we recognize the primary point-of-view or gaze in the film as belonging to Johnny – especially as evidenced in his voyeuristic fifteen-second “viewing” of the spectacle of Frankie’s recalcitrant body, and in his original identification of the “true love” of which he must convince his would-be partner – then not only do Frankie’s “No’s” not register seriously on Johnny’s scale, but the narrative reveals these apparent refusals to be part of the elaborate ritual of romance which actually had a provocative and titillating effect rather than an off-putting one.

Thus, in instances of sexual harassment, as in the classic rape defence, saying “No” is not heard to mean “No”; at most, it may suggest that the male take another, perhaps an even more aggressive, line of approach. For women to occupy the active position of actually saying “No”, and meaning it, would be to radically challenge and divert the stereotyped gender role of a femininity which requires compliance and/or coquettishness from females towards males, especially where that conventional gender relationship is compounded by the power dynamic of superiority in the workplace, as was the case with Thomas and Hill.

PURE LUCK

JIM SCHEMBRI

O kay, I give up. What's the big secret? What did Nadia Tass and David Parker get in return for making Pure Luck? Whatever it was I hope it was fabulous.

Presumably this film was supposed to have the word "comedy" written all over it. Instead, what it seems to have written all over it is the word "deaf," for it bears that one unmistakeable word "deal", for it bears that one unmistakable trademark of a deal film: it has no heart or brain.

The film suffers from a haphazard tone borne of its obvious confusion about where its comedy level is – buddy film, slapstick, action – and is clearly illustrated by the jarring use of violence. In one scene in a Mexican prison, Ray is repeatedly taken out of his cell by the guards to be either bashed or raped and is returned each time without much fuss. In another he puts a gun into the mouth of a villain and threatens to blow his brains out. You'd think that somewhere along the line in the making of a film like this that someone would actually sit down and say, "Hey, this just doesn't belong."

Apart from the obvious shortcomings of Nadia Tass' direction, it is a disheartening surprise that none of David Parker's visual style and wit so evident in Malcolm and The Big Steal was brought to bear anywhere in the film. With all those pratfalls, you'd have thought he'd have had at least a little fun.

The one good thing about Pure Luck is that it ends with a shot of Martin Short's character about to go over a waterfall. This, presumably, while holidaying in Mexico and she gets amnesia. To try and find her a detective, Ray Campanella (Danny Glover), is made up with a similarly accident-prone accountant, Eugene (Martin Short), the idea being that this will somehow lead them to her.

Thus the scene is set for a lot of slapstick sh*t, like falling off chairs, bumping into doors, dropping matches into groins and so on and so forth and such like. Fine. Banana-skin comedy will always have appeal. Trouble is you can't just do it. It's not like changing a fuse. You have to have style, you have to have someone who is great at physical comedy. Obviously someone like Martin Short is the new Buster Keaton. News flash...

Another big problem is Glover and Short. Martin and Lewis they ain't. There's not a lot of point wasting too much space on this expensive glossy paper on why the coupling doesn't work, but here's a quick post-mortem: they start out, predictably enough, as antagonists. Soon, however, they become close when Eugene is mugged by a woman and Glover goes into Lethal Weapon mode by waving a gun around and hitting people in the face. This, presumably, is the way to make friends and influence people.

But the comedic electricity between them couldn't jump start a loaded mousetrap. Note, as evidence, the heated exchange when their car gets bogged in the sand. Like the numerous other similar wanna-be-funny scenes between them, it seems to be predicated on the theory that good screen comedy is basically any dialogue, however flat, delivered in a loud voice in high-key lighting. Fortunately, the scene is cut short when some guys drive by and start shooting at them, presumably to shut them up.

The film reeks of desperation. Some of Short's pratfalls are excruciatingly predictable and often extensively telegraphed just to make sure everyone knows something funny is about to happen. It's like that line from Martin Scorsese's The King of Comedy (1983): "You don't say 'Hey folks, here's the punchline', you just do the punchline." That idea was certainly respected in Malcolm and The Big Steal, but not here.

In the restaurant scene, for example, Ray tests Eugene's bad luck by planting a malfunctioning salt shaker on his table. Eugene inevitably ends up with salt all over his dinner plate. The bee-sting allergy sequence is similarly laboured, resulting in Eugene being bloateted by the prosthetics team. There is also some old "God, what did we do to deserve this?" castration comedy when a snake appears between Ray's legs and Eugene aims a gun to shoot it. Guess which snake Ray clutches with both hands while yelling "Nooooo!!"

Worst, though, is the scene late in the film when their jeep breaks down on a clifftop. They engage in a highly unlikely argument that makes nonsense out of the relationship that was supposed to be developing between them and which merely serves as an excuse for Short to practise some martial arts and crunch his groin into a tree.

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The one good thing about Pure Luck is that it ends with a shot of Martin Short's character about to go over a waterfall. This, presumably,
will kill the chances of a sequel and allow Tass and Parker to go into something a little more worthy of the work that attracted the attention of the American film machine in the first place.

Then again, why not a Pure Luck 2? Hmm. Is Jocelyn Moorhouse busy?

2. This is a refreshingly new plot device that I personally would like to see a lot more of.
3. I swear on my parents no pun intended.

PURE LUCK

SACRED SEX
Sacred Sex, so the advertising grabs imply, is a documentary about the search for sexual fulfillment on a higher, spiritual plane. Essentially, it is just that: a search so unclear of its motives that its revelations become an unholy mess.

Early on, the film's star, American porn queen Annie Sprinkle, talks coyly about devoting orgasms to special causes in her life, such as her pet cat. Just as the audience is working out whether to take her seriously or not, a solemn-sounding narrative cuts in, reminding us that we are all sexual creatures born through the act of love.

This amusing non-sequitur is the first of many contradictions in a documentary which is a confused, voyeuristic look at extremists trying to do something different with sex. It contrasts the exploits of Annie Sprinkle with the goings-on of a bunch of individuals who get into things like heavy breathing, and staring into the eyes and chanting as a precursor or a substitute to the real thing. One way or another, they all subscribe to ancient Tantra and Taoist sex techniques which emphasize sexual harmony as a road to higher consciousness and spirituality.

Directed and produced by Australian Cynthia Connop, Sacred Sex was funded by a $206,000 grant from the Film Finance Corporation and a $65,000 pre-sale deal with the ABC (a censored version has been made for television). The project was never going to be an easy one, given the dichotomous branches it represents within the New Age movement. Upon release, it was criticized by some as a misuse of taxpayers' money and a film that revels in the act of love.

For the most part it sticks to showing things as they are, although Connop occasionally takes leave of her objectivity. At one point, she is a glaring antithesis to the notion that there is something noble in the elusive "higher sexuality" Connop's documentary tries to capture.

The primary flaw of Sacred Sex is not so much what is shown on the screen, but how it is shown. It is weighed down by its own self-importance and a constant suggestion that the sex practices it depicts are the way and the light. Narrator Tanya Gerstle tries valiantly to convince the viewer that Sacred Sex should be taken seriously, while a U.S. academic from the Kinsey Institute is used at several junctures. The academic talks rather disparagingly about how well the ancient Indians and Chinese got it together — both spiritually and sexually — but one suspects she is merely a talking prop.

Sacred Sex unfolds in straightforward form interspersing action — if one permits such a euphemism for sexual activity — with interviews. For the most part it sticks to showing things as they are, although Connop occasionally takes leave of her objectivity. At one point, the camera highlights a rainbow on the horizon as a group spiritual sex session is in process. One can only assume the rainbow is meant to symbolize the fulfillment and mystical energy generated by a good, old-fashioned orgy.

The soundtrack makes an attempt to convey the predictably inane Muzak one expects to hear in New Age bookshops; a few tribal rhythms are thrown in when things get heated up. Mostly, the music fits in quite well with ethereal dialogue such as, "I bless your door of pleasure and may it bring you great ecstasy." Later, though, comes a scene involving a technique where lovers breathe heavily and place their feet on each other's sternums in order to achieve orgasm. Strange as it looks, even stranger is the music: a sleazy-sounding concoction of keyboards, bass guitar and flute that may well have been lifted from a John Holmes porn flick.

A crucial challenge of a documentary dealing with a fringe subject is making it accessible to a broad spectrum of viewers. Sacred Sex surely does deal with the most popular cinema commodity of all, but does so in a way that is beyond the reach of the ordinary person. Aside from one or two exceptions, most of its characters lack credibility and wear the jaundiced mark of per-
sonal despair and disillusionment. One Tantra convert begins to make sense out of the maze when he says something to the effect that if you’re going to have sex, why not make it good sex? Right on. The bearded one had me interested for at least half a minute, then he began describing a source for his sexual and spiritual energy: a phallic-shaped stalactite he’d souvenired from a cave.

The most annoyingly hollow part of Sacred Sex is the inclination of its characters to apply a pseudo-religious creed to their sex practices. When she is not flashing her breasts or waving a dildo, Annie Sprinkle occasionally tries to weave a few meaningful words together. Her thoughts on Tantra philosophy? “If it is true or not it doesn’t matter because it is good to believe it.”

Another “star” of Sacred Sex, English psychologist Alan Lowen, assumes the mantle of a religious icon at seminars he runs for people wanting to experience spiritual sex. He sermonizes, he ceremoniously hands out condoms on a platter, he even cleanses his converts in water. In spite of the religious implication, the end product of Lowen’s seminars is nothing more than a pagan flesh cult in which love is a transferable commodity.

Earlier in the piece, the documentary makes an attempt to contextualize its theme with the views of the man on the street. The question “Have you experienced spiritual sex?” meets with a string of nonsensical replies about one-night stands, wet dreams and belief in God. The responses are a fair indication of the relevance of the documentary in mainstream circles. Connop would have been wiser to expand the focus of the vox-pop segment and extract some solid feedback on what people are really thinking about sex these days, the impact of AIDS, the comeback of monogamy and the like.

Sacred Sex would have us believe that the sensitive, new sexual philosophies it explores are shining beacons in a modern, post-AIDS jungle. It tells us to confront our fears and inhibitions, let the oxygen run to our brains and reach out so that we’ll be on the way there (wherever that is). The finished canvas, however, is blurred by images of faked orgasms, lustful forays disguised as spiritual journeys, Annie Sprinkle’s dildo collection and those going the grope at orgies.

One must admire Connop for having the conviction to tackle an issue certain to arouse elements of moral disapproval and ridicule. Unfortunately, in its confusing, contrived form, Sacred Sex confines itself to a few egocentric sex guru masquerading as prophets of human potential, and their burnt-out Me-generation disciples who’ll try anything to fill a void in their lives.

Sacred Sex
Directed by Cynthia Connop.
Producer: Cynthia Connop.
Executive producer: Ronald S. Tannor.
Associate producer: Michael Murray.
Scriptwriter: Cynthia Connop.
Director of photography: Tony Wilson.
Sound: Max Hensler.
Editor: Suresh Ayyar.
Composer: Nick Palmer.
Narrator: Tanya Geratle.
Cast: Annie Sprinkle, Alan Lowen.

SPOTSWOOD

Karl Quinn

In his book A History of the Cinema: From its Origins to 1970, Eric Rhode describes the Ealing comedies of the 1940s and '50s as manifesting a “belief in the capacity of gallant amateurs to muddle through any difficulty”. This description can readily be applied to Spotswood, and indeed, since the film’s first screenings in early 1991, repeatedly has been.

Spotswood is set in the late 1960s, in the Melbourne industrial suburb of the same name, and centres on the life of a small moccasin factory, Ball’s. The ancient patriarch, Mr Ball (Alwyn Kurts), decides to call in Errol Wallace (Anthony Hopkins), a “time and motion” man, in a bid to modernize the factory. Despite a variety of obstacles being put in his path, Wallace soon discovers that the business is running at a massive loss, and has not made a profit for years. Ball has only kept it afloat by selling off his assets, and it seems inevitable to Wallace that the only possibility of turning the company around rests in reducing the workforce and increasing the productivity of the remaining staff.

