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Scott Murray

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CINEMA Papers

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CINEMA PAPERS 94.1
'The Salute of the Jugger'
Dear Editor

The Salute of the Jugger certainly has its own slightly dotty integrity and I'm glad that someone has come out and said something positive about it at last [Scott Murray, in "Second Glance", Cinema Papers, No. 92, p. 53]. Audience expectations of maybe an action film or a re-run of Blade Runner [Ridley Scott, 1982, which Peoples scripted] were shattered and people found it very hard to deal with the harshness, the lack of glamour and the bleak poetic vision. I was there at the Sydney premiere and can testify that we were stunned mullets and fairly hostile. Even people who worked on the film walked away in a state of shock.

Nevertheless, the film does have abiding qualities. The scenery, the music, the costumes and the sets, although incidental, are strong and powerful. The casting of the leads is interesting and quirky. The vision of a world winding down into entropy is sustained and believable. The film has its own quite unmistakable flavour - gamy perfume and a feel for the epic. Peoples has just found such a poetic vision. I was there at the Sydney premiere and can testify that we were stunned mullets and fairly hostile. Even people who worked on the film walked away in a state of shock.

David Peoples refuses to compromise his story and soften it in any way. This is a project he has nurtured since Blade Runner, and his commitment and that of the cast shows on screen.

Where the film is weak is in the casting of some minor parts and in the simple nuts and bolts of direction. This is a story that asks for a director with a feel for the epic. Peoples has just found such a director in Clint Eastwood with Unforgiven. It's not the film itself but its uncompromising vision of a future which appalls them.

-- Annie Marshall

Scott Murray comments

It is certainly encouraging to know this film has another dedicated fan out there and that its totally unjustified reputation as a failure may be waning.

Where I would beg to differ with Ms Marshall, however, is over the standard of Peoples' direction. Having seen and re-seen some three hundred Australian films for Australian Films 1978-92 (Oxford, forthcoming), there is little doubt in this writer's mind that The Salute of the Jugger is one of the best directed. Five viewings have done nothing to undermine that belief; in fact, one could list many scenes which are so well crafted they ought to be used in Australian classes on film technique. An obvious example is when Kidda (Joan Chen) is tested out for membership of the team, the camera dramatically tracking in counter parallel to the energetic side movements of the chain-wielding Young Gar (Vincent Phillip D’Onofrio). This is crisp, energizing filmmaking at its best.


'Bern Man's Houses'

Dear Editor

Having committed himself early on in his review of Black Man's Houses [Cinema Papers, No. 93, pp. 42-3] to the thesis that this documentary suffers from a tendency to revert to "essentialist notions of race", Karl Quinn then resorts to misquoting the narration in order to prove his point.

Recalling my final narration as "some people still think that identity is a matter of heart, not logic," he concludes that the film prefers "to leave racial identity in the hands of innate, interior blood links rather than moving to an understanding of race [...] as a social construct".

In fact, Quinn has turned my narration around. What I actually say is: "some people still want to argue, but identity is a matter of the heart, not logic." This is a restatement of Tasmanian Aboriginal Vicki Matson-Green's earlier comment that "Aboriginality is a feeling within; it has little to do with the colour of the skin."

Far from "baulking at the largest gate", Black Man's Houses firmly challenges biological notions of racial identity. Given that the reviewer has a video copy and can easily double check, one can only conclude that Karl Quinn misheard what others had no difficulty hearing because he'd already decided that I had it wrong.

Furthermore, he refers to "cultural discontinuity" as evidence that contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal identity is a construct by people who have been oppressed and, therefore, looked elsewhere for their sense of belonging. This is not the whole picture. If it were, then they might as well be in it for the money, as conventional white racism insists they are.

The truth is that, although Tasmanian Aboriginal culture suffered a mighty assault, continuity has been retained through the kinship system and oral traditions. And before I'm accused of reverting to "blood links" again, let's be clear that kinship in Aboriginal societies transcends biology.

-- Black Man’s Houses acknowledges that far from being static, declining or extinct (notions which are hangovers from 19th Century science), Aboriginal culture is dynamic. It is continually evolving and adapting. Indeed, it’s ability to do so puts more mean-minded cultures in Australia to shame.

Steve Thomas
Co-producer-director

Karl Quinn replies

I have seen Black Man's Houses twice: once on a friend's VCR (I do not own one) and once at the cinema. On both occasions, the line which I have apparently misquoted came across to me and others as I have rendered it (the operative distinction - between the words "but" and "that" - isaurally fine but contextually substantial). For the misquote, I apologize to Mr Thomas.

However, my argument is not dependent on one line of narration alone; it relates to an unspoken tendency that imbues the film as a whole. It is, as evident in Mr Thomas' letter in his claim that "continuity has been retained through the kinship system and oral traditions", which contradicts the statements by many in the film that they didn’t even know about their Aboriginal heritage until rather late in life.

Somewhat insincerely, Mr Thomas' letter subtly attempts to drag my argument into the sphere of "conventional white racism". My support goes out to the subjects of Black Man's Houses, whom I believe have a valid case. However, I do not think that a refusal to address the issue of racial identity in all its complexity and political contradictions is likely to help that case at all.


'Mr' Newman, again

Dear Editor

In this age of simulation and floating signification, Adrian Martin's brave and bold corrective assertion that author Kim Newman "is a woman" [Cinema Papers, No. 93, p. 3], while courageous, must have come as something of a revelation to Mr. Newman.

However, not only is this pedantry wrong, but Martin also misrepresents me. I did not "fault" Science Fiction: The Aurum Film Encyclopedia for "lacking female contributors" per se. I suggested that editor Phil Hardy should have at least included some women critics or SF authors in the revised and expanded section devoted to the critics' topper ten.

-- Mick Broderick

THE LEAVING OF DEBRA SHARP

Debra Sharp, who has been the administrative manager of Cinema Papers for the past three years, has left for new pastures. The staff of Cinema Papers and the MTV Board of Directors wish her the best for the future.
The Australian Film Television and Radio School turns 20

August 1993 sees the twentieth birthday of the Australian Film Television & Radio School.

In the late 1960s, a group of people began lobbying for government support for a local film industry. In 1969, this resulted in an announcement by Prime Minister John Gorton of a three-tiered plan to support the creation of a local film industry.

The bill to establish the Australian Film and Television School was passed unanimously under the direction of Professor Jerzy Toeplitz. This first group of students alone organized a number of special events this year, including the Sit-Corn Forum in March, the recent International Cinematography Forum and a reunion of graduates and ex-staff planned for August.

Some highlights and achievements:

- Since 1973, 444 students have graduated from the full-time film and television courses. There have been 138 graduates from the full-time radio courses which began in 1982. More than 1500 short courses have been run in all states through the Industry Program, with almost 27000 participants.

- An employment survey of graduates conducted in 1988 showed that 86% of all graduates were employed full-time in the film and broadcasting industries. All radio graduates found employment within one month of completing their course. In 1990, during a period of recession, it was found that 90% of the previous year's graduates had still been able to find employment.

- AFTRS graduates Jane Campion and Laurie McInnes were the first Australians to be awarded the prestigious Palme d'Or for Best Short Film at the Cannes Film Festival in consecutive years. Jane Campion is the first Australian to have four films accepted into the Cannes Festival, three of which were produced while she was an AFTRS student, and the first woman and Australian to win the Palme d'Or this year for The Piano.

- The first public screening of student productions was held at the Sydney Filmmakers' Co-operative cinema in August 1976. Since then, the graduate screenings have become an annual and national event, screening in 12 cities around Australia and watched by more than 5000 people.

- The AFTRS hosted the 21st Biennial Congress of CILECT (Le Centre International de Liaison des Ecoles de Cinema et Television) in 1982. Forty-three member countries were involved in discussions on the themes television training and training for the developing world.

- AFTRS Educational Media has produced a large number of video productions on all aspects of media training. With more than 130 titles currently available, it has recently secured an international distribution network with distributors based in the U.S., Asia and France.

- The first AFTRS course designed specifically for Aborigines was held in 1975. Numerous courses have run since then to meet the training needs of Aboriginal broadcasters. When Aboriginal-owned Imparja Television was awarded a licence, the AFTRS conducted a training course in managing a television station for Imparja board members and senior staff in Alice Springs. The School has also devised a three-year curriculum for radio and television broadcasters at Imparja.