Wallace – who prefers to be known as a productivity enhancement consultant – wishes to remain anonymous, but is soon introduced by Ball to all the staff, who seem to think that the newcomer’s primary function is in facilitating the fulfilment of their interior design fantasies. He enlist a young employee of the factory, Carey (Ben Mendelssohn), as an assistant, believing the young man will be eager to take the leap into management. But Carey is reluctant, and is only won over to the proposition when he realizes he will be sharing a desk with the boss’ youngest daughter, the not-as-fantastic-as-she-thinks-she-is Cheryl (Rebecca Rigg), who is temporarily working at the factory as a secretary “before she leaves to take up a career as a full-time model”.

Intercut with Wallace’s trips to Ball’s are scenes of his less than harmonious home life – quite clearly the result of the hours and the nature of his work – with wife Caroline (Angela Punch McGregor), and visits to Durmack’s, a company where his consultation has resulted in the recommended shedding of 480 positions. The modern business approach of Durmack’s is enshrined in the sleek black-glass exterior of the company’s headquarters, against which Wallace parks his Rover in a perfect parody of the car-commercial morality of the 1980s. By contrast, the drive-by of Ball’s is a clutter of wrecks and broken machinery, succinctly symbolic of the reticence to shed the past that characterizes the factory and its work practices as a whole. In a rare early scene of something like compassion, Wallace tells his wife that walking into Ball’s was like “visiting my Grandfather’s house, only my Grandfather isn’t there”.

The contrasts between the old management style of Ball’s and the new management approach advocated by Wallace and his partner are what structure the film, much more than any straight sense of narrative. Television advertisements talk of it as a “clash of cultures”, and, while this is not inaccurate, it by no means does justice to the complexity of Mark Joffe’s multi-layered film. Spotswood utilizes the full array of filmic possibilities, from set design, through lighting and photography to acting, music and direction, in order to bring a potentially very simple story to a rich fulfilment.

This commitment to making the most of all the possibilities of the medium is evident from the moment the opening credits begin to roll. The visuals are unremarkable – red writing on black screen – but the soundtrack is not. An amateur band is performing a horrendous cover of The Animals’ version of “The House of the
ties of the 1990s is to return to the paternalistic capitalism of Ball's version of the '60s? Perhaps it is unfair to suggest that what Joffe's film offers is a return to paternalistic capitalism. After all, if the preferred view of running a business is embodied in Ball's, what are we to make of the fact that the first time the camera enters the factory (along with Wallace, who is obviously meant to represent our "modern" perspective) we hear and then see an employee dancing around a stock room singing "Who Wants to be a Millionaire? (I Don't)? The film, in fact, very nearly eschews the values of capitalism entirely, replacing them with a traditional working-class sense of community. The Social Club, with its climactic (and hilarious) slot-car race, provides an external focal point for this sentiment. The factory itself, and the staff canteen in particular, are equally important as sites of community. In fact, only the suburb of Spotswood itself, where the film's main focus is on the unhappy home life of Wendy (Toni Collette), offers little warmth. Hence work and work-related social activities are to the employees of Ball's self-contained means of escape from the drudgery of urban existence, rather than the worst aspect of it.

It is significant that Wallace's conversion to Catholicism is accompanied by a change in his working methods. In the old days, if he felt too sad or depressed, he would simply retreat to the factory for solace. But this time, he tries to help the workers to solve their problems. Perhaps it is unfair to suggest that what Joffe's film offers is a return to paternalistic capitalism. After all, if the preferred view of running a business is embodied in Ball's, what are we to make of the fact that the first time the camera enters the factory (along with Wallace, who is obviously meant to represent our "modern" perspective) we hear and then see an employee dancing around a stock room singing "Who Wants to be a Millionaire? (I Don't)? The film, in fact, very nearly eschews the values of capitalism entirely, replacing them with a traditional working-class sense of community. The Social Club, with its climactic (and hilarious) slot-car race, provides an external focal point for this sentiment. The factory itself, and the staff canteen in particular, are equally important as sites of community. In fact, only the suburb of Spotswood itself, where the film's main focus is on the unhappy home life of Wendy (Toni Collette), offers little warmth. Hence work and work-related social activities are to the employees of Ball's self-contained means of escape from the drudgery of urban existence, rather than the worst aspect of it.

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FILM AT WIT’S END: EIGHT AVANT-GARDE FILMMAKERS

Stan Brakhage, Documentext & McPherson, New York, 1991, pp 200, pb, rrp $17.95

JORGE DAVID REMY

Conceptually the book is a series of lectures on film history, Film at Wit’s End: Eight Avant-Garde Filmmakers pays homage to the author’s mentors and contemporaries as it recounts the origins and accomplishments of American independent cinema. Without commercial pressures to restrict their artistic vision, the independent filmmakers of the 1940s, ’50s and ’60s pioneered the direction film was to take as a form of art and a medium for popular entertainment.

The author underscores independent cinema’s influence on the commercial film industry with elements of biography and cultural history, leaving the reader with a vivid sense of the struggles these artists endured to make their films. Maya Deren, whom one filmmaker has called “the mother of us all” because of her prevailing efforts to promote the art of filmmaking, first explored the phenomenological potential for film in such works as Meshes of the Afternoon and Ritual in Transfigured Time. Juxtaposing highly-stylized images with those from daily life, Deren demonstrated “the charge and […] power of perfectly ordinary household objects”, creating, like the Surrealists whom she admired, an art rooted firmly in the unconscious mind.

“I want to impart hilarity, joyousness, […] expansion of life with an uncontrollable mirth”, Marie Menken once said. Using a hand-held camera, Menken expanded the poetical vocabulary of film with an “incredible energy” visible throughout her work. Her style of cinematic collage later became a prominent feature of such films as Godfrey Reggio’s Koyaanisqatsi and Walter Ruttmann’s Berlin.

Another innovator of the early independent cinema was Jerome Hill, whose hand-tinted negatives produced an impressionistic effect on screen for the first time. Other innovations attributed to independent cinema are the use of slow and accelerated motion, split-screen visuals and the addition of musique concrète as an accompanying soundtrack for film.

Whether commenting upon Haitian dance or the atomic bomb, the “impossible silence” of a Kansas cornfield or the “great epic” that was the Beat generation, Stan Brakhage conveys the spirit of artistic experimentation that is an essential ingredient of independent film.

Filmmakers such as Marie Menken marked an era in film history by marshalling their wit and intelligence to create art under the most demanding of circumstances. Once, Menken supplied the lens she needed to film a close-up of the human body by taping a magnifying glass onto her camera, so determined was she to see her project through to completion.

Bruce Conner is yet another artist whose inventive ways forged new perspectives in American cinema. Conner fostered the social context in which we view his film commentaries by incorporating excerpts from newsreels and other media into his work.

The strength of Maya Deren’s films, on the other hand, rests upon her ability to use a variety of camera speeds to attain the images she envisioned, though this was not always according to plan. While filming Choreography for Camera, Deren panned the camera at a setting different from the one she thought she had selected: the film strobed, creating the impression of trees swaying in visual counterpoint to the movements of a dancer. A more desirable outcome could not have been orchestrated. In relating this episode, the author observes that,

The greatest moments in art are often the result of an unforeseen difficulty: there is an accident, or funds are cut off, or something breaks. And then something unsought-for happens. It is the mark of a genius to recognize it and use it with consistency.

Brakhage draws an interesting distinction between the role of “seduction” in commercial and independent film as he profiles the careers of eight filmmakers who shaped American cinema. Whereas most commercial films appeal to the viewer’s aesthetic sense with an array of images rich in special effects, winning the audience’s attention through craft, seduction in independent film, if any, arises from a consciousness of the camera that is both captivating and disturbing. Many times the actors used in an independent film are not professionals.

Moreover, independent filmmakers are likely to illicit a response from an audience with images that are stark in their presentation, as compared to their counterparts in the commercial film industry who seldom, if ever, reveal their techniques. Unaccustomed to seeing splices and other technical aspects of filmmaking, an audience may question the artistic credibility of not only the actors but the film in which they appear. Such films engage one, figuratively speaking, “somewhere between the chair and the screen”, so that an image, bursting with contradiction and vitality, leaves the viewer “hanging”. There is no attempt at disguise. As confrontation yields to comprehension, the audience becomes participant rather than observer.

Sidney Peterson described this quality of independent cinema best in reference to The Potted Psalm, a film he made with James Broughton: “[The] images are meant to play, not on our rational sense, but on the infinite universe of ambiguity that is within us.”

Nearly half a century since they first appeared before the American public, independent films continue to confound and delight audiences with a mixture of comedy and outrageous sincerity that defies expectation.

Stan Brakhage has written a book that captures the spirit of independent cinema and the times in which it was created. Film at Wit’s End is a valuable introduction to independent filmmaking which may be enjoyed by the weekend moviewgoer as well as the serious student of film. The filmographies that conclude Film at Wit’s End are a welcome reference now that more independent films are appearing on video-cassette.
THE ABC OF DRAMA 1975 - 1990
Liz Jacka, Australian Film Television & Radio School, Sydney, 1991, 147 pp., pb, rrp $19.95
This overview of ABC television drama, with invaluable checklists, will be reviewed in the next issue.

ALTERNATIVE SCRIPTWRITING: WRITING BEYOND THE RULES

FEATURE FILMS ON A LOW BUDGET

FILM & VIDEO FINANCING

FILMMAKING FOUNDATIONS

SCREEN ADAPTATION: A SCREENWRITING HANDBOOK

The above titles are an all-embracing selection of 'how to' publications put out by Focal Press.

The film industry worldwide is increasingly becoming a tougher nut to crack, the influx of students into film schools or filmmaking courses has been on the rise.

These publications are specifically aimed at film students moving into independent production. Each author is a scholar or a professional with a long and successful history in the field, and each book provides more than rudimentary principles. Dogma and readymade success formulas are avoided.

The purpose of the series is to bridge the gap between what is learnt in film schools and what happens in the situation of hands-on filmmaking. The authors set out to comprehensively cover all aspects of their chosen field in a step-by-step fashion, and genuinely impart what they have learnt through experience with relevant case studies.

For anyone seriously considering a career move into film, they are worth more than a cursory glance.

CHAMBERS FILM & TV HANDBOOK

With an abundance and variety of films and television shows made readily available and with wider appeal, this reference book is mostly geared at the general audience gaining greater literacy with critical, artistic and technical terms, key personalities and specialist films.

There are more than 700 entries, the bulk of which is devoted to biographies of actors and directors. The biographies are surprisingly comprehensive, as are the appraisals of key films and television shows.

Also included are lists of Oscar winners since 1927, as well as award winners from the Berlin, Cannes and Venezia film festivals. Understandably, the emphasis is on the contemporary, and there are so few comprehensive reference books around that this handbook is a valuable update and companion.

CONVERSATIONS WITH MARLON BRANDO

After a few colourless chapters describing the details of negotiating and finally meeting with Brando for interviews, this book finally picks up the pace with a question-answer format.

The interviews, which took place on Brando's Tahitian atoll over a ten-day period, make up the bulk of the book. For a man whose reluctance in interviews is legion, Brando is open and forthright about his profession and lifestyle, and especially his views on social issues. But he can be expertly cagey when necessary and does not come across as the eccentric he has often been made out to be. He reveals himself as quick-witted and amusing, often showing up the interview situation or appropriately quoting from Shakespeare's work.

The conversations, however, do not cover the past thirteen years. The interview was actually conducted in 1978, portions of it appearing in Playboy magazine. Coming as it does on the heels of the recent controversy over his son's murder trial, the book is openly opportunistic. The added "Afterword" only routinely updates Brando's life in the light of the increased media coverage which accompanied the trial.

THE DEVIL'S CANDY: THE BONFIRE OF THE VANITIES GOES TO HOLLYWOOD
Julie Salamon, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1991, 434 pp., hb, (US) $24.95

This sometimes amusing but rather trivial book follows in the American tradition of recounting the troubled histories of what are perceived to "unique" in screams for. When the reader does get a glimmer of understanding, it comes against what is euphemistically called "color enhancement."

This is the sixth volume in what seems to be the never-ending series of Film Index publications put out by John Howard Reid (sometimes under the banner of Rastar).

The series is obsessively comprehensive, listing full cast and crew credits, release dates for Australia, the U.S. and the UK, alternative titles, loads of production information and trivia.

But, like previous volumes, it is incredibly naive. It's baffling to attempt to understand what the "unique" is all about. When the reader does get a glimmer of understanding, it comes as a self-evident justification. Take the instance of this claim in the introduction: "I imagine a film noir in color! Such an aberration is obviously no longer a film noir." Well, one need not imagine hundreds of film noirs in colour for one can actually see hundreds of film noirs in colour - a good deal of Anthony Mann's westerns, for example; Don Siegel's The Killers; Allan Dwan's Slightly Scarlet; and so on.

As well, skimming through the titles, one soon realizes that not many are under "threat" of colourization, nor is it ever made clear what is so special about the use of black & white photography in each case - something the "unique" in screams for.

As is usual in the series, references rarely venture beyond the 1950s. This is a publication strictly for those into nostalgia, where their celebration should be appropriately translated into remorse for the long-gone, good ole days.
The Gulf Between (JFF, Monique Schwarz, Australia, 1991), filmed in Israel immediately after the Gulf War, deals with the impact of the war on six representative Israelis: a Russian immigrant, a Holocaust survivor, a journalist, an army reservist, a kindergarten teacher and a woman whose house was hit by a Scud missile. The thoughts, fears and disappointments of each of these people form a kaleidoscope of personal responses which Schwarz has organized into six 'chapters'. The imposition of chapters gives containment to what can be read as a cri de coeur on behalf of the Jewish people who, the film stresses, yet again find themselves the victim of an unjust war: "Each war was unjust, but this was the most unjust."

The film canvases frank and open responses to the impact of the war, during the conflict and in its aftermath. Although a variety of political views are sought, the predominant mood is generally unforgiving and pessimistic. The memory of the Holocaust looms heavily over the content and its imagery: a Nazi rally, the instruction "go into a sealed room", a contemporary dance expressive of those who died in concentration camps, and cuts to the wearing of gas masks, by babies and children.

Given recent Israeli history and the listing of the five wars fought previously since 1948, some responses from those interviewed seemed surprising. While Mayor Tommy Kollek says that he knew from 2 August that the war would come, most of those interviewed expressed shock at the missile attack, which is surprising: "The breaking of a strong belief that something like this couldn't happen [again]."

This sentiment raises questions which the film does not attempt to explore. Does this mean that modern Israelis have become complacent, or over-confident? The film dwells on the spectre of the gas masks. Does this mean that the Israelis feel impotent still? If so, maybe these feelings of impotence come not from the heritage of victimhood (of which the quintessential example is the Holocaust), but from being forced to sit on their hands, night after night, and not use the power of their state to defend themselves – a power they have at last after two thousand years, but were persuaded by their Allies not to use. This may have been politically wise, and even saved Israeli lives, but it did nothing to eradicate the spectre of Jewish impotence.

Nonetheless, The Gulf Between draws attention to pervasive, persistent feelings of impotence in Israeli culture, despite an outside perception of Israeli military power.

Several films were about Jews returning to their countries of origin to lay the ghosts of the past to rest. In Loving the Dead (FJC, Mira Hamermesh, UK, 1991), the director returned to Poland to find the grave of her mother who died in the Lodz ghetto. In her search to recover her past, she found others who like her were haunted by the demands of the dead to be remembered – Polish Christians, both young and old, who in different ways seek to atone for Polish anti-semitism, or bring what has vanished to life again.

Naomi Gryn’s Chasing Shadows (FJC, UK 1990) follows her father, a London rabbi, Hugo Gryn, to his hometown Berehovo, in what used to be Czechoslovakia. For Hugo, Berehovo is less a village from where 15,000 Jews were shipped to Birkenau than the pungent memory of a charmed Jewish boyhood. Hugo returned to say a last nostalgic goodbye to a country that nourished him. This is not the case with Emanuel Rund, whose film Alle Juden Raus! (All Jews Out!, JFF, Germany 1990) has a great deal more venom.

Using old film footage, and photographs (like Gryn, but to different effect), Rund powerfully indicts the German town Göppingen, midway between Stuttgart and Ulm, for the way it treated its large community of Jews. He exposes the town’s venal shabbiness by tracking the plight of Göppingen’s Jews (who helped found the town’s prosperity 100 years before), from Kristallnacht, to the shameful stealing of their property and wealth, to their incarceration and death in Theresienstadt and Auschwitz. In many ways, Rund’s attack on Göppingen can be compared to Michael Verhoeven’s feature, Das Schreckliche Mädchen (The Nasty Girl), based on Anja Rosmus’ exposure of her hometown Passau, in Bavaria. What redeems two of the inhabitants of Göppingen, however – the telephonist at Theresienstadt and the chief of the town’s fire brigade (though Rund does not let them off too lightly) – is their public regret of it, and their attempts at recompense by answering questions from local schoolchildren.

For the wealth of valuable, beautiful and informative Jewish films that were screened during the two festivals, thanks to Les Rabinowicz of the Festival of Jewish Cinema, and the AFI.

2. The trilogy is made up of God Has Forsaken Us/ God Does Not Believe in Us Anymore (1981), Santa Fe (1985) and Welcome in Vienna (1986).

GUESTS AT THE FESTIVALS
Diane Perelszttein (FJC); Mort Ransen, Orna Ben-Dor Niv (JFF)

OTHER FILMS SCREENED
FEATURES
Abraham’s Gold (JFF, Jorg Graser, Germany, 1990)
Alan and Naomi (JFF, Sterling Vanwagenen, U.S.,1991)
Jen o rodiných zalezitostech (Family Matters, JFF, Jiri Svoboda, Czechoslovakia, 1990)
Les Lendemains qui Chantent (Song Filled Tomorrows, FJC, Jacques Fansten, France, 1985)
A Letter to Harvey Milk (FJC, Yariv Kohn, U.S., 1991)
Mosca addio (Farewell Moscow, JFF, Mauro Bolognini, Italy, 1987)
Passport (FJC, Georgi Danelia, USSR-France-Israel, 1990)
The Plot Against Harry (JFF, Michael Roemer, U.S., 1969)
Sadotyerukim (Green Fields, FJC, Isaac Zeppel Yerukim, Israel, 1989)
Sanatorium pod Klepsydra (The Sandglass, FJC, Wojciech Has, Poland, 1973)

DOCUMENTARIES
Bigal Hamilkhamah Hahi (Because of that War, JFF, Orna Ben-Dor Niv, Israel, 1988)
Forever Activists (FJC, Judy Montell, U.S., 1990)
Great Cantors of the Golden Age (JFF, U.S., 1990)
Next Time Dear God Please Choose Someone Else, Rex Bloomstein, UK, 1990)
The Sabbath Bride (JFF, UK, 1987)
Sarsah (JFF, Orna Ben—Dor Niv, Israel, 1991)
Yiddish the Mother Tongue (JFF, Pierre Sauvage, U.S., 1979)
Travelling Light

I can remember my admiration (as a young producer) when the DOP on a 16mm documentary shoot took from out of a suitcase his Lowel lighting kit: three stands, lights, barn doors, cutters, gel frames, diffusion scrim, a doorframe clamp, leads and a power board. It was a box of technology about which I changed from wide-eyed appreciation to apprehension as, in true Pandora fashion, it enabled us to blow the fuses on a whole office floor and seemed to take us forever to repack.

Now we are all a bit more critical. It takes something like the razzle-dazzle of dedolights (with lower-case d) or the CineKinetic kits to impress me now, yet only time will tell whether the new items stand up like the Lowel. The dilemma of portable systems is that at some point the reduction in size/weight/complexity starts to work against you. Having to compromise with poor tools doesn’t always bring out the best in us.

With this in mind, I have selected a few items from a range of current equipment and services that you might consider when travelling light. To make it more than press release and catalogue hype, I’ve attached some user comments.

FRED HARDEN
applications is on a step ladder for high-angle shots.

The price for the Door Claw is $995 and for high-speed work David recommends an additional Bracing Kit at $325. This is basically a clamp that goes around the handle of the camera and runs to the car roof with a telescopic rod attached to a suction clamp. This takes out any movement when combined with the side bracing straps, nylon rope that uses clamp cleats for tensioning. David originally used winches and actual straps, but found that they had enough wind resistance to flap and gradually move the camera. He says, I've done amazingly steady shots on race cars at 180 kph, and news stories in rally cars where I've been able to change from a forward, reverse and an interior shot in less then twenty minutes. It takes less than five minutes to hang the mount on the door and fix the strap around it and winch it on.

For Sales and Rentals inquiries telephone David Boulter on (03) 544 5769.

CineKinetics gear is available through a number of outlets, including the John Barry Group and Lemac.

THE ‘TRAVELLING LIGHT’ LIGHT

Last year Dedo Wegart Film GMBH received a Technical Achievement Award from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for its development of a portable focusing-beam lighting system they called the dedolight.

Designed as a portable 12-volt system from the beginning, the innovation that the Academy acknowledged was primarily the patented optical method that replaces the common fresnel lens. By using a quartz halogen lamp, a separate rear mirror and a meniscus lens behind the front clear condenser lens, the dedolight has a flat lighting field from edge to edge and an extraordinary focusing range.

The lens system also allows the lamp to reach a standard 3200 degree Kelvin at slightly under the rated 12 volts (10.7 volts). This gives what Dedo claims is a typical 1250 hour life, an increase of 25 times the manufacturer’s rated life expectancy. The power supply unit which is switchable 110,120,220,230 and 240v, allows each of the lights to be switched individually from off, to low (3000 K), medium (3200 K), and high (3400 K at 12.2 volts). Because of good thermal design even the high voltage gives extended lifetime beyond the manufacturer’s ratings. There is a fifth 12v outlet from the supply that can be used as a camera power feed.

With a 100-watt lamp and on the high power position and flood, the output is stated as approximately equal to a 300-watt fresnel (if you have one!). When spotted, the output is higher.

The dedolight can also be fed directly from a 12v battery belt or camera battery or via a car cigarette lighter socket.

Among the accessories, there is a projection attachment that uses standard Rosco-M size gobos for projecting patterns, a flat aluminium plate holder with a two-way articulated arm ending in the 5/8” (16mm) stud, and a 6-inch suction holder with a vacuum pump. There are adapters for on-camera mounting and stand mounting.

The kit displayed in the photograph is one of two standard ones but kits can be individually assembled.

Noel Jones has been a cameraman for about twenty years and started shooting news at Channel 7, moved to Channel 10 and then to Lemac. He has been freelance for the last two years shooting documentaries, commercials and corporate work. He has just started shooting what he describes as "pretty pictures" for a new television lifestyle show for Gavin Disney. He comments about his dedolights: I bought the lights for a three-month overseas job I had with an English firm, The Principal Film Company. It was two documentaries on global warming with a presenter called James Bourke. I wanted something light because I was taking quite a lot of gear, including a suitcase dolly and a mini-jib, and there were
only two of us. I didn’t want something where I had to worry about voltages and the dedolight has the transformer which is switchable to almost anything. They are a good light because of their focusing range, and I find them handy on a big lighting situation where you whack up a big light and use the dedo as supplementary to give you contrast. For travelling there is nothing better.

The case that I got with it is very compact. I was worried at the start about its strength, but it’s held together and the new ones are better.