- The first training programme in film and television targeted specifically for women was conducted following a UNESCO survey undertaken during International Women's Year. Since then, the Industry Program has run many courses designed to meet the media training needs of women.

- In 1984, the AFTRS began the On-the-Job Training Scheme for women. A world innovation, the scheme enabled experienced women to move into key technical and creative positions.

- Following a request from the ASEAN-Australia Forum in Penang in October 1982, AFTRS organized a television production course for five ASEAN member countries. The success of this course led to further courses being organized in Sydney and other ASEAN countries. Courses have also been run by AFTRS staff in Papua New Guinea and the South Pacific.

CORRIGENDUM

In the last issue of Cinema Papers (No. 93, May 1993), Miro Bilbrough's name was incorrectly spelt on the contents page for her interview with Jane Campion. She was also incorrectly credited for the interview with Tracey Moffatt. The latter interview was actually conducted by John Conomos and Raffaele Caputo.

Cinema Papers apologizes to Bilbrough and Conomos. As for Caputo, he's credited for so much anyway that he can afford to miss a credit once in a while.

MELBOURNE FILM FESTIVAL
31st SHORT FILM AWARDS

- Grand Prix for Best Film (sponsor: City of Melbourne): Lektoren in Finnsternis (Lessons of Darkness, Werner Herzog, Germany-UK)
- Best Short Fiction (Kino): Schwarzfahrer (Black Rider, Pepe Danquart, Germany)
- Best Animation (Kino): Mona Lisa Descending a Staircase (Joan C. Gratz, U.S.)
- Best Documentary (Kino): Those Loved by God (Johannes Holzhausen, Austria)
- Best Student Film (Kino): Wind (Margit Ruile, Germany) and Heart of Pearl (Andrew G. Taylor, Australia)
- Best Experimental Film (Kino): No-Zone (Greta Snider, U.S.)
- Erwin Rado Award for Best Australian Film (Film Victoria): Memories & Dreams (Lynn-Marie Milburn)

Special Commendations

Experimental: DamSEL Jam (Sarah Miles, UK), Rules of the Road (Su Friedrich, U.S.)
Fiction: Shooting to Stardom (Kieron J. Walsh, Ireland-UK)
Documentary: O No Coronado (Craig Baldwin, U.S.)
Animation: A Saucer of Water for the Birds (Anne Shenefield, Australia), Midriftein (Sabrina Schmid, Australia)
Best Science Film (ANZAS-CSIRO): The Northern Lights (Alan Booth, Canada), On the Eighth Day: Making Babies Perfect (Gwynne Basen, Canada)
Ecumenical Award (OCIC Oceania-International Catholic Organization for Cinema and Audio-visuals): Mr Electric (Stuart McDonald, Australia)
The Festival also announced a non-short award for: Best Exploration of the Human Experience (Australian Psychological Society): Como Agua Para Chocolate (Like Water for Chocolate, Alfonso Arau, Mexico)

DENDY SHORT FILM AWARDS

Fiction: Opportunity Knocks (Rick Connolly)
General: Pale Black (Marie Craven)
Documentary: Black Man's Houses (Steve Thomas)
Animation: Sunday (Peter Moyes)
EAC Award: Bread (Nicolina Caia)
Rouben Mamoulian Award: Black Man's Houses and Just Desserts (Monica Pellizzari).

The first three awards were sponsored by the Dendy Cinema, the Animation Award by Yoram Gross Studios and the EAC Award by the Ethnic Affairs Commission of NSW.

CINEMA PAPERS 94 - 3
In this two-part interview, Andrew L. Urban questions writer-director Paul Cox (above) about the shooting of his latest film, Exile, while Raffaele Caputo discusses with Cox the soon-to-be-released The Nun and the Bandit.
trait of an exile
Paul Cox

Exile

*Exile* is set in the 19th Century. A young man, Peter (Aden Young), is banished to an island for stealing a few sheep. There he lives, “fighting the demons of his past and the ghosts of his present”, until the arrival of a young woman, Mary (Beth Champion). When the God-fearing citizens of the mainland learn of their life together, they demand the two be married.

The film is based on *Priest Island*, a novel by the little-known Scottish writer E. L. Grant Watson. It was shot on the largely deserted Freycinet Peninsula on the east coast of Tasmania, where Cox was interviewed while in production.

The location obviously plays an important part in *Exile*. How did you find it?

I had always wanted to shoot on Maria Island. We sent four people in a little plane to do some looking around, but nothing was really achieved. Then, a week or two later, I drove into Cove’s Bay. I chartered a boat and went to Schouten Island. I had this idea that the film should be shot on a real island. But, although it was very beautiful and unspoiled, I compared the island with the fact that it was so easy to film everything on the coast and make it look like an island. So, I went back and this fisherman then took me to a few other places. Suddenly, I knew the Cove’s Bay location was spot on.

The novel is actually set in Scotland, where the story really happened last century. In fact, there is an actual Priest Island near Scotland. Because of that, I felt the film had to have something of that feeling within Australia. I found it on this coast in Tasmania, which has such an ancient quality.

I also discovered this bay was a favourite gathering ground for the Aborigines. There are rock carvings that look like they were done by the sea, but I’m sure they’re Aboriginal. They used to come here, partly because the weather was very mild. It is a very sacred, holy place and one of the last paradises on earth. You never find anything on the beach: it’s very clear and clean. Put your hook in the ocean and a fish comes out. It’s like it used to be.

Did you discover the book a long time ago?

No. Somebody had written a script based on Grant Watson’s novel and given it to me about three years ago. I didn't take to it at all and put it aside. But the writer became a friend. He was quite persistent and then he told me he had found Watson’s daughter still living in England. She sent me *The Nun and the Bandit*, which I read and found very fascinating.

These things tend to hit you at a time in your life when you are ready for something else. Most of my films had been set in small rooms and I was ready to get out of that claustrophobia. I needed to breathe. That is how *The Nun and the Bandit* happened. Later on, the daughter then sent me some more of her father’s books, and one was called *Priest Island*.

I read them all because I found his descriptions of landscape as striking as the way Patrick White writes about the island. It is quite spectacular when people can really explain the landscape to you, the clouds and the sea.

Then went on a holiday, which doesn’t often happen, to this little island in Greece. I had *Priest Island* with me and read it again. I then sat down and spent the next seven or eight days writing a script. I worked very hard from very early in the morning to late at night. It never really changed after that.

Back in Australia it was, of course, the same old story. The FFC didn’t select it for the Film Fund. When I later saw the films that came out of that Fund, I was really upset once again. It was all very silly because the FFC totally misread and misunderstood the script. In the end, we got the money together with the FFC’s help, but only half the money I actually needed.

In what way was the script misunderstood?

Most of the scenes in the script involve a description of the land, the atmosphere of the sea, the way the sky is creating the atmosphere, and how that directs what people say. The real protagonists are the sea and the land, and it’s very hard for people with little imagination to read this sort of thing.

So, there is a lyrical-poetic quality to the story and setting. It is more metaphysical, because in the book there is a ghost. The ghost comes and talks to this exiled man and teaches him, which is a very old-fashioned concept.

While I was writing the script, I thought, “Well, they make films in Hollywood called *Ghost* that have special effects which nobody believes and everybody enjoys.” So, I decided to make the ghost (Norman Kaye) very real. He is like a friend who travels with Peter (Aden Young), but who every now and then suddenly pops up or disappears. The ghost also orchestrates things so that Peter travels. We are so addicted to the flesh, to this life, that we never see the universe and how small we are. So the ghost orchestrates for a woman from the village, Mary [Beth Champion], to come and live with Peter, which is not really in the book.

People in Hollywood get away with the most extraordinary nonsense, so I thought I felt I could certainly do it and still keep it very real.

So, while you question a lot of the things Hollywood does, you also use its poetic or artistic licence?

Yes, and even more so because I have some very fine, young, popular actors and actresses. They weren’t chosen for any commercial reason, but because the story asked for them.

There was difficulty in the beginning making it all clear, and none of us actually understood what was going on. But it all fell beautifully into place and the actors contributed enormously.
As you know, I usually work with the same people, but on this film I have had a total change and turn-around, which for me was very difficult. Of course, a few of my usual actors appear in minor parts.

Exile has a story everybody can understand and digest, and has very popular young actors. But it’s not just a normal story, it has an incredible spirit, and things which throw it in a totally different dimension. As I grow older, I believe less and less in religion, but I become more and more religious.

Religious or spiritual?
It is basically the same thing.

Can you elaborate on these other elements?
Again, the most important aspect is the comment on society. We are very spoilt people. We have everything and everybody has enough to eat, yet we are worried about totally the wrong priorities.

I saw this programme once where young people were asked what they would do if they had a lot of money and all of them came up with the most hideous answers. Until I was 35 or 40, I never even questioned whether there was money in my pocket. It didn’t matter then, though it seems very important now.

Exile is about how society gives people totally the wrong values. Though set in the last century, there were so many parallels with today.

Peter is forced away from society for stealing a few sheep. The people on the mainland want to hang him, but, because he is so young, he is sent to this island. He suddenly has to go back to the earth and survive for himself. Only later does he realize he is in paradise.

When the people on the mainland realize that not only is he surviving, but living with Mary and having a child, the priest talks to his friend and says, “Every time on a clear day you can see part of the island looming in the distance, most of us feel ashamed.” Ah, the lunacy of that righteous society! If they could only accept the lesson of what happens on the island, where there are none of the rules. They have just one another and nature, and are very close.

Basically, our society is out of tune with nature and, because of that, out of tune with itself. Individuals either conform and become part of this very deadly course that we are on, or they blossom away from it all.

In the end, Peter doesn’t marry Mary in the name of God, but in the name of the land and the spirits. In this respect, it is a very beautiful, romantic story. It is also a very telling story about the way we are going.

Being then the devil’s advocate, why is the FFC putting money into a film which, while not ignoring what you’ve just said about western society in general, has nothing specific to say about Australia?

Why does the Film Finance Corporation put money into films like Turtle Beach and all the other unbelievable, ridiculous movies that cost $5 to $10 million to $15 million and are not even released? What has Turtle Beach to do with Australia? What has Green Card to do with Australia? What a scandalous thing that was putting money into Green Card.

So, on this level, I can’t even answer the question. I make films for people, not for Australians or anybody else in particular.

At the same time, I’m much more proud of Australia than most Australians, even though I’m not Australian. I’m still working here, when I would have gone overseas years ago, if I’d been sensible in terms of work. What is Australia? What are Australian films? It is ludicrous thinking and I have no concept of it.

I once had a bad fight at Cannes when I said I was a Victorian filmmaker and not an Australian filmmaker. Phillip Adams and Kim Williams got very angry with me, but I thought there was some value in it because Film Victoria was the only corporation which had continuously supported me. I couldn’t say that about the Australian Film Commission or any of the other bodies because they have either completely ignored me or reluctantly allowed me to continue.

I’m very Australian in my convictions and in my beliefs and in using Australian actors. We have some fantastic talent here. Isabelle Huppert and Irene Papas are the only people I’ve ever worked with outside of all this.

Is the story of Exile in any way symbolic of your position as a filmmaker? You are more highly respected by filmmakers and audiences in the U.S. and Europe than you are in Australia. Does that make you feel like an exile here?

Every film you do with your heart and soul, even every portrait and picture of the landscape you do as a photographer, is a self-portrait. You can’t help it, because that is all you have to give.

Of course, I would never have taken the story of Exile so strongly unless I had seen so many frightening parallels. But, on a larger scale, I think anybody who thinks, struggles, feels and continuously questions is an exile.

I also live in a country that is not my own. I can’t go back to my own country, so I don’t know where I am. I have no home.

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1. At the time, Phillip Adams was Chairman of the Australian Film Commission, while Kim Williams was its Chief Executive.
2. For the record, it should be noted that all of Cox’s dramatic features since Cactus (1986) have had AFC or FFC investment, apart from Film Victoria support. The AFC financially backed Cactus and majority funded Golden Braid (1991), while the FFC has the majority investment in A Woman’s Tale (1991), The Nun and the Bandit and Exile.
Yet you maintain very strongly that you are an Australian filmmaker.

No, a filmmaker living in Australia.

In *Exile*, the question of where it is set doesn’t arise. Was that a conscious decision to make the film universal?

Yes, because it’s not relevant.

Look at America, where they have this false sense of nationalism and patriotism. At the time of the Gulf War, there was a crazy law in Pennsylvania where you couldn’t be buried unless you had a fucking American flag for a hat, even if you came from somewhere else. Why is it that when patriots have something to defend they become the aggressors?

I’m very glad all that by-passed me totally, because patriotism is an act of aggression. You can love your country, and the Greeks have a marvellous saying, “Wherever I travel, Greece warms me.” That’s good enough. The Greeks don’t have that aggression. They don’t go around saying you must do this or that. Yet they are very proud of being Greek, and I love them for that.

On the other hand, when an American travels somewhere, he puts up a Kentucky Fried Chicken outlet and goes to eat at Pizza Hut. Americans cannot possibly understand that there is a world outside of their narrow thinking because they are all patriots, and there is nothing worse than a patriot on that level.

Do you think of your filmmaking in terms of political action?

Yes. If you make films about the human condition, it’s an extremely political act. It is against the very act of filmmaking itself, because that is about money and business, and about bums on seats. Film is like a product on the shelves in the supermarket. It won’t be bought if it makes people feel uneasy, or if it doesn’t make the false shine even more shiny.

It’s a very political act to make my films and get away with it. There are quite a few of my films that are in the black, otherwise I could never go on.

Also, don’t forget I make them very cheaply, and I work extremely hard. There is a lot of opposition to this.

Most of the people who have invested in my films, during the 10BA period and all that, very easily come back and invest again because I don’t disappoint them. If people put money into a film that loses money, and another one makes money, then I will give them their money back. That is how I’ve been able to keep going.

What about in the finished product: is there a moment when you can objectively stand back and look at it?

Only years later can you do that properly.

Have you looked at any of your previous work lately?

No. Films are really like children. They go out into the world: some go to boarding school and you lose contact; others come back and you talk to them. But, no, I can never sit through them again. It’s finished; it’s over.

In another way, though, I am haunted by them. They haven’t died. Most other films seem to die, but mine travel all the time and keep selling and screening. I even have to employ people to keep looking after them, which was never the idea.

At what point do you feel most connected to the film?

During the making I am very attached. I will travel with it until death do us part. It’s madness, and dangerous. I also drive people to the very edge, myself first.

Is that weakness your one fault?

No, I am riddled with faults. Sometimes I think it’s an essential quality, though it’s also very annoying.

You can’t film for too long because you sleep very little; the film becomes too important. It’s one chance that you have.

You have a rich and diverse range of projects either in production or pre-production. Do you feel this is a particularly rewarding phase of your career?
I don't call it a career, I call it a curse. I've never made a career out of filmmaking, it just happened to me. I really never set out with dreams like that; it just happened.

But, yes, these are the best years because I have done away with a lot of shit. If you don't have to compromise, it's easy to let something go to your head. So, it's very important to travel through all the ego nonsense and be yourself. I travelled through that a few years ago. Now it doesn't matter any more. I don't need the world. I live a very secluded life.

These are very fine years for me. I feel I'm getting closer to a level of sufficient concentration to do it properly. I think Exile will be quite fine. It's a very neatly- and beautifully-made, beautifully-shot and -composed film. Whether it will be popular or hit the mark, I don't know. It will take time, but it will be all right. I never felt this confident about any of my other films.

Apart from the aspects of landscape, what appealed to you about the novel?

I don't like Watson's stories that much - they are quite violent - but his descriptions of landscape, and how people relate to it, are great. Very few people really belong to or understand the land. To really belong, you must be able to describe what you see.

I find a lot of Australian films set in the country show nothing but red dust, which doesn't appeal to me. Australia is a wild country with an incredible variety of landscapes. But this is never mirrored in our films. There is just this one flat, dusty image of a few sheep being rounded up and a red sun hanging low. The Australia I know is very different from that and I have always been looking for a vehicle to describe that.

In The Nun and the Bandit, I wanted the landscape to be a stage. In Exile, the landscape is the protagonist; it motivates people. The first is a so-called religious film, while the latter is much more metaphysical.

In Australia, The Nun and the Bandit won't be appreciated on any level. That's why I don't want to have anything to do with a release. I've had enough shit thrown at me here. It's not only this film, but most of my films.

A Woman's Tale was a big success everywhere around the world and ran for a long time, except in Melbourne where it was pissed on and ran for a week. It is rather strange that it should be like that in this country. It's another reason to escape to the landscape at times.

Many Australian films which depict a vast, barren landscape are exploring the idea of a culture that needs to be invented upon this emptiness. The Nun and the Bandit explores the idea of a culture already there within the landscape, which it tries to draw out.