The limpet suction mount is useful when I need to put a light on a window. I don’t use it a hell of a lot, but it comes in handy when you’re short of space.

I think I was the first in Australia to get a kit and, while I didn’t think they were terribly cheap, they are very well made.

The globe is a 100 watt — they only cost about five dollars, and seem to last a hell of a long time. I did try to get some in Singapore and had some trouble there, but I’m sure you could find them in most places. They’re so small and cheap that I just take a dozen with me.

LEMAC have dedolights also for hire, a good way to suss out new gear if you are thinking of purchase.

THE BASIC MAKE-UP KIT

Travelling Light as a concept applies to all the production crew. It requires you to take just enough to cover all situations and we asked Dawn Swane of 3 Arts Make-up Centre/Art & Technology of Make-up (choose one) what would be the basic make-up artists kit to take away. Dawn has also given us current prices of the items from her make-up centre shop. She also mentioned that the Australian Film Television & Radio School has a 26 minute 1982 videotape for hire that has a basic kit and is called, not surprisingly, Basic T.V. Make-up.


Then there is the list of miscellaneous items, including cleanser, toner, moisturiser, tissues, cotton buds, sponges (synthetic and sea), powder puffs, and a cape and headband to protect the actors clothes.

Art & Technology of Make-up Studio. Cnr. 44-46 Myrtle Street, Chippendale, Sydney 2008.

Telephone: (02) 698 1070.

HELLO AND SORRY,
I FORGOT YOUR BIRTHDAY

Agfa XT100 replaces the XT125

With an exposure index of 100 ISO for Tungsten and 64 ISO for Daylight with an 85 filter, Agfa has replaced the XT 125 stock with new XT100. The stock is an improved fine-grain medium-speed stock. It uses advanced XT grain technology and concentrates on a more uniform distribution of smaller tabular grains to improve the image structure. Danny Batterham is featured on the recent Agfa ads as DOP on Shotgun Wedding. He used the new stock on the movie and had very complimentary things to say about it.

Accompanying the XT100 press release was a reminder of a significant piece of motion-picture history that happened fifty years ago as at October last year. 31 October 1941 was the Berlin release date of a German musical comedy So Women are Better Diplomats. Its place in the record books is not due to the filmic content, but the fact that it was the first full-length feature produced with Agfacolor film, a single-strip negative with dyes incorporated in three layers in the photographic emulsion.

A film critic of the time reported, “The public was thrilled and delighted with moving pictures in colours which were really close to nature.

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My Favourite Tool

Ellery Ryan: The Pentax Digital Spotmeter

In this column we invite industry people to nominate one item of their equipment that they wouldn’t be without. We lead off with a cinematographer, but it could just as easily be a grip, gaffer or sound recordist.

Ellery Ryan has made the move from DOP on countless commercials to features, and from Melbourne to the world. His recent credits include Death in Brunswick and he is currently in the U.S. shooting for director Richard Franklin. He was included a few years ago in the Cinemas Papers calendar featuring Australian DOPs. Unfortunately, it was accompanied with a photo of somebody that we have still to identify, but it certainly wasn’t Ellery. To make amends and so that you will recognize him at the next Academy awards, (“Look, isn’t that Ellery next to Dean Semler?”), please study the photo of him here with his favourite tool, a Pentax Spotmeter.

Ellery says:

“I’ve owned a Pentax Digital Spotmeter made by the Asahi Optical company of Japan for something like nine years. I’ve shot nine films with it, eight mini-series and several hundred commercials. It has been snowed on at Arthur’s Pass, had gallons of salt water dumped on it in Auckland, been covered in dust for days in Central Australia. It has been dropped on and into every surface from mud to concrete, and even been driven over by an American tourist in Hong Kong (‘Have a nice day’, she called as she drove away.)

“The serial number has dropped off somewhere along the way, but it is so severely dented from repeated falls to rockhard studio floors that I can no longer screw on the close-up lenses, and the attractive black stipples finish has been worn smooth by hundreds of thousands of encounters with its owner’s sweaty hand. Still it persists. Other meters have come and gone, some lasting no longer than two or three months from the violent and unthinking abuse that a DOP hands out.

“I understand the pathetic fallacy. I realize that a meter is only an electronic measuring device, and yet the only thing that stops me from building a small mausoleum for it down in the back yard next to the graves of Rover and the budgerigar is a near certainty that I shall be in my grave long before the Digispot will be laid to rest.”
Maybe Kodak could sell this in a plain brown wrapper or have a slipcover that says “Cinematographer’s Refresher Handbook” because it is of potential interest to a lot more camera people than just students.

If you are not too embarrassed to be considered a student, this would be a good travelling read on the plane. If you are, sneak it into your luggage anyway. I don’t imagine that you will use the book for reference on location, but as a basic text on just using FILM it pulls together lots of Kodak information sheets into a slim 160 pages.

It is still readable, but you will need to pay attention to the sensitometric technical bits, but there are small sections of interesting historical background, such as in the sound section, that are as up-to-date as Kodak co-developed digital CDS format (but not the digital Dolby process).

There is a good section on dealing with labs, what to expect, and when and how to ask for it. In places it talks down by being a bit dogmatic (maybe it’s just good ol’ American positive thinking), such as in the section on marketing yourself or your work and in finding potential clients.

The glossary needs to be expanded: it has good simple explanations, but is pretty thin on some necessary areas and includes a few bits of film history that will be of only passing interest.

At the Kodak price of $14.95 it is recommended. Your local motion picture representative doesn’t have them so call Margaret McLoughlan at Kodak Sydney on (02) 870 4378.

To give you a taste of it and in line with our theme in this issue, we are reproducing the section on Film Handling. Thanks to Kodak for permission to reprint it here.

STORAGE OF RAW AND EXPOSED FILM

The sensitometric characteristics of virtually all unprocessed photographic materials gradually change with time, causing loss in sensitivity, a change in contrast, a growth in fog level, or possibly all three. In color films, the rates at which the various color-sensitive layers respond are not necessarily the same, thus the color balance of the material can also change. Improper storage usually causes much larger changes in color quality and film speed than do variations in manufacturing. Scrupulous control of temperature and humidity, thorough protection from harmful radiation and gases, and careful handling are important to long, useful film life.

Raw Stock in Original Package

Temperature

In general, the lower the temperature at which a film is stored, the slower will be its rate of sensitometric change during aging. For periods up to six months, motion picture raw stock should be stored at a temperature of 13°C (55°F) or lower during the entire storage period if optimum film properties are to be retained.

Raw stock should be stored at -18° to -23°C (0° to -10°F) if it must be kept longer than six months or if the film is intended for a critical use that requires uniform results. Sensitometric change cannot be prevented by such storage, but it will be minimized.

IMPORTANT: After removing a package of raw stock from cold storage, allow it to warm up to room temperature (70°F ± 5°F; 21°C ± 3°C) before opening the can. This will prevent telescoping of the roll during handling because of cold-induced looseness between the layers and will prevent moisture condensation and spotting of the film.

Radiation

Do not store or ship raw stock near X-ray sources or other radioactive materials. Some scanning devices used by postal authorities and airlines may fog raw stock. Take special storage precautions in hospitals, industrial plants, and laboratories where radioactive materials are in use. Label packages of unprocessed films that must be mailed across international borders: “Contents: Unprocessed photographic film. Please do not X-ray.”
This represents a significant advance on previous attempts with colour films. Those previous colour experiments often had widespread viewing because of the novelty value, but were usually shorts or coloured sections cut into features.

Development of the Agfacolor negative/positive process had taken the company’s technicians five years from 1936, when they first introduced the “Neu Agfacolor” slide film that incorporated dye couplers in the emulsion. The process was to continue during the production of the feature. Scenes that were shot in 1939 at the start of the production had to be re-shot for the premiere, as the film stock was refined and colour techniques that we accept as commonplace were discovered. One of these was recorded was surprise that the green field used for an enormous ballet sequence was reproduced with a yellow or blue tint depending on the colour temperature of the light at the various times of day. Other films using the process quickly followed: Munchhausen starring Hans Albers and Sissi starring Romi Schneider. The war and military requisition of materials added another intriguing chapter to film history.

The three colour layers used in these early films have now become twelve emulsion layers, and the emulsions are much thinner. It was the start of the production had to be re-shot for an enormous ballet sequence was reproduced with a yellow or blue tint depending on the colour temperature of the light at the various times of day. Other films using the process quickly followed: Munchhausen starring Hans Albers and Sissi starring Romi Schneider. The war and military requisition of materials added another intriguing chapter to film history.

The three colour layers used in these early films have now become twelve emulsion layers and the emulsions are much thinner. It was the single-strip negative that made colour feature filmmaking simpler and cheaper and Agfa’s contribution was a vital part.

(The history books say that the first three-colour process feature film was the American film Becky Sharp released in 1935 using the Technicolor 3 film strip process. The first single strip negative feature is not as easy to pinpoint.)

### SOUND EXPERIENCE

I feel I should explain why Ian Wilson’s name always seems to pop up when “Technicalities” talks about sound. He’s a friend and when I need a sound recordist comment I ring friends. He also has a firm grasp on new computer and video technologies, and we talk for hours about the way things are going. He has travelled the world on documentary shoots, and worked for 60 Minutes for years. What follows started as a conversation about lightweight and minimum gear for sound recording and the future with digital machines such as DAT. All that will have to wait because this anecdote was more interesting. I’ve always made jokes when struggling to help Ian carry his large silver Haliburton case of equipment and we all use its nickname, the “Mother Case”. Yet the accessories inside have saved many a job, Ian:

The case goes in luggage, but the Nagra always goes over your shoulder with you on the plane. Anyone who doesn’t do that is an idiot and I know there are quite a few who don’t. I always put a tape on it and carry a little microphone in the pouch. If you are shooting current affairs, 60 Minutes, whatever and if the plane gets hi-jacked you have a sound report. I’ve done this since day one and it stops it getting knocked around. What you are fighting is the continual wear and tear and tear that the gear has.

Everything I own in my sound career is in that case. It’s a Haliburton suitcase, it’s been around the world 65 times, it has bullet holes in it, it has every conceivable dent known in the Western world and a few other worlds, but it is very functional because it contains what I need for any job I’m confronted with. It has evolved over the years from numbers of huge cases down to that one; it’s a process of refinement.

Now for the bullet story. We were in the Hunza Valley and there was some border trouble. Suddenly all hell broke loose and I dropped to the ground behind the case. I didn’t realize that something had come close until I opened the case later and a bullet head fell out. I was very grateful for a large case. If I’d taken notice of all you disbelievers it may have been a different story. It would be ludicrous for me to hide behind a small plastic DAT.

A cameraman friend of mine once turned up for a job with a case that was six feet long by two feet wide and a foot deep. To make it manageable it had wheels on it. The attempts to get it on the plane were ridiculous. I got so fed up that, as a joke, I went out and bought a hacksaw and came to his room and said, “OK, I’m going to fix this right now.” He wasn’t impressed, but the reality is you have to watch things like that. If it is anything over 30 kilos in this country, the airline baggage handlers refuse to handle it. So my case teeters on 29 to 30 kilos and, if it goes slightly over, I open it up and take a tape out. The limitation of size is that you need to be able to get to things fast; if it’s too cramped you can’t.

### CINEKINETIC MICRO JIB

The Micro Jib weighs about sixteen pounds (6kg) and folds up within itself to a length shorter than a standard tripod. It mounts on a tripod bowl and can be set up by one person in a few minutes.

CineKinetic have been mentioned (sometimes tongue in cheek) in these pages before. I believe their promotion and brochures are some of the best around and they have had considerable success in the American market. They have been quick to adapt and innovate with a range of product designed for travelling light. But good looking doesn’t always mean it works, so we asked someone who owned one of their Micro Jibs.