The Nun and the Bandit

The Nun and the Bandit, also based a novel by E. L. Grant Watson, is the story of Michael Shanley and his brothers, who are 1940s outlaws. Angered over having been dispossessed of an inheritance, they enact a revenge by kidnapping their wealthy 14-year-old second cousin, Julie Shanley (Charlotte Hughes Haywood). But things go awry when her chaperoning nun, Sister Lucy (Gosia Dobrowolska), refuses to abandon her charge.

Shot last year around Maldon and Bacchus Marsh, the film is indicative of Cox's increasingly austere style of filmmaking.

Cox was interviewed about the film two days before the film's Australian premiere at the Melbourne Film Festival.
That's so if you're sensitive to this environment. White man came here, stomped around as if he owned the earth, destroying anything that is dear. If we are all taught to have a very good look at a tree when we are young, we will never destroy it later on or treat it with disrespect.

The actual culture imported here was very destructive. Most of this country was rainforest. But the wood was not even used; it was just burned. I don't understand why.

Tasmania, for example, is really Deliverance country in a way — beautiful, stunning country. But the most common sight on the road is a truck loaded with trees going to a pulp mill so that toilet paper can be made for the Japanese. The trees are not being used to build anything.

The actual wastage is unbelievable, and these trucks thunder across the island day and night, killing everything in their way.

How did you approach the religious aspect of The Nun and the Bandit in relation to the landscape, because the person most identified with the bush is the bandit, Michael Shanley [Chris Haywood]?

No, it's the nun. For the bandit, the landscape is just there to be used and abused. Of course, it has also shaped him, but he has never learnt to appreciate it. It is only later on that he starts to see things differently.

There is a class element established between Sister Lucy [Gosia Dobrowolska] and the rich townfolk, which makes one favour Michael. He is more easily identified with the landscape.

The exterior landscape, not the interior landscape.

In the book, there are many more things happening: Aborigines come into the story, the woman becomes pregnant, they go to court and it flashes back to the nunnery... all sorts of things. I stripped it as bare as I could. I wanted it to be a pure story between two people. Of course, in terms of cinema, it was not a very good decision, even though I know that the film is very neatly crafted.

There are other layers in the nun that one will discover later on; it takes time. I know a lot of people won't be able to digest it, or even see it as an Australian film. But I think it's a very Australian film.

This, of course, will be totally misunderstood if you don't have a strongly religious background. If you are really committed to religion you will hate the film, because it is being basically against religion.

Given her captors are such inept bandits, why doesn't Sister Lucy simply run away?

Because she is totally conditioned to being passive. There is a type of fatalism in all this that I find appalling. Don't forget, the film is set before the war and things have changed dramatically since. But this is the way it was. I remember from my own family that nuns are trained to be passive.

I had an aunt who was a nun and an uncle who was a Benedictine monk. I also had another uncle who was a bandit!

Is Michael Shanley redeemed in the end?

Yes, but he has never been given or received any compassion or love. If he had, it would have changed him. But society doesn't allow that, and it will always be the same. The only thing you learn from history is that the same things happen over and over again. Michael will not be redeemed unless we change. And you have to destroy everything before you can build anything new. You cannot build on old foundations. Yet, that's what we do all the time, because we are too scared, too insecure.

This is what the hopelessness of his character is about. He is touched and he suddenly realizes that there is human goodness there. That is the very message if we see beyond the surface and not just say, “Oh, he is a bit of a bastard.” As soon as you give people a little bit of attention and time, suddenly they come to life. Everybody has that potential, even a man that is so ugly and greedy. It is not his fault: he is conditioned to be bad, whereas the nun is conditioned to be good. She is probably much more evil than he is.

Does the nun change then?

Absolutely, on the exterior. Her interior is a conditioned type of interior. It's not a natural, instinctive interior, but she has nothing else. There is great loneliness in both souls because of their conditioning.

CONTINUES ON PAGE 60
"Those who find most Aussie films irritatingly safe and serious may welcome this walk on the wild side".

VARIETY

"..... enjoyable ..... perverse ..... brilliant ....."

SEATTLE POST

"Like "Final Analysis" and "Fatal Attraction", Howson's film warns against thinking with our hormones, against wanting things we don't need. "Hunting" equates lust with sin and punishes obsession with rape and death"

WASHINGTON POST

"..... it's right up there with Brian De Palma's "Scarface", Luchino Visconti's "The Damned", and Adrian Lyne's "9½ weeks' ".

BOSTON GLOBE
Notes towards a re-appraisal

RAFFAELLE CAPUTO

Imagination is the last scene of a film in which a budding young man sits atop a fence post or rock, or is standing on an incline in some lonely country setting. His point of view of the surroundings is from a vantage point. He has a clear view of everything on the horizon, and at times seems as though he can reach out even further. He is at the end of an initiation journey in which, plunged through his first heart-rendering experience, he lost his greatest, most passionate love. The loss precipitates the gain, the experience draws him closer to manhood, and now the world before him has opened up to take him in. This is something like the ending to Robert Mulligan’s Summer of ’42 (1971), and it’s the prototypical image of a coming-of-age.

If memory serves well, in the 1980s the notion of a coming-of-age had its use, politically, with the sparks of an economic turn-a-round (or was it sporting triumph?), as both a description of the nation’s character, and as promise of better things to come for the whole nation. Culturally, it had more currency as a description for the film industry of 1970s and early ’80s. Perhaps this is good reason why Australian films that dealt with very particular tragedies of war – ‘Breaker’...
Coming of Age

Morant (Bruce Beresford, 1980) and Gallipoli (Peter Weir, 1981) were the sort of international successes we could be proud of—war fought under the rule of an unjust imperial power being the metaphor for the nation’s loss of innocence, and the mythological catalyst for a historical turning point.

Yet generally the coming-of-age notion seems to get the best battery power from films battling the conflicts of new sexual mores emerging out of the dying days of good old times. Australian cinema has its fair share of films with a coming-of-age bent and it might be worthwhile schematizing a few of the preoccupations, especially given that three Australian films of late—Love in Limbo (David Elfick), The Heartbreak Kid (Michael Jenkins) and the soon-to-be-released The Nostradamus Kid (Bob Ellis)—in one way or another have been labelled coming-of-age films.

At close inspection, the intriguing aspect of a coming-of-age theme is that the films never quite turn out the way they are supposed to turn out. There is something profoundly naïve and rather tiresome about the whole notion of discovering a new horizon when a young boy’s formative relationship with a woman, usually much older, pushes him closer to manhood. It’s something akin to the clinical suburban world filled with robins that results from the nightmare encounters between Jeffrey (Kyle MacLachlan) and Dorothy (Isabella Rossellini) in Blue Velvet (1986), though David Lynch’s vision is a parody of the expectations of adult life awaiting Jeffrey after he overcomes his ‘rites of passage’ journey.

Films with a coming-of-age theme have a tendency to start off sex-obsessed and move progressively toward keeping the libido in check, or keeping it socially acceptable. The strongest counter-attack to this stymied perspective comes from the 1950s and the unlikely camp of Jerry Lewis, perhaps because Lewis’ films never seem to begin at the beginning, but at the end.

In a film like The Ladies’ Man (1961), when the newly-graduated Herbert H. Heebert witnesses the heart shattering event of his college sweetheart in the arms of another man, his baroque display of pain in gripping his heart and staggering back to his parents is a form of awakening—but an awakening of an infantile, regressive state, soon indexed by unbottling a comically-anguished cry, “MA!”

It makes sense that Lewis be brought into the framework. First, because the 1950s and ’60s is generally the period most favoured by coming-of-age pics. Love in Limbo, for example, spent a good deal of energy in duplicating the gaudy, colour-saturated look that is reminiscent of many Jerry Lewis-Frank Tashlin movies of the late 1950s and early ’60s. Elfick even pays added tribute by throwing in a few clips from Tashlin’s The Girl Can’t Help It (1956).

Second, and more important, Lewis exemplifies the type of figure the protagonist of a coming-of-age film definitely wants to leave behind. As Raymond Durgnat once wrote, “Jerry Lewis films are about how difficult it is to build yourself into a reasonable, adaptable person.” By the end of The Ladies’ Man, just when Herbert scraps through his initiation, in strolls Baby, a once harmless pooch illogically transformed into the MGM lion, and a token of the character’s repressed libido.