Producer and cinematographer Ivan Johnston started in the industry fifteen years ago at the ABC and for eight years made the familiar moves from news current affairs to film documentary and drama. He was second unit DOP on Mission: Impossible and of late he has been shooting and producing more off-beat material for shows like the SBS Eat Carpet. In 1991, he was DOP for a David Attenborough documentary in Queensland about a naturalist painter living in the rain-forest near Cairns. It was for a similar shoot that he purchased his Micro Jib, he explained:

I bought the Jib for an environmental documentary about two years ago, because the director wanted camera moves and, with just a two-person crew, this was the way to do it. It was a very early model and I’ve suggested some changes, such as strengthening the end and changing the tightening knob to the side that you are operating from, which I think have been incorporated. I bought the canvas carrybag with it and, at one stage, we had a substantial walk into the rainforest and I used the handles of the bag to carry the Jib like a knapsack on my back. It wasn’t great, but it was the only way we could have got it there.

On that shoot, we did a shot that I don’t believe we could have achieved with anything else but the Micro Jib. We were on a fifty-foot (15m) long suspension bridge, one hundred feet up in the air. There was a lot of movement in it. I set up the tripod in the middle of the bridge and put the Arri on the jib arm. The shot started up high in some overhanging leaves and tongues across to pick up the presenter walking towards the camera. It’s then that the viewer realizes that the camera must have been floating out in mid-air. It was a great shot.
The Australian Cinematographers Society was formed in Sydney in March 1962, the Melbourne branch not till 1966. I attended a few meetings but there seemed to nothing relevant for me as a young beginner. Priorities change, as they do for organizations, and I've attended the past few award screenings in Melbourne, where there is a healthy growth in attendance and a feeling of relevance to the younger industry members. We depend a lot on the strength of groups such as the IREE and SMPTE; I wonder if it's not time for a resurgence of the other industry guilds, such as for film editing and sound. Here is the first of Marilyn Miller's regular reports from the ACS.

It's no longer news that Australian cinematographers are sought after by overseas production companies because they are inventive, creative and they like to work hard. Working with small crews and low budgets in Australia, our cinematographers have, through necessity, developed good lighting skills and the ability to shoot high-quality pictures under difficult circumstances.

When they are not shooting overseas, they usually come home to Australia to work, rest and to pass on their knowledge to other people in the Australian film industry. The Australian Cinematographers Society hope to have Dean Semler ACS as guest speaker in one or two states in the first half of this year. Dean, who won an Oscar award last year for cinematography in Dances with Wolves, and has been preparing a new feature, will be in Melbourne during May for an AFI seminar. Dean is perhaps the Society's most famous member.

There are others who are also well known to producers throughout the world: John Seale ACS (The Doctor, Dead Poets Society and Gorillas in the Mist), Peter James ACS (Mister Johnson and Driving Miss Daisy), Peter Levy ACS (Predator II), David Parker (The Big Steal and Pure Luck), David Eggby ACS (Mad Max, The Man from Snowy River II and Quigley) and Russell Boyd ACS (Blood Oath).

More than 900 people across Australia belong to the ACS. Most work on features, commercials, television news and current affairs, documentaries or corporate training films. They all share a passion for the art of cinematography and a commitment to maintaining high industry standards.

The Society, whose headquarters are in Sydney, has a branch in each state and the A.C.T. The branches hold regular functions, usually with a focus on film. These functions may include a trade night at a film laboratory, a special-effects studio, or a production or post-production house. Or the function may be an educational evening with a film and guest speaker.

As many of the Society's members who began their craft working with film now work with videotape, some functions cover videotape subjects such as HDTV (high definition television), and the application of film techniques when using videotape.

These functions are free for Society members. Non-members are welcome to attend, but some branches may charge them a small fee for each function. If you are not a member, and you would like to attend any of the following functions, it is advisable that you ring the contact person in case the information given has changed.

NEW SOUTH WALES
You will have missed the February evening with Jim Frazier ACS, by the time you read this. Jim worked with David Attenborough on the Australian shoot of the BBC series, The Living Planet. He is one of the world's best nature cinematographers, well known for developing his own amazing micro lenses and a fine example of the standard of the Sydney ACS nights. For more information contact: Phil Donnison (02) 971 0036.

VICTORIA
The Award Winning Cannes Film Festival Commercials (1991) were held late in February.

Free Student Day, Saturday, 14 March. An introduction to professional work in the industry for people specifically interested in camera work. Numbers are limited. Contact Barry Woodhouse ACS (03) 808 6015, or Marilyn Miller (03) 817 4117.

QUEENSLAND
An evening with Dean Semler ACS on the Gold Coast in March (at a date to be arranged). Contact: Jane or Edwin Scragg (07) 378 0077.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA
Monthly Club trade nights, generally held on the first Tuesday of each month. Contact: Richard Brooking (08) 362 1210.

There will be more information on the Dean Semler nights and other Society functions in the next issue of Cinema Papers.

1. The use of the letters ACS after a cinematographer's name is limited to Society members who have been judged by their peers and granted the honour of ACS accreditation.
Motion Control is a versatile technology that allows precise and repeatable moves on motorized axes. Pan, Tilt, Track, Rotate, Boom and other controlled movements can be repeated for the production of multi-pass or separate-pass elements used in videotape or film composites shot on location or in a studio.

The system allows sync-sound photography at 24/25 fps to playback or film composites shot on location or in a studio. Time exposure and scanning effects controller permits frame rates from single-frame open-shutter exposures creating photography at 24/25 fps to playback or film composites shot on location or in a studio.

Pride Effects Studios, Sydney. Some of port systems have been engineered by motor is also available for photography motorized can be programmed for exposure and scanning effects through to moderate high-speed frame rates up to 150 fps on selected axes.

Camera motor adapter plates are available for computer-controlled camera modes for the Fries Mitchell 35-R3-PL and the Mitchell S-35R MKII, necessary for pin-registered work. Arriflex BLs and Arriflex III can be crystal-locked to the system. Arriflex IIB (Bayonet Mount) with controlled motor is also available for photography of non-registered material.

A variety of motorized camera support systems have been engineered by Pride Effects Studios, Sydney. Some of these include a lightweight 18′ track with dolly and crane with 7′ rise; an emeck format dolly with a riser column centre-mounted pan and tilt head. Special custom-mount rigs also include lightweight and heavy-duty programmable turntables, a vertical track of over 7 metres with a remote pan and tilt head. Other rigs can be modified/built to suit individual projects.

Any rig/model/light that can be motorized can be programmed for exact control to synchronize with a programmed camera move.

Programming time can range from several minutes for a simple pan & tilt, onwards for more complex moves. Set-up time can vary due to location, camera rigging and shot requirements. Suitable time should be allowed for programming and rehearsing moves.

**WATCHING THE NEWS**

If you have been reading somebody's copy of *Encore*, recently, you would have seen the article on the photography of *Redheads* and DOP Steve Mason's technique of modifying the bleach during negative processing of the Kodak 5296 to achieve a hard, high-contrast look. You may have wondered, as I did, which was the adventurous lab that went to all the trouble. No thanks or mention was made in the article, so I asked. It was Atlab.

**SAMUELSON FILM SERVICE FREIGHT DEALS**

One travel topic that came immediately to mind was the problems in air-freighting gear. I remember fronting up to the Ansett air cargo office in Townsville with the usual mound of silver boxes and watching the scale numbers rise along with the counter person's anticipation of the extra revenue. His face fell when we had him call his office for the Sammies' cargo rate. I smiled. When you move as much equipment freight around as Samuelsons, you can negotiate special deals. Dennis Noonan, Managing Director of Samuelsons, said that they were about to make an announcement about International Freight deals that they have been negotiating. Especially with the new Samuelson's office in Singapore, the company is moving gear in and out of the country daily. Talk to them about a quote on your next job.

**ANTON / BAUER ULTRALIGHTS**

The other high tech lighting kit that combines lightweight with compact size is the U.S.-manufactured Anton/Bauer Ultralight. (Anton/Bauer is well known for its ni-cad batteries, and the Anton is the Anton Wilson who was the Cinematographers' Workshop.)

They use a range of different wattage dichroic lamps which ensure sensible battery life, and have a clever system for quick lamp changes on the run. There are fully adjustable swivel and tilt movements. Sydney director-DOP Ron Winton bought a set and was enthusiastic enough to write the following piece about them:

During the 35 years I've worked as a cinematographer and director of television commercials, there have been significant changes and advancements in the tools that cinematographers have at their disposal. The vast improvement in cameras, film stock and lenses have provided the cinematographer with the means to obtain a quality of photographic image that could only have been dreamt about in past years.

The equipment is available equally to all of us, but it is in the clever use of light that cinematographers set themselves apart. I take a great deal of interest in new lighting products and developments, and make sure that I remain familiar with the latest advances.

Recently as DOP and director on a series of television commercials for Calltex I was faced with lighting a number of night driving scenes (some in rain) with actors driving and delivering dialogue. We wanted to work with a small crew and without a lighting generator, and the small space and mobility we required suggested battery-powered lights.

I'd seen the Anton/Bauer Ultralights at John Barry's and Ben Vanderlinder offered them to me for testing. I was impressed, so I made the purchase.

The lights proved to be an asset on that job. They're small, lightweight and portable, and have since been used on numerous shoots. Their compact size let me use them extensively on a recent studio shoot for Canon Bubble Jet Printers. Most of the product photography was on an S-Board and the lamps could easily be hidden behind the printers, allowing me to create highlights and fill where required to supplement the main lighting source.

The lamps are very well manufactured and versatile with a range of barn doors, dichroic filters, diffusers and a wide angle adapter. All in all I find them extremely useful.

Ultralights are available from John Barry Group P/L, Sydney office (02) 439 6955.

**AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY OF MAKE-UP ARTISTS**

The ASMA (Australian Society of Make-Up Artists) will be holding make-up / special effects exams on Sunday 29 March 1992 at the YWCA, 5 Wentworth Avenue, Darlinghurst, for make-up artists wishing to become members. Make-up artists who are not members of the ASMA are strongly encouraged to join. For further details please write to the Secretary, ASMA, P.O.Box 357, Broadway, NSW 2007.
The introduction of random-access editing systems is the biggest single change in film and television post-production since talking movies. Tape and laser disk based non-linear editing systems have been around doing heavy-duty volume work in North America for the past few years. There has been some exposure to these systems in other markets, but they have been basically transitional technologies bridging the gap between traditional film and scissors or off-line video on the one hand, and true random access systems on the other. While a number of systems have emerged or been announced, the field seems to have narrowed to two major players: LIGHTWORKS and AVID.

I don’t propose here to compare the systems or to fully outline their features. Steven Smith covered some of this territory in the last edition from the point of view of an AVID user. As the Australian and New Zealand distributor of LIGHTWORKS, I would like to give some background to this editing machine.

The three partners who began the project are London-based and all have a background in film and television production. Project head, Paul Bamborough, a film director and inventor, was responsible for the SSL audio mixing desk that became a standard in serious music recording studios around the world in the 1980s. With his partners, he set out to produce the best possible editor with the available technology.

They took the view that questions of picture and sound quality would be basically a level playing field, and that the real difference between competing machines would be in the editing interface — i.e. the way in which the editor uses the machine. Having said this, LIGHTWORKS clearly has the edge in picture quality.

The first assumption, then, was that what they were building was an editing machine and the LIGHTWORKS should behave like one. It should have an on/off switch that did just that without presenting computer type screens or requiring any saving or shutdown procedures. It should have a control console that any editor could recognize and use immediately without a training course. And it should not assume that the way an editor wants to work is not the best way for s/he to work. Thus it needed to be flexible enough to be driven by an editor in their preferred configuration.

The list of features is extensive, but the above starting points have all been incorporated into the finished design with great success. Editors who have the machine demonstrated recognize it immediately as a tool they can use to make their job more creative and less about rolling, marking, gluing, filing or number crunching.