In this respect, apart from owing its period look to Lewis and Tashlin, Love in Limbo cannot yield any further comparison. The central point of concern is that Lewis (or Tashlin) isn’t looking back at the period; he is a part of it. Lewis can be sentimental, but not nostalgic, which is what coming-of-age films usually have a tendency of doing.

Nostalgia brings Love in Limbo closer to American Graffiti (1973), in that the use of 1950s artefacts and “Colour by Deluxe” production design makes a play for the period’s supposed mood of innocence. But Love in Limbo plays it straight down the line. Ken (Craig Adams) is a sex-obsessed teenager who fantasizes vividly about his English teacher and sister’s girlfriend, and has an adept hand at sketching the female form. His turning-point experience with a mature woman in an excursion to a whorehouse in Kalgoorlie has only put into practice what he already knows in his mind.

The world of teenager Ken and the desire to lose his virginity is completely insulated. By the end of Love in Limbo, Ken is merely an innocent adult, just as he was an innocent teenager (that is to say, a virgin) at the start of the film. His excursion to the brothel has only made him ready to be paired off for marriage to a nice, virginal Greek girl. The experience and its consequences remain disconnected to any idea of a change in social and sexual mores.

The film’s guiding principle is really that a young man should “sow a few wild oats” before settling down; so while there is nostalgia for a period, there isn’t a sense of history in Love in Limbo.
Films with a coming-of-age theme have a tendency to start off sex-obsessed and move progressively toward keeping the libido in check, or keeping it socially acceptable.

What makes the loss of innocence (psychologically as well as physically) so believable in a film like *American Graffiti* is that the innocence of the period is also about to end, for just around the corner are events like Vietnam, student unrest and the civil rights movement.

Like *Love in Limbo*, Bob Ellis’ *The Nostradamus Kid* also takes us back to the 1950s and ’60s period, but it is melancholy rather than celebratory nostalgia, and does better at interweaving personal obsessions with events of the wider world. The film isolates a formative moment in the life of Ken Elkin (Noah Taylor) at a Seventh Day Adventist camp in the late ’50s, and then invests the psychological imprint of those days into Elkin’s life at Sydney University in the ’60s with the backdrop of Cuban missile crisis.

Ellis’ Ken, like many others, is sex-obsessed, questioning and hungry for knowledge, and it grates against the teachings of the Seventh Day Adventists. At the religious camp, his head is filled with strong beliefs in the end of the world. After an encounter with a heretic, Elkin is convinced of the arrival of the apocalypse at camp’s end, and fears his love for the pastor’s daughter will never be consummated.

Of course, the world does not end, but his experience has left a psychological mark he will carry into the future. While at University, still very much sex-crazed, he falls in love with the virginal Jennie O’Brien (Miranda Otto), the daughter of a highly-successful newspaper man – and again encounters the end of the world in the form of the Cuban missile crisis.

This time with absolute belief that the end is nigh, Elkin convinces Jennie to flee with him to the mountains in her father’s stolen Jaguar. At one point in their flight to safety, the couple pause at a look-out of the lights of Sydney, and, while they gaze down, Ken projects a vision of the bomb going off and a mushroom cloud engulfing the city. But, of course, once again the end of the world is postponed. They return to Sydney and it’s the beginning of the end for Ken: he must face a court order by Jennie’s father, he loses Jennie and he alienates his closest companion, McAllister (Jack Campbell). It seems the good times are over and Ken has to grow up.

It is no accident that Ellis cast Noah Taylor as the lead, for Taylor comes encoded from his role as the misfit Danny Enabling in both of John Duigan’s *The Year My Voice Broke* (1988) and *Flirting* (1991).

Indeed, the respective characters of *The Nostradamus Kid* and *The Year My Voice Broke* bare much resemblance because both are
incurable misfits and always will be. The code for making their way in the world is not whether the world will take them in, but whether they will take in the world. This is a code which is the repressed menace to the coming-of-age idea, and brings The Nostradamus Kid a lot closer to the sensibility of Lewis.

The last sequence of the film flashes forward twenty or more years from the apocalyptic events of 1962. Ken has obviously grown older and weighty, he is married and a successful playwright. While one of his plays is being staged at the Opera House, he spies Jennie and McAllister from University seated in the audience, now married and enjoying a better life. On the same evening, Ken happens to come across friends from his Adventists days. Disillusioned with the church, his friends are in Sydney catching up on the things denied to them in their youth. As Ken later gazes over at the lights of Sydney from the Opera House, everyone seems to be a lot older and wiser, but suddenly he projects the vision of an atomic mushroom cloud going up over the city. Ken Elkin, and Danny Embling, never really grew up to be fully integrated into the world; they preserve and carry about them the obsessions of their childhood.

The Nostradamus Kid and The Year My Voice Broke are of a type that only appears to be oriented around the classical movement of a coming-of-age film. Another Australian film that should be seen from a similar perspective is Devil in the Flesh (1986), Scott Murray’s graceful adaptation of Raymond Radiguet’s novel, Le Diable au Corps.¹

¹Declaration: Scott Murray is the editor of Cinema Papers.

Devil in the Flesh is set during World War II among the middle-class of rural Australia. It tells of a passionate love between a young woman, Marthe (Katia Caballero), and Paul (Keith Smith), an adolescent schoolboy approaching manhood. Marthe is daughter to a French immigrant family, and married to an Italian who has been interned for the duration of the war. The affair between Marthe and Paul begins after she and her family seek the assistance of Paul’s father in having her husband released.

But to see Devil only as a coming-of-age film is to pigeon-hole the film too easily, and not to appreciate the restrained, minute and unexpected emotional and psychological changes of the central character. As their affaire progresses, much to the displeasure of Paul’s parents, his response is always in renunciation of their feelings and authority. For Marthe, her relationship with Paul is clearly a positive and liberating experience, but not one that is insular; for Paul, their relationship is furtive and all that matters is his moments with Marthe.

While on the one hand Paul’s affair with Marthe awakens a degree of independence, on the other his world is shrinking, and stifling of his own emotions. For instance, when Marthe is to visit her husband, Ermanno (Luciano Marucci), in the internment camp, Paul reacts by picking up another woman (Louise Elvin). It’s an action resulting from paranoid jealousy but, curiously, there is also the sense of a predatory impulse. There appears to be a private resolution of selfish conquest on his face, and he seems destined to become an emotional cripple.

Thus, if teetering on the point of emotional impotence, one can imagine Paul as perhaps belonging to that lost generation of men of, say, Michelangelo Antonioni’s L’Avventura (1960) or Federico Fellini’s La dolce vita (1960) for whom, by gaining too much too soon, adulthood is now tinged with world-weariness, and a hopeless longing for what they will never have.

The Heartbreak Kid is worlds apart from the style of Devil in the Flesh, but has similar ingredients for a classical coming-of-age film: a mature woman who is a teacher, an adolescent who is her student, and a set of familial characters hostile to their relationship. That she is a teacher and he a student is not insignificant, given that a coming-of-age theme is typically about awakening knowledge of the world.

But The Heartbreak Kid reverses the expectations of a ‘teacher’ introducing a novice to the adult world. The reason teacher becomes student is essentially because the relationship is not played against the backdrop of an innocent period about to close. The film, instead, pitches its story deep among the working-class, ethnic community, and hits at living under the values of the old world, particularly for women.

Christina (Claudia Karvan) is 22 years old and starts out in the film with her future already mapped out for her. She is looking down the barrel of marriage to Dimitri (Steve Bastoni), an upwardly-mobile Greek-Australian, which means an end to her career, kids and a house across the street from her parents. This all changes when she takes to the flirtatious charm of her 17-year-old problem-student, Nick Polides (Alex Dimitriades).

It’s interesting that by the end of the film Nick is still basically the same kid. His sense of obligation to old values, social barriers, or what is right or wrong, have not as yet fully emerged. He only seems to know what he wants, and has an uncanny ability to understand Christina’s thoughts. Prior to any sense of sexual awakening, Nick already has a freedom which comes from youth.

Christina, on the other hand, could only hope for such freedom. As a consequence of her relationship with Nick, she must face the stigma of crossing a professional and social barrier, and disgrace in the eyes of her family and fiancé. But for Christina, who basically lived under the shadow by her father and where her destiny was not of her own making, the relationship gives her a new perspective on her life, a new-found confidence in making her own decisions. She leaves the school, moves out of home, leaving behind the values of the old world, and decides to travel and further her education.