Lately, on-line storage has become a discussion point. LIGHTWORKS uses magnetic hard disks for the storage of digitized pictures and sound. It uses optical removable disks for archiving and retrieval of information. In London, there has been much discussion about using the optical removable disks for direct editing. This is possible but, in the opinion of the design team, currently undesirable.

Their approach is to be able to recall material required from optical disks as needed. While previewing the required take from the optical disk, it is written to the hard disk in the background ready for inclusion in the current editing session. It is not necessary to recopy the whole of the optical disk as the machine keeps track of the whereabouts of all the material logged to a project even when the actual picture and sound is not on-line. If a particular shot is required, the machine will advise the editor to put the optical disk into the drive and it will retrieve it.

There are two good reasons for not editing direct off the opticals:

1. The data transfer rates are very slow (comparatively). If fast cuts are required from the same disk, there is the likelihood that the material will not show up when required.
2. The disks only store 500 MegaBytes per side, or 50 minutes at the lowest picture and sound resolution. If you want to access the other side, you have to physically turn the disk over and then you no longer have access to the material on the A side.

If you are interested in these devices, and plan to use one on your show, take a good look at the available machines before deciding which way to go. Take a test drive and kick the tires.
But how much of your walking up to a group of Russians is George Negus the individual being interested in them and how much is it George Negus playing out his role in the film?

Almost without exception, what I would say to people on camera is what I would say off camera. If I saw a group of Russians at a service station after the failed coup attempt, I really would want to talk to them anyway.

The fact that you talk to them with the camera rolling just adds a filmic element, which means that you’re probably a little more careful in the way it’s done, not what you say.

But take the early shot where you pat the side of a truck and say something like, “Do you think it’s going to get us across Russia?” It’s a line that could almost have been scripted for that point in the film.

Well, you know you have to say something like that and you hope that it’s also very close to what you would have said anyway. Sometimes it works and sometimes it sounds like you’re setting something up. You can find quite corny lines working their way into your on-camera performance. The beauty of editing is that you can throw them away.

But when you’ve been doing it as long as I have, it becomes almost another sense. There are friends of mine who would accuse me of never being off camera in my daily existence; there are others who say I behave on camera as if there’s no camera there. Who’s right? All it means is that the person and the journalist have become so enmeshed that there is no cut-off point; I’m one and the same.

When you were doing stories for 60 Minutes, how free were you to be yourself? To what degree were there pressures from executive producers and others to tailor your performance?

There were no executive or management pressures. I was completely free to do what I wanted to do, the way I wanted to do it, within the constraints of the format and the style. What caused me to leave eventually was that I saw television journalism becoming too formatted, too much a captive of its own success and its own structure. It became a professional straitjacket. I felt I was becoming professionally stereotyped. So, you either take the extra money and wear it, or you take less money and leave. I decided to do the latter because my own profession and journalistic ethic are far more important to me than maintaining a commercially successful television programme for the sake of Kerry Packer, Alan Bond or anybody else.

The other danger is of becoming not quite a caricature of yourself, but a parody. Because of the high profile and the continual exposure, you become the butt of jokes, cartoonists and satirists, all of which is flattering in the first instance, but gets to be a pain in the bum after a while.

Because 60 Minutes helps delineate an image of a presenter quickly and clearly, the custodianship of that image is crucial. The high-profile presenters must inevitably become very concerned about their own images and even begin controlling themselves more than outside forces might.

That’s why I’ve always been more than willing to be outspoken in a private/professional sense. If I asked for comment about things that I think I’m qualified to comment on, I give one. I haven’t done that as a 60 Minutes reporter or as a journalist, but as a high-profile individual.

But yes, you’re right. The pressure to conform, even within what is a fairly free environment, is very hard to resist. And the only way to resist is to get out. If you look at what all the original 60 Minutes reporters have done, and I say this kindly, Ray [Martin] went from one constriction to another, as did Jana [Wendt]. Maybe they are better at handling constriction than I am. As for Ian [Leslie], he tried to go his own way and he’s had a few professional mishaps, but I’m sure he’ll find his professional feet again.

I was very aware that when I left 60 Minutes and did the Today show that I was going from one constriction to another, but I needed professional breathing space. I needed time to work up, if you like, the guts to make a deliberate move out of the system so that I could come back to it in a totally different professional form — still George Negus, but a Negus packaged in quite a different way.

Was that not only a financial risk but also an emotional one, in the sense that you don’t have this huge support mechanism around you?

It was not a financial risk; it was financial stupidity, if you want to be ruthless about it.

When I left, most of my well-meaning friends in the industry, like Gerald Stone, said, “The thing I think you’ll find most difficult is the lack of a support structure.” That was true to an extent, because it meant I wasn’t free to do only what I wanted. When you are on your own, you have no choice but to think about the financial aspects, the legal aspects, the hiring and firing, and all those awful, murky areas of the profession that you prefer not to know about.

That being the case, people who think they could do what we did and succeed overnight deserve to fail, because you can’t. If people also expect that moving outside the structure of the system means that they can make product and have it immediately accepted by the networks, then they are very stupid. There is an automatic antagonism, by the commercial networks at least, towards anybody who flies in the face of the system, or, if you like, bites the hand that feeds them. They would much prefer you in there being an expensive maverick than out there being a competitor, or even just somebody selling product to them.

The commercial networks are so unaware of the real financial nature of their own industry that they think it’s more expensive to buy product off people like myself than to have us working there in on a huge salary. I suspect that very few television executives understand how much their own products cost because so much lying, cheating, scheming and amortising goes on. That makes it doubly difficult for people on the outside to go in there and sell product.

Did you consider at any point trying to arrange a sort of half-in-there/half-outside relationship with a network?

We had one and still do. I wouldn’t go so far as to say that it’s one foot in and one foot out, but we’ve maintained a toe in the water throughout, first of all with Nine. This was totally unworkable because they were just scheming and amortising goes on. That makes it doubly difficult for people on the outside to go in there and sell product.

Seven tried much, much harder to deal with us and, in fact, we sell product to them. I suspect that’s a relationship that could have developed.

Now we’re discussing a similar relationship with the ABC, whereby I work for them [on Foreign Correspondent] and also sell them things. There is every reason to believe that is going to work out very well.

The most frustrating thing about dealing with the commercial networks is that they totally lack any sort of adventurism when it came to new programmes, though very recently Seven seems to be showing a bit of bravery. But the mad rush of blood that Nine had with programmes like 60 Minutes, Sunday, Today and Wide World of Sportstend, twelve years ago has gone. The last bold thing they did was Burke’s Backyard and now, because that’s successful, they don’t want to go outside that.

It is infuriating to bash your head against this wall which refuses to acknowledge the fact that people other than their programmers, their hole-fillers, can come up with ideas for programmes. There’s nothing
**Why don’t the television networks understand their audiences better?**

Because they never talk to them; they just talk to each other and to market surveyors.

The phrase that annoys me more than anything in the television industry is people saying, “That’s what the mob wants.” Quite frankly, I don’t know many television executives or journalists or programme-makers who have a clue about what the mob wants. They wouldn’t know who the mob is; they’ve spent most of their lives trying to be something other than one of the mob. Their ‘awareness’ of their own market is a self-perpetuating myth. They just wouldn’t know.

**And why would George Negus know?**

For my sins as a high-profile journalist, the great unwashed—for a more charitable way of describing the Australian viewing audience—think they know you, and they make a point of approaching me and talking to me.

I also regard myself as an incredibly normal human being and I mix with incredibly normal people. And the sorts of stories I do mean that I meet a lot of ordinary people. I don’t hide from them like most of the people I know in television and journalism.

I have been quoted recently as saying that television people underestimate the audience’s intelligence level. That’s probably a smart-ass crack. What I also said, but it didn’t get as much coverage, was that they underestimate the audience’s interest level. Quite often television managements will say the television audiences wouldn’t be interested in story x or story y, when they really mean they’re not. And because they’re not, because it doesn’t affect their lives in any way, shape or form, they don’t think people out there are particularly interested either.

In the past fifteen to twenty years of my life, I have been continually astounded at the interest level of ordinary people in what’s going on around them, not just in Australia but internationally. They want to know, and they feel quite starved and deprived of attractively-packaged information and explanation. And that, in the long run, is what we are about: making attractively-packaged information and explanation.

**How do you define the audience that you’re making programmes for?**

The bottom 85%, people who don’t normally find things out for themselves.

I only took the job at the ABC because I know it is consciously trying to extend its audience reach from the 10 or 12 it now is to the 20s and maybe 30s. Instead of my trying to maintain an interest level from ordinary Australians, what I would like to do now is take ordinary Australians to the ABC audience camp. I think the ABC was far too restricted for far too long. But I’ve been very encouraged by what I have seen in the past five to ten years. The ABC is now aggressively setting out to attract more people to watch its programmes, and not just traditional ABC viewers.

**Do you feel the same about SBS?**

SBS is a great shame because it is technologically crippled. It can’t reach people. If everybody who told you that SBS was a wonderful channel actually watched it, SBS’ ratings would be about 20.

You never hear anybody say anything that isn’t positive about SBS, as though everyone knows it intimately. They have an inkling that SBS has something to tell them and show them, and they’re right.

**In terms of the audience, how do you think this bottom 85% perceives you?**

[Long pause] Well, I think they identify with what they see as my normality. I’m a normal human being who happens to have picked up information and developed opinions about a lot of things over the years. I’d also like to think they identify because I don’t talk down to the audience. Having said that, I’ve never pitched myself at any particular audience level either.

It’s all about communication. If you’re not communicating with people, they won’t watch. I’ve never had that problem, which means that whatever method I’m using instinctively or deliberately works. Very few people say to me, “I didn’t know what you were getting at.” Hence, over the years, there have been all those accusations of oversimplification and sensationalization. That’s a heap of shit. The skill of the journalist on television, whether it be the ABC or commercial networks, is to communicate incredibly complex issues, subjects and situations to as wide an audience as possible, and that means having to state things in a way that may occasionally appear to others as trivializing or superficial.

To communicate to a lot of people quite successfully, you have to know a lot more than you appear to know, and that’s the way I see myself. People know that I don’t say things for the sake of it, that I don’t make claims I can’t justify, that I don’t pretend experiences I haven’t had. They know that I’ve been there and done it, that I am not a theoretician but an activist. I like to think there’s a credibility factor that has nothing to do with me seeking credibility. They just feel that I’m fair dinkum as an individual, so therefore I must be fair dinkum as a journalist.

To that description one might add “passionate”. There are not that many journalists who seem genuinely and passionately interested in what they’re doing.

That’s true; I am passionate. The things that interest me as a journalist also interest me as a human being, so I don’t have to fake it. Maybe that is another explanation for why people appear to react positively to what I do. I couldn’t fake it and I wouldn’t.

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**ACROSS THE RED UNKNOWN**

As those interested in FFC decisions would already know, the FFC does not reveal at the time of its decisions how much money has gone to each project. One must wait to the annual report for that information.

From the 1990-91 Annual Report come the following figures. The name in parentheses is the director(s), which is followed by the production company. Unless otherwise specified, the amount listed is an equity investment by the FFC. No figures were listed for Feature Film Fund projects.