Like the vantage point usually reserved for young men, Christina is at a point in her life where she seems able to reach further than the horizon. From this perspective, The Heartbreak Kid is still conventional material. But, like Devil in the Flesh, it is an evolution of the traditional coming-of-age film by being vitally concerned with the position of women and by foregrounding its ethnicity.

Devil in the Flesh does this, too, by discussing the internment of Italians here during the war and the repatriation of POWs that followed. It links this with the emergence of a new Australia, one less bound by the repressive English values of the pre-war years (which colour Paul’s world).

In the bitter-sweet final scene, Paul visits Marthe and Ermanno, now released, and sees his and Marthe’s child for the first time. Contrary to any expectation of a revengeful Italian husband, Ermanno is instead most understanding of Paul’s suffering and sensitive to his wife’s feelings and needs. One realizes how Marthe and Ermanno have grown far more than Paul, away from Anglo-Celtic notions of puritanism and patriarchy to a more European equality, openness and warmth. This seems to mirror the important changes that began in Australia at the time and continue to this day.

In that sense, Devil in the Flesh is not a coming-of-age film set in a period of lost innocence, but signals a new, more humane, dawning. It is not a film of nostalgia but of beginnings.
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CHRISTINA (CLAUDIA KARVAN) AND NICK (ALEX DIMITRIADES)
IN MICHAEL JENKIN'S 'THE HEARTBREAK KID.'
The Heartbreak Kid concerns the coming of age of a 22-year-old Greek teacher, Christina (Claudia Karvan) who falls in love with a soccer-obsessed, 17-year-old schoolboy, Nick (Alex Dimitriades). Their relationship challenges not only notions of age difference and teacher responsibility, but the restrictiveness of some aspects of Greek culture and the racism endemic to Australian society. Based on a stage play by Richard Barrett, the film was directed by Michael Jenkins, best known for his ground-breaking work in the television series, Scales of Justice and The Leavin of Liverpool. His other theatrical features are Rebel (1985), David Williamson's Emerald City (1989) and Sweet Talker (1991).

After doing a degree in English and Philosophy, Jenkins went to the ABC, where he worked as a journalist for a couple of years, including in the Canberra press gallery. He then did "a very enterprising 12-week production course" at the ABC, which led to work as a first and second assistant during the early days of television drama. Becoming involved in scriptwriting and editing eventually led to directing 52 episodes of Bellbird.

Jenkins: Those were the days of full-on, multi-camera treatment for drama. The single camera technique hadn't emerged by then. My whole training was in the electronic area on shows like Bellbird and Certain Women.

One thing that background gives you is a certain amount of discipline in terms of planning. After all, you had to execute and edit the entirety of a drama programme in one or two days. You had to know every shot you wanted and the battle was to keep some flexibility with the actors. It was very much a planning-oriented introduction to filmmaking.

How would you describe your directing style today?

I'm very free with actors and like to think on my feet a lot. I work very closely with the DOP, but above all I like to work with the actors in the rehearsal process. To some degree, I allow the shooting style to evolve from that.

One thing I've grown into these days is a shooting style that doesn't dictate to the actors, or to me, what can be done. It's very easy to let the mechanics of the shoot take over, which often results in a technical film that doesn't have a simplicity or truth about it. Everybody, particularly the actors, become slaves to the process.

The most exciting thing I find about filmmaking is the extent to which you can take a piece of material and develop it. For that you really need rehearsal space. Very few people write a
The schoolyard scenes in *Heartbreak* are very much an example, in a fairly action-orientated way, of what I was saying earlier, where we created the sequence and only then worked out how to photograph it. We very rarely set up a shot and said, “Okay, you have to throw this punch here because the camera is here.”

The good thing about this approach is that you can photograph action with one, two, three or four cameras. In the schoolyard, we were squirting off film into two or three cameras at a time. This is a good way to work on a tight Australian schedule because you can get a lot of vitality and excitement happening. If you laboriously work shot to shot and set things up, like a puppeteer, you can lose that richness, especially on the ridiculously, stupidly, short schedules that we have in Australia.

What kind of pre-production and shooting time did you have?

We had six weeks, but they were five-day weeks. And on none of the days were we in a budgetary position to shoot any kind of extensive overtime.

But that can be kind of liberating as well. You can still be adventurous with the actors and achieve the schedule.

Do you storyboard?

Yes. I think the two things are compatible. Storyboards give you a kind of reference or anchorage point, which is what we would have tended to do on *Heartbreak*. It does also depend on the DOP that you work with. Nino [Martinetti] likes to think on his feet a lot.

In the previous piece I did, *The Leaving of Liverpool*, I spent a week locked in a room with Steve Windon, a Sydney-based DOP, the production designer, the first assistant, the camera operator and the sketch artist. It was quite democratic in that we all felt free to pull apart a scene and make suggestions about key visual ideas.

The whole point of the planning process is to create freedom for those few shooting days that you have. Without this freedom, you cannot explore any kind of boundaries, such as the kind of improvisation you see in a lot of modern American cinema. You get the feeling that a lot is happening that was never written down on a typewriter, which is exciting for audiences to relate to. That is where my interest lies – much more than in visual technicalities. I don’t care about them to be perfectly honest.

How much time did you spend with the actors on *The Heartbreak Kid* prior to shooting?

We had three weeks. Six weeks would have been a lot, lot better as we still had heaps to do after three weeks.

As a side issue, the film looks at multi-culturalism and the racism sometimes associated with that.

We didn’t want to make a film about the multi-racial question or drag out issues about ethics – we just wanted those things to be there. We didn’t want the film to be self-conscious about its multi-cultural component.

I don’t think Christina’s plight only applies to someone of a specific ethnic background. It is about anyone getting themselves committed too young to a course in life before having explored one’s own abilities. Without making the bloody thing sound too pomp-
the film is about personal freedom.

In the boy’s case, it is a fairly classic situation of growing up. I quite like the social context that his life is pinned to. He is a kid with a single parent, a boy who has huge potential and real leadership. He gains enough self-confidence through his relationship with Christina to know that, if he wants something, he can do it.

**What other themes were you interested in exploring?**

I suppose the film is about danger and promise – danger because the young kid and the teacher become involved in something which crosses social barriers of duty and obligation, about what is right and proper in our community. They enter a dangerous and risky territory which puts in jeopardy their family relationships and her career. They also both very much run the risk of falling into one of those kinds of affaires that could easily result in damage. As it turns out, it isn’t, but it could have been.

Christina also runs the risk of disgrace in her own family. Nick, too, could easily be regarded by his school peers as wrecking something for them, because they actually like this teacher and the effect of this affaire is that she is driven away from school.

The promise aspect is that it is not a dead-end street. There is the promise of sexual excitement and personal exploration for both.

**What do you consider to be the most interesting aspect of your work: writing or directing?**

Directing. My main input into filmmaking, as far as writing goes, has been to be involved in the creation of scripts. In a few cases, that has involved co-writing.

On Heartbreak, Richard and I worked on and off for two years on various drafts. But I much prefer directing.

**How do you feel about crossing the line between television and cinema?**

On television productions, scripts generally emerge without heavy-duty research and grounding. A producer, director and writer might set aside a year to develop a thing before it becomes a reality, but they will typically give a writer some money and say, “In twelve weeks we want a draft.” Unless that writer is accessing something major and personal that he or she already has insight into, or is adapting a terrific book, you can’t do it.

I think a lot of times our films are not wise enough or informed enough. It is a bit catch-22. I could turn around and say Australian writers, producers and directors don’t get enough funding to do that sort of thing, but finally that is not the answer. You can only look at what is. I don’t think we do enough work. If we are to come up with strong films, then we need to do more research. By “strong” I don’t mean it has to be social-realist material; you can call Strictly Ballroom strong.

**What future projects are lined up?**

Ben and I are working on a film. It is at script stage and I’m writing it. It is about civil rights, set in Australia and the strongest subject matter I’ve come across in quite a while, if we get it right. It is a very hard-edged piece of material. It takes a member of society that has very few rights left and is in the most dire straits.

The screenplay will be ready in the next few months. It is not a high-budget idea, but that’s all I can say about it at the moment.

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1. *Daydream Believer* (Kathy Mueller, 1992) was produced by Ben Gannon. Michael Jenkins was the script editor.

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**BEN GANNON**

Producer of *The Heartbreak Kid*

Not all producer-director relationships are harmonious, yet you have worked successfully with Michael Jenkins on a number of films.

Touch wood, I have never fallen out with a director I’ve worked with. This is the third time I have worked with Mike, on *Sweet Talker, Daydream Believer* and *The Heartbreak Kid*. I have a tremendous respect for directors and I don’t want to be one myself. A lot of producers want to be directors, which can cause a lot of friction. I don’t enjoy being on the set all the time. I’m too impatient.

Apparently, the Nine Network has shown interest in a series based on *The Heartbreak Kid*.

We’re having conversations with Nine. It has bought the film and is very enthusiastic about it.

We’ve put a proposal to Nine for taking the basic setting of the film of a blue-collar, very multi-cultural high-school. We are trying to present a contemporary Australia which is not a *Beverly Hills 90210*, silly Hollywood version, but actually real and true to our country in the 1990s. We would take the endless storylines that can flow from that. It won’t be a soap. It will be more along the lines of a *Hill Street Blues*, with a bit of hard edge and realism to it.

Initially, we would do 13 one-hour programmes. Michael would probably direct the first one and would be part of the overall script supervisory unit. We would bring in other writers and directors.

It’s early days and I wouldn’t make too much out of it, but certainly we are talking and working on it as a future project.

**What is the marketing plan for *The Heartbreak Kid?***

The film is targeted two ways. We’ve test screened it with questionnaires and we know quite a lot about how the film plays. It plays extremely well to females 12 to 45, which is a very wide audience. The male audience is not quite so wide. The target audience is male and female 12 to 45. The first thrust of the campaign is to them.

The second thrust is to the older female audience. Females seem to relate very strongly to the journey Christina takes. Obviously, there is the “spunk factor” of Nick, but the fact that Christina actually goes through this liberating journey is something a female audience identifies with.

We’re also doing a lot of word-of-mouth screenings with soccer clubs and Greek clubs. The screenplay is being published by Currency Press, which is something it does a lot now with Australian films, and there is an enormous amount of promotion with other associated campaigns, such as Myer/Grace Bros., Southdown Press, Triple M, etc.

Polygram got involved very early in the piece and we’ve put together a soundtrack which consists largely of its artists or things we’ve re-recorded and it owns. We’ve spent a lot of time on the music. Polygram is putting out two singles and a soundtrack album, separate to the Village Roadshow campaign.
Compared to past years, the 1993 Cannes International Film Festival and Marché was a lack-lustre event which began slowly and ended predictably. There were no shocks – except for Wim Wenders unaccountably winning the Grand Prix du Jury for *Far Away, So Close!* – and no dazzling talents unearthed from among the new directors. Tran Anh Hung’s *The Smell of Green Papaya* which won the Camera d’Or was much admired, but it failed to elicit from delegates the same excited buzz that hailed such films as Jim Jarmusch’s *Stranger Than Paradise* (1984), Patricia Rozema’s *I’ve Heard the Mermaids Singing* (1987) or Jocelyn Moorhouse’s *Proof* (1991).
Several films in the Official Selection were stolid and pedestrian, and a few downright poor (particularly Pupi Avati’s Magnificat, Abel Ferrara’s Body Snatchers and Robert Young’s Splitting Heirs). Despite the absence of euphoria, there were high spots, however: the handful of very fine films from established directors Chen Kaige, Mike Leigh, Hou Hsiao-Hsien and Ken Loach which will further consolidate their reputations; Jane Campion’s epic romance, The Piano, which won the Palme d’Or for Best Film (along with Chen Kaige’s Bawang Bie Ji (Farewell to My Concubine)), making her the first female director in the history of the Cannes Festival to do so; and the controversy sparked by the success of The Piano as to what constitutes the ‘nationality’ of a film.

Several factors contributed to this being a flatter Festival than previously. For the first time in many years at Cannes, there was no dominant American presence to be felt, feared and envied by the Europeans. The object of the traditional trans-Atlantic love-hate relationship didn’t come to the party.

This was visibly apparent during the first week when, with the exception of the opening night, the crowds milling on La Croisette around the giant staircase leading to the Grand Theatre Lumière were noticeably thinner than in previous years. Only in the second week, when Elizabeth Taylor swept into Cannes for an AIDS promotion, held in conjunction with Renny Harlin’s Cliffhanger, starring Sylvester Stallone, did the numbers swell to past levels, cresting again for the appearance of Michael Douglas, the star of Joel Schumacher’s Falling Down, and the extravaganza of the closing ceremony.

Cannes thrives on its symbiosis with Hollywood. Ever since the French recognized the importance of film as an export commodity and grafted a film market onto this great annual festival, Cannes has depended on big name American actors to generate the glamour and publicity that still makes Cannes, despite the inroads of other festivals, the world’s premiere film event, second only in media exposure to the Academy Awards.

Hence, when the news broke that there would be a dearth of American films at Cannes this year, because the studios were not willing or able to complete their quota of summer blockbusters in time for Cannes, eyebrows were raised and speculation was rife.

Festival director Gilles Jacob hit out at the studios for what he called “poor planning”, while the studio heads, who have been pushing Cannes for some time for a change in the Festival date to later in the year, repeated their complaint about having to rush to get films ready by May which are often not released in the U.S. until the fall, or even Christmas.

Consternation amongst the Cannes organizers was further compounded by the absence of films from big name American auteurs such as Robert Altman, Woody Allen, Steven Spielberg, James Ivory, Gus Van Sant and Martin Scorsese – all directors with films rumoured to be near completion at the time, whose names alone can be guaranteed to give Cannes gloss.

It is not clear why Hollywood chose or was forced this year to be a “party-pooper”. Certainly it is hard to resist the notion that the global recession has made the funding of mega-productions (such as Steven Spielberg’s Jurassic Park) much harder and that the ballooning costs of film production and distribution have further widened the gap between the supply of funds and the ability to deliver the finished product.

Added to these difficulties, the progressive consolidation of the studios and their distribution networks has made film production even more difficult for the American independents.
But there are other reasons as well for Cannes losing its lustre this year. Technological advances (telephones, faxes and satellites) have globalized film markets. Indeed, some Festival die-hards were reported in the trade papers as questioning the justification for the three main film markets – Cannes, the American Film Market and MIFED – with one veteran going so far as to say that Cannes "is a festival the world doesn’t need any more".

Film marketing is a year-round business. Technological advances in marketing and financing, and the speed with which financial transactions occur, have altered ways of doing business, in film as in everything else. Faced with this reality, the Cannes administration will need to fight harder to maintain Cannes’ pre-eminence in the face of competition from other markets, rapid changes in technology, and the growing popularity of other festivals such as Berlin, Venice, Toronto, Montréal and Sundance.

One effect of fewer American films being screened at Cannes this year was the highlighting of offerings from other countries. Of the films in competition for the Palme d’Or, for example, four each came from France and the UK, three each from Australia, Italy and the U.S., and one each from China, Russia, Taiwan, Haiti, Germany and South Africa.

On the surface this looked exciting, as if other national film cultures were preparing to displace American dominance. But Cannes is no longer the litmus test it used to be. For instance, the Melbourne Film Festival, which picks the eyes from the major festivals around the world, including Cannes, in some ways is more representative of the world picture, and this year the Melbourne Festival featured an exciting mix of new films from Mexico, Asia, Iran, South America and Canada. The screening, too, of many good independent films from the U.S. is a reminder of the persistent energy of the American film industry.

On the other hand, this doesn’t negate the trends that were observable at Cannes this year: a strong resurgence of filmmaking in England, and the clear emergence of a vigorous film culture in Asia that is poised to take advantage of China’s version of market socialism. Given their prominence in Competition, the French, Australian and Italian films were generally disappointing.

The opening night film from France, André Téchiné’s Ma Saison Préférée (My Favourite Season) was a case in point and gave a dull, uninspired start to the Festival. Catherine Deneuve and Daniel Auteuil play middle-aged siblings who are forced to confront complex feelings for each other as they come to grips with the mental and physical decline of their mother. Although the roles were expressly written for them by the director, Deneuve is miscast and never looks comfortable or convincing, while Auteuil is too likeable to be dangerous, and lacks credibility as a neuro-surgeon. Chiara Mastroianni, Deneuve’s off-screen daughter by Marcello, is one of three young people who drift in and out of the film meaninglessly. The fault lies with the undeveloped script and Téchiné’s limp direction which fails to give the film cohesion. Martha Villalonga’s realistic portrait of the siblings’ earthy, dignified mother is the film’s saving grace.