**FILM FINANCE CORPORATION 1990-1991**

**TELEVISION DRAMA (ADULT)**
- BRIDES OF CHRIST (Ken Cameron) Roadshow, Coote & Carroll, $3,028,000
- GOOD VIBRATIONS (Graham Thorburn) SSF, $1,479,716
- HEROES II - THE RETURN (Donald Crombie) TVS Films, $3,258,164
- SIX PACK (Megan Simpson, Rodney Fisher, Kay Pavlou, Di Drew, Sue Brooks, Karin Altman) Generation Films, $960,000
- TRACKS OF GLORY (George Ogilvie) Barron Films, $3,610,044

**TELEVISION DRAMA (CHILDREN)**
- ANIMAL PARK (Mark DeFriest, Mike Smith) Sunshine Films, $1,360,000
- CLOWNING AROUND (George Whaley) Barron Films, $2,498,000
- LIFT OFF (George Ogilvie, Steve Jodrell) ACTF, $6,800,000
- THE MIRACULOUS MELLOPS (Karl Zicky) Millenium Pictures, $2,088,624
- THE RIVER KINGS (Donald Crombie) Prospected Productions, $2,133,465
- TOMORROW'S END (Noel Price) Film Australia, $2,159,014

**DOCUMENTARIES**
- BRAN NUE DAE (Tom Zubrycki) Jotz Productions, $81,374
- CHAINSAW (Shirley Barrett) M & A Film Corporation, $97,693
- THE DAYLIGHT MOON (Don Featherstone) Don Featherstone Productions, $60,993
- FOR ALL THE WORLD TO SEE (Pat Fiske) Bower Bird Films, $211,791
- GLOBAL GARDENER (Julian Russell, Tony Gailey) 220 Productions, $320,078
- JOHN OLSEN: PAINTING AUSTRALIA (Don Bennetts) Don Bennetts, $196,623
- MEDITERRANEAN CHICK (George Nogus) Negus Media International, $81,873
- LAND OF THE APOCALYPSE (Bob Plasto, Ruth Berry) Mistpalm, $122,056
- TABLE - THE LIFE AND TIMES OF A WOODCHIP (Trevor Graham) Yarra Bank Films, $300,000
- THE RICH TRADITION (Carmelo Musca) CM Film Productions, $376,585
- RIDING THE TIGER (Curtis Levy) Curtis Levy Productions, $516,494
- SACRED SEX (Cynthia Connop) Triple Image Films, $205,474
- THE RpERT AND THE CROSS (Chris Hilton) Aspire Films, $156,000
- TALES OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC (James Wilson) Juniper Films, $1,014,971
- TRACK RECORD (John Mabey, Roy Mason) Sorena, $322,689
- VITAL'S AUSTRALIA (Jon Ossher) Looking For Australia, $161,994

**SECOND AUSTRALIAN DOCUMENTARY FILM CONFERENCE**

From Page 2

AFC, FFC, Film Australia, SBS, National Film Board of Canada, New Zealand Film Commission, British Broadcasting Corporation and state funding bodies, as well as overseas filmmakers, were in attendance. On a more worrying note, there was a significant lack of 'young' filmmakers at the conference.

Black filmmakers had a high profile at the conference. Lina Gopaul of the British Black Audio Film Collective, Tama Poata of Te Hokioi Film in New Zealand, and Aboriginal filmmakers Frances Peters, Rhonda Barker, Rachel Perkins and Francis Jupurrula Kelly all screened and discussed their work. This was and is important.

When Wayne Wharton from the Townsville Aboriginal and Islanders Media Association told a packed session on Aboriginal film that all Aboriginals were documentary filmmakers, he put into a sentence a large issue. As Aborigines until recently have had whites make films about them, they have been denied the chance to tell their culture, their story, their way. Yet, the essence of much documentary filmmaking is the expressing and strengthening of a particular society. It seemed very appropriate, then, to be sitting at a documentary conference and see any number of Aboriginal films and videos being taken on by a general audience.

Day Three was a look to the future. There were lectures on possible markets, a new documentary movement, computers in the documentary and new technology.

The conference ended with delegates trying to come to terms with the present. The fragile state of documentary filmmaking throughout a recession, proposed government legislation and the need to keep documentaries squarely before the public, and industry in general, prompted the forming of a committee to act on behalf of the delegates on an on-going basis. A separate agenda was proposed by the indigenous filmmakers and media representatives. The conference accepted their proposals of establishing working arrangements on their land or with their people.

Lastly, the conference decided to make the event a bi-annual one, with the Third Australian Documentary Film Conference scheduled for 1993. And then it was over. People packed their bags, exchanged cards and had a drink to all of it. They also gave thought to the future of documentaries.

There were numerous reasons given for the high turnout at the conference: the poor state of the industry, the attendance of many corporate video producers, and so on. What is probably closer to the mark is the real concern among those attending about the shrinking opportunities for documentaries in Australia.
A young Aboriginal ex-con is torn between his past and his future. He faces a battle against illegal loggers who destroy their land, and he must choose between his old ways and a new path.

Synopsis:
Nutsy Koala, in the Australian bush. They are a mischievous koala, and his friend, Splodge, Flap Flaprus and Nutty Koala, in the Australian bush. They battle against illegal loggers who destroy their homes and attempt to destroy the bush. But Blinki Bill rallies his friends and together they fight to preserve their homes.

COME BY CHANCE
Prod. company Self-financed
Budget $10,000
Principal production July 1990 - Aug 1990
Production Aug 1990 - Mar 1991
Post-production Apr 1991...
Principal Credits
Director Lara Dunston
Producer Lara Dunston
Costume designer Terry Carter
Scriptwriter Lara Dunston
DOP Terry Carter
Sound recordist Terry Carter
Editors Terry Carter
Composer Terry Carter
Planning and Development
Script editor Terry Carter
Script writer Tara Carter
Casting Lara Dunston
Terry Carter
Screening schedule by Lara Dunston
Budget by Lara Dunston
Production Crew
Prod. supervisor John Cumming
Prod. manager Becky Locke
Location managers Lara Dunston
Transport manager Raife Stokes
Production office Lara Dunston
Camera Crew
Clapper-loader Kathleen O'Brien
Camera asst Kathleen O'Brien
Camera type Arri AL & Bolax
On-set Crew
1st asst director Terry Carter
2nd asst director Kathleen O'Brien
Script assistant Becky Locke
Continuity Sharon Cunniffe
Boom operators Becky Locke
Hairdresser Sharon Cunniffe
Safety officer Becky Locke
Still photography Loic Gueszennec
Art Department
Unit publicist Lara Dunston
Art director Lara Dunston
Props buyer Lara Dunston
Standby props Sharon Cunniffe
Action vehicle co-ords Terry Carter
Camera Crew
Camera operator Brayre Pearce
Focus puller Peter Goodall
Clapper-loader Michele Con Bambacas
Key grip Jon Goldney
Assist grip Scott Broke
Gaffer Peter Walkey
Best boy Jo Mercuro
Generator operator Greg McKee
On-set Crew
1st assistant director Michael Faranada
2nd assistant director Peter Nathan
3rd assistant director Fran Tingley
Continuity Andrea Fontaine
Boom operator Gary Carr
Make-up Liddy Reynolds
Special fx John McQuinn
Stunts co-ords. Peter West
Safety officer Art Thompson
Production Crew
Prod. in charge prod. Doug Yellin
Prod. co-ord. Shona Miller
Prod. ass't. Justin Mellell
Prod. secretary Silla Childs
Location manager Brian Burgess
Unit manager Neville Mason
Production runner Todd Fellman
Prod. accountant Rachel Black
Accounts acct. Tricia McNicla
Paymaster FJUA
Completion guarantor The Completion
Bond Co. 

Synopsis:
Based on the novel of Blinky Bill, the mischievous koala, and his friend, Splodge, Flap Flaprus and Nutty Koala, in the Australian bush. They battle against illegal loggers who destroy their homes and attempt to destroy the bush, but Blinki Bill rallies his friends and together they fight to preserve their homes.

COME BY CHANCE
Prod. company Self-financed
Budget $10,000
Principal production July 1990 - Aug 1990
Production Aug 1990 - Mar 1991
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Principal Credits
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Screening schedule by Lara Dunston
Budget by Lara Dunston
Production Crew
Prod. supervisor John Cumming
Prod. manager Becky Locke
Location managers Lara Dunston
Transport manager Raife Stokes
Production office Lara Dunston
Camera Crew
Clapper-loader Kathleen O'Brien
Camera asst Kathleen O'Brien
Camera type Arri AL & Bolax
On-set Crew
1st asst director Terry Carter
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Synopsis:
Based on the novel of Blinky Bill, the mischievous koala, and his friend, Splodge, Flap Flaprus and Nutty Koala, in the Australian bush. They battle against illegal loggers who destroy their homes and attempt to destroy the bush, but Blinki Bill rallies his friends and together they fight to preserve their homes.
This page contains a list of names and roles associated with various production and creative departments involved in the creation of a film. The names are listed with their respective roles and companies, organized by department. This appears to be a page from a movie production credits list.
Synopsis: A skinny, introverted eleven-year-old meets the young effervescent but drug-addicted Angie and enters her fantasy world. It is a relationship that offers strength to each, and through the highs and lows of a long hot summer they both gradually learn to face the end of the world. The religious and sexual coming of age of a 1960s Seventh Day Adventist boy, who acquires a taste for drink, women and philosophy, and believes the end is nigh during the Cuban Missile Crisis, seems to keep getting postponed.

**SECRETS**

Women and philosophy, and believes the end of the world. The religious and sexual coming of age of a 1960s Seventh Day Adventist boy, who acquires a taste for drink, women and philosophy, and believes the end is nigh during the Cuban Missile Crisis, seems to keep getting postponed.
**SYNOPSIS:** Nick is 16-years-old. He's killed his father. He didn't like him that day. Didn't like him for a long time. Does it matter? This is what it's like to commit a murder. A murder in our angry world doesn't necessarily need a motive. Nick and his mother Angela run for it. Down the highway. Fast. They don't know where they're going. They don't know if the police are after them yet. The unfamiliar road seems malevolent. It is. Avoiding the issue, yet each obsessed with it, they react in ways they don't understand to situations common—place and extreme. They encounter a hitch-hiker with less morals than they think they have. Victims of their act, they run with their memories and meet the world of their fears. But no-one really gets away with it. The fear of being caught — the imprint of the act remains forever.

For details of the following see issue 85: DIAL-A-CLICHE

SOMETHING TO DO WITH ANTS

**AUSTRALIAN FILM TELEVISION & RADIO SCHOOL**

**THE COLOURED CAMPAIGN**

Prod. company Australian Children's Television Foundation
Post-production 10/1/92

**Principal Credits**

Prod. manager Liz Mullinar
Exec. producer Jenny Sabine
Prod. adviser David Connell
Prod. runner Angelo Salamanca
Prod. manager Gabriel Dunn
Prod. adviser Steve Jodrell
Prod. accountant Kathleen Burns
Prod. co-ordinator Anne West
Prod.徵t editor John Holmes
Actress Angela Salamanca
Scriptwriter John Reeves
Script editor Rob Caldwell
Editor Camilla Gold
Production Casting Australian Cinema Ensemble

**Production Crew**

Prod. manager Gabriel Dunn
Prod. adviser Steve Jodrell
Prod. runner John Holmes
Prod. accountant Anna West
Prod. co-ordinator John Holmes
Prod.徵t editor Camilla Gold
Scriptwriter Rob Caldwell
Editor Angela Salamanca
Production Casting Australian Cinema Ensemble

**Production Cast**

Eileen Cressey (Angela), Daniel Wyllie (Nick), Rowan Woods (Ralph), Janine De Lorenzo (Kathy), Tammy Burnstock (Paul), Andrew Ferguson (Kathy), Anthony Mooney (Mr. Funnell), Josi Robson (Lily), Max Lake (Robin), Darren Pearson (Dad), Darryl Mills (Dad), Veronica Stute (Mrs. Price), Graeme Farmer (Mr. Funnell), Jason Eriksen (Mr. Freeland), Maxine Blair (Teacher), Kellie Ellis (Teacher), Janet Cooper (Teacher), Ingrid Wilkie (Teacher), David Connell (Teacher), Petar Stratford (Teacher).
Asst grip
Tim Porter