Things couldn’t have been more different the following day with the premiere of Mike Leigh’s Naked. This is the British director’s best and most mature film to date. It’s also his bleakest. Previous Mike Leigh characters have fallen into two broad categories: those portrayed with kitchen-sink realism and those perceived largely as
caricatures. Whichever way he paints them, they are all misfits battling to cope with the world. *Naked* is altogether more integrated and illuminating. Life itself is questioned here—even those humanistic values we take for granted in a Mike Leigh film—and the shift in gear is virtuosic and exhilarating.

The film begins with the protagonist, Johnny (played brilliantly by David Thewlis), savagely raping a woman in a Manchester alley before heading for London where he plays cat and mouse with all those he comes into contact with: lost souls, nihilistic drifters like himself and ordinary, decent people like his ex-girlfriend, Louise. Johnny's rage and violence is thoroughly modern despite his Dickensian garb, and so is his misogyny. In many ways, the creation of this character is Mike Leigh's masterpiece (although much of the credit, according to Leigh, should go to Thewlis, who also won the Cannes Best Actor award for his performance). It is unfortunate then, though not surprising, that Leigh's *Naked* was subject to hostility from many at Cannes who, in the presence this year at the Festival of many successful women film directors (15 out of 72), identified this kind of misogyny as an egregious anachronism.

This vociferous criticism was ill-focused and should have concentrated on those films that were overtly violent and misogynistic, without Leigh's redeeming social and humanistic concerns—films, for example, from that inveterate misogynist Peter Greenaway whose *The Baby of Mâcon* features amongst other excesses not only a debasing and ugly birth but the serial rape of a virgin by over 200 men, and Pupi Avanti's plodding *Magnificat*, so overburdened with historicity that it needed enlivening through the drowning of a young witch and the public quartering of a man.

*Naked* was the first of the English films at Cannes to make an impact, and coupled with the pleasure induced by Stephen Frears' working-class romp, *The Snapper*, which opened La Quinzaine des Réalisateurs, a high point was reached early in the Festival against which most films in the first week were measured and found wanting. In the main Competition, two films from Italy had merit, Paolo and Vittorio Taviani's *Fiorile* and Ricky Tognazzi's *La Scorta* (*The Bodyguards*), as did Takeshi Kitano's *Sonatine* (Japan) in Un Certain Regard and Nicolae Caranfil's *E Pericoloso Sporgersi* (*Don't Lean Out the Window*, Rumania), Ildiko Szabo's *Child Murders* (Hungary) and Victor Nunez's *Ruby in Paradise* (U.S.) in Quinzaine. But it was not until the screening of Jane Campion's *The Piano* (followed swiftly by Chen Kaige's equally impressive *Farewell to My Concubine*) that the Festival really sprang to life.

Campion's unorthodox vision and the powerful eroticism of her film struck a chord with everyone at Cannes. Even before the Festival began, Campion was tipped to win the Palme d'Or by those who had seen previews in Paris and London, and there was the danger that response to *The Piano* would be coloured by expectations, and that the reality would prove an anticlimax. That this was far from the case is a further tribute to the film, which was hailed at the press conference, immediately after its first screening, as a masterpiece.

In contrast to the evident delight of the film's Australian producer, Jan Chapman, who understandably found the reaction "thrilling", Campion's response to the acclaim was low-key and matter-of-fact. "Cannes is such a strange environment to be thrown into", she said later at the Carlton, the ritziest of Cannes' wedding-cake hotels. "It's not real. You don't want to take it too
Alexandre Khvan’s long-winded throw Neill’s performance into the shade. Duoba—a gift for off-beat narrative, fresh vision and a capacity to ravish the eyes with startlingly beautiful images.

The drama evokes the brooding, romantic novels of the Bronte sisters. Ada (Holly Hunter), a mute woman, arrives on the beach in New Zealand in 1852 with her young daughter (Anna Paquin) to enter into an arranged marriage with a man (Sam Neill) she has never met. When her new husband forces her to leave her beloved piano on the beach, an act of petty tyranny that Ada cannot forgive, he sets in place a train of events that almost leads to tragedy.

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The American Holly Hunter, stripped to the essentials with rigid costumes, no make-up, no dialogue and intense emotions, gives a miraculous performance which won her the Cannes Best Actress award. Harvey Keitel is just as commanding as the illiterate husband forces her to leave her beloved piano on the beach, an act of petty tyranny that Ada cannot forgive, he sets in place a train of events that almost leads to tragedy.

The Piano (not unlike Mike Leigh’s Naked) represents a coming together in total congruity of her considerable powers—a gift for off-beat narrative, fresh vision and a capacity to ravish the eyes with startlingly beautiful images.

The Piano eclipsed lesser films as well. Alexandre Khvan’s long-winded Douba-Douba (Russia), about a young scriptwriter who commits a series of crimes to finance the escape from a prison camp of a woman who in the end rejects him, is a case in point. It is too heavy and oblique to succeed as either dream or political allegory, which makes it an essay in futility in more ways than one.

Similarly difficult to watch, especially for those who remember Wings of Desire as one of the great films of the 1980s, is Wim Wenders’ Far Away, So Closet. Set in a unified Berlin, this interminably long sequel—in which the second angel Cassiel (Otto Sander) becomes human—attempts to recapture the magic of the first film but finishes up as a failed parody which even threatens to diminish the impact and poetry of the original. The impenetrable storyline has uncomfortable parallels, too, with the wandering confusion which eventually made watching Until the End of the World (1991) such a chore. Nevertheless, Louis Malle and his Cannes Jury thought sufficiently well of it to award it the Grand Jury prize.

On the other hand, Alain Cavalier’s Libera Me (France), which won the OCIC Ecumenical Jury Prize, is a strangely passionate indictment of totalitarianism that is mesmerizing to watch for the austere purity of its images. The narrative consists of brief scenes filmed against neutral interiors which snapshot the torture and execution of citizens living in a society much like our own. The bloodless, expressionless action unspools entirely without dialogue, accompanied only by ambient sounds. Too cryptic and too aesthetic perhaps to make any profound statements about human rights, Libera Me nonetheless demands a response from the viewer, as the film’s title implies.

Lauded by some, and thought too saccharine by others, was Steven Soderbergh’s King of the Hill (U.S.). It is a saga set in St Louis in the 1930s, adapted for the screen by Soderbergh from the memoirs of A. E. Hotchner, about the coming of age of a 12-year-old boy growing up during the depression in the 1930s.

Most disappointing from the Australian point of view were the films of the young Australians, Laurie McInnes, Stephan Elliott and Tracey Moffatt. They received a poor reception generally, although there were pockets of interest. All three directors have undeniable talent, but McInnes and Moffatt still have some way to go in marshalling skills, McInnes in scriptwriting and Moffatt in scriptwriting and direction.

McInnes’ Broken Highway is moody and visually compelling, but this isn’t sufficient to sustain interest. Her story is so interior and locked into mystery that it virtually doesn’t exist for the viewer, who is forced to remain outside the film’s emotionally charged atmosphere in constant perplexity. Early scenes between Aden Young as Angel and Dennis Miller as Max work very well, as do those with David Field as Tatts. But without an infrastructure, fine actors like Norman Kaye and Bill Hunter are made to seem gratuitous.

Moffatt’s Bedevil is more problematic. Relying heavily on her strong visual sense, Moffatt’s film comprises three stylized ghost stories set in tropical Queensland, based on tales told by members of her family. Shot on a sound stage, her style is eclectic and fragmentary, ranging at will from her “Queensland gothic” to a more naturalistic approach with injections of humour. For all its positives—subject interest and strong visuals—Bedevil lacks rhythm (perhaps storyboarding and tighter editing could help) and is dogged by stilted acting which is hard to pass off as style. Night Cries: A Rural Tragedy (short, 1990) succeeded not only because of its style but because it had structure. One has the feeling with Bedevil that the three-in-one project was too ambitious.

Stephan Elliott’s Frauds is more accessible, but not necessarily more conventional. Elliott sees himself as an enfant terrible, perhaps even an Australian Ken Russell. Certainly his film aroused strong feelings at Cannes.

Frauds is bold and cheerful, a splashy film about insurance fraud and practical jokes that backfire

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Frauds is bold and cheerful, a splashy film about insurance fraud and practical jokes that backfire
which doesn't take itself too seriously, while at the same time making a few nice points about human behaviour. Elliott directs with confidence and flair, and wrings good performances