Rigger
Max Gaffney

Gaffer
Andrew Topp

Best boy
Darrin Fon

Lighting directors
Michael Branney

Graham Brumley

Lighting asst
Mick Cleary

KevinPearce

Electrician
Mick Cleary

On-set Crew

1st asst directors
Paul Healey
John Wild
Phil Jones
Ross Aliasop
David Clarke

2nd asst directors
Marcus Hunt
Martin Green (ABC)

3rd asst director
Andrew Power

Continuity
Carmel Torcasio
Karinirdarson

Audio operators
Tony Dickinson (ABC)
Graham Cornish (ABC)

Audio assts
Neville Kelly (ABC)

Catrina McDonald (ABC)

Make-up
Nik Dorming

Anna Kapinski

Hairdressers
Nik Dorming

Anna Kapinski

Asst hairdresser
Laura Morris

Special fx
Peter Stubbie

Nurse/chaperone
Glad Fish

Still photography
Greg Nokes

Unit publicity
Howie & Taylor

Catering
Kath Field
Sheila Buzza

Director's attachment
Megan Manning

Art Department

Art directors
Bemie Wynack
Dale Marks

Art dept co-ord
Robert Stringer

Art dept runner
Michelle Venuti

Set dressers
Marita Mussett

Phil Chambers

Michael Keane (ABC)

Mark Reynolds (ABC)

Pros buyers
Murray Kelly

Chris Kozlov (ABC)

Standby props
Fiona Grevelle

Brian Lang

Art Camilleri

Peter Wilson

Rod Primrose

Head puppeteer
Peter Stringer

Puppet builder
Rob Matson

Puppet makers
Richard Mueck

Michael Logan

Rob Matson

Add. puppet maker
Peter Matson

Puppet maintenance
Richard Mueck

Paul Myers

Wardrobe

Wardrobe supervisor
Concetta Raff

Rosalie Napper

Bernice Devereaux

Standby wardrobe
Monica O'Brian

Gail Mayas

Dails Lamson

Capri Ireland

Eoin Breen

Machinists
Maureen Ryan

Post-production

Post-prod. co-ord
Ken Tyler (ABC)

Supervising editor
Ralph Strasser

Asst editor
Christina Poddolsky

Stock footage co-ord
Christine de Podolinsky

Editing facilities
The Joinery

Sound mixers
Steve Withower (ABC)

Ian Battersby (ABC)

John Wilkinson (ABC)

Music consultant
Chris Neal

Music educationalist
David Beauchamp

Music co-ord
David Chesile

Visual fx director
Paul Nichola

Vis. fx produ. man.
Peter Bain-Hogg

Vis. fx 'E' Fantasies art
Maree Woolley

'Lotis' interior fx co-ord Michael Bladen

'Patches' animator Glenn Mellenhorst

Visual fx runner
Julian Dimsey

Animation consultant
Peter Viskar

Cast:
Mark Mitchell (Mr Fish), Paul Cheyne (Nipper), Erin Pratten (Posa), Maria Nguy (Kim), Madeline Blackwell (Jennifer), David Sandford (Ted), Heber Varian (Turbo), Robert Peschel (Max), Aru Kado (Swap), Akil Bueliki (Little Ak).

Synopsis: Littl Off is a children's television programme aimed at three to eight-year-olds. It will consist of 26 one-hour programmes which can be split into half-hour episodes, and will be screened weekly during and after school on the ABC from May 1992. It will use actors, puppets and animation and each episode will be based around a broad theme.

NEIGHBOURS (serial)

[See issue 84 for details]

TELEVISION POST-PRODUCTION

THE BOYS FROM THE BUSH (series II)

Prod. companies
Entertainment Media

Principal Credits

Directors
Shirley Barrett

Exec. producers
Peter Beilby

Scriptwriters
Douglas Livingston

Bill Garner

Cast:
Chris Haywood (Dennis), Tim Healy (Reg), Pat Thomson (Doris), Nadine Garner (Ariane), Mark Haddigan (Leslie). The Boys from the Bush Programme Guide: Series II, Reg. 9/12/91 - 29/6/92

Synopsis: It's Series II, Reg. 9/12/91 - 29/6/92 again surprised by a visit from his ingenuous English nephew, Leslie. This time, Leslie arrives to find Melbourne is even more surprising than your average kangaaroo. Engaged to a millionaire's son and 'Melvourian Confidante' get involved with some very big players indeed.

KEELY 2 (mini-series)

Prod. company
Westbridge Prods

Dist. companies
Telesat Releasing

Westbridge Entertainment

Budget
$3.5 million

Pre-production
14/10/91 - 29/6/92

Production
14/10/91 - 29/6/92

Post-production
14/10/91 - 29/6/92

Principal Credits

Directors
Chris Langman

Line producer
Mike Smith

Exec. producer
Jonathan M. Shiff

Scriptwriters
David Phillips

Peter Heworth

Peter Kinchlo

Allison Nesselle

Shana Brennan

Shelia Sibblay

Desine Morgan

Judith Colquhoun

DOP
Brett Anderson

Sound recordist
John Wilkinson

Editors
Ray Daley

Philips Watts

Prod. designer
Georgie Greenhill

Composers
Gary McDonald

Laurie Stone

Planning and Development

Story editor
Galina Hardy

Script editor
Jenny Sharp

Casting
Jo Rippon

Production Crew

Prod. manager
Gina Black

Prod. co-ord.
Susie Evans

Producer's ast
Coya Hegarty

Prod. secretary
Helen Boivincnis

Location manager
Greg Ellis

Transport managers
Feell Wheels

Conte Movie Trailers

Unit manager
Gerrit Breet

Insurance
Jennifer Clevers

Insured
Hammond Jewell

Completion guarantor
Fil Finances

Legal services
Barak Gosing

Cameraman Crew

Focus puller
Terry Howells

Clipper-loader
Warl Lawrance

2nd unit focus
Gary Bottomley

Camera type
Arr SR

Joel Witherden

Key grip
Craig Dusting

Ast grips
Laurie Fish

Best boy
Roy Pritchett

Electrician
Michael Hughes

On-set Crew

1st asst directors
Robert Kewley
Richard Cierdinwen

2nd asst directors
Maria Phillips
Rosemary Morton

3rd asst director
Gene Van Dam
Katy Hennessy

Continuity
Paul "Crusty" Kley

Boom operator
Ray Phillips

Make-up
Angie Conta

Make-up assit
Michelle Johnstone

Special fx
Stunts co-ord.
New Generation Stunts

Stunts
Chris Peters

Safety officer
Chris Peters

Still photography
Pamela Hawkins

Unit poetist
Anthea Collin

Catering
Band Aide

Art Department

Art dept runner
Peter Ramsey

Set dressers
adie Freer

Soe Casting
Guy Cochrane

Props buyer
Angela Christa

Standby props
Chris James

Wardrobe

Wardrobe supervisor
Manon Bojce

Mandy Sedavik

Animals

Animal trainers
Michael Garcia

Paul Van Vilet

Post-production

Post-prod. supervisor
Ray Daley

Edge numberer
Post

Sound transs by
Post

Recording studio
The Music Department Laboratory
Cinemax

16mm

Shooting stock
Kodak

Off-line facilities
Post

Government Agency Investment Development

Development
Film Victoria

Production
FPC

Marketing

Inst. dist.
Teles Images

Atlantis Releasing

Westbridge Entertainment

CAST:
Max the dog (Kelly the dog), Charnaine Gormally (Jo Patterson), Alexander Kemp (Danny Foster), Anthony Hawkins (Mike Patterson), Gil Tucker (Frank Patterson), Ailsa Piper (Maggie Patterson), Kay Brinson (Dr Robyn Foster), Matthew Ketteringham (Chris Patterson), Mike (Junior), Jo Spence (Brian Horton).

Synopsis: The continuing story of three young children growing up in Fern Cove and their adventures with a retired police dog. An action, adventure romp.

THE LEAVING OF LIVERPOOL (series)

Prod. comps
ABC-BBC-Knapman Prods

Pre-production
8/7/91

Production
16/9/91

Post-production
9/12/91

Principal Credits

Prod. designer
Michael Jenkins

Director
Steve Knappan

Exec. producers
Panny Chapman

Assoc. producer
Wayne Barry

Scriptwriters
Jo Cooper

DOP
Susan Smith

Sound recordist
Steve Windon

Editor
Peter Grace

Prod. designer
Marcus Lawless

Costume designer
Anne Marshall

Production Manager
Liz Mullin

Casting
Liz Mullin

Extras casting
Lizelle Edney

Storyboard artist
Steve Lyons

Production Crew

Prod. manager
Jo Rooney

Prod. co-ord.
Sandy Stevens

Prod. secretary
Lisa Hawkes

Location manager
Peter Lawless

Ass unit manager
John Downie

Post-production runner
John Vitalios

Prod. accountant
Cynthia Kelly

Accounts assit
Irene Gaskell

Camera Crew

Camera operator
Marc Spicer

Focus puller
Sean Mcllory

Matthew Temple

Key grip
Paul Thompson

Ast grip
Benn Hyde

Gaffer
Ken Petigrew

Best boy
Bruce Young

Electrician
Greg Allan

Generator operator
Phil Mulligan

On-set Crew

1st asst director
Adrian Pickersgill

2nd asst directors
Craig Sinclair

Ross Giannone

Leah Vincent

Suzy Brown

Gerry Nucifora

Chirs Tripodi

Kerry Jury

Jemma Wilson

Special fx
John Neal

Stunts co-ord
Claude Lambert

Unit nurse
Gary Jongton

Still photography
Jenna Johnstone

Unit publicist
Krista Natenklo

Catering
Marie's Catering

Tutors
Narele Simpson

Art Department, Wardrobe

[See previous issue for details]

Construction Dept

Scenic artist
Paul Brielbaker

Carpenter
Karl Hart

Set finisher
Michael Hushan

Post-production

Ass editor
Liz Walshe

Off-line facilities
Spectrum Films

Production

Television

Cast:
Christine Tremarco (Lily), Kevin Jones (Bert), Frances Barber (Ellen), Bill Hunter (Brother O'Neil), John Hargreaves (Harry), Frankie J. Holden (Bunter), Martin Jacob (Brother Jerome), Kerry Walker (Mrs Dunne), Pauline Rand (Mrs Lang), Colin Moody (Mr Symonds).

Synopsis: The Leaving of Liverpool tells the story of two remarkable children who were victims of the convinion and cruelty of the governments and organizations involved in the mass transportation of deprived and homeless children throughout the British Empire in the 1950s.

See previous issues for details on:

ALL TOGETHER NOW

BONY CHANCES

A COUNTRY PRACTICE

THE CROCODILE ON TRIAL

GOOD VIBRATIONS

HEROES II - THE RETURN

THE MIRACULOUS MELLOPS

CINEMA PAPERS 87
A panel of eleven 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); Sandra Hall (The Bulletin, Sydney); John Harris (The Adelaide News); Paul Harris (3RRR; EG, The Age, Melbourne); Ivan Hutchinson (Seven Network; Herald-Sun, Melbourne); Stan James (The Adelaide Advertiser); Adrian Martin (Business Review Weekly; "Screen", 3RN); Scott Murray; Tom Ryan (3LO; The Sunday Age, Melbourne); David Stratton (Variety; SBS, Sydney); and Evan Williams (The Australian, Sydney). Welcome to John Harris of the Adelaide News. Neil Jillett of The Age is on holiday.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FILM TITLE</th>
<th>Director</th>
<th>BILL COLLINS</th>
<th>SANDRA HALL</th>
<th>JOHN HARRIS</th>
<th>PAUL HARRIS</th>
<th>IVAN HUTCHINSON</th>
<th>STAN JAMES</th>
<th>ADRIAN MARTIN</th>
<th>SCOTT MURRAY</th>
<th>TOM RYAN</th>
<th>DAVID STRATTON</th>
<th>EVAN WILLIAMS</th>
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keep the show
on the road.

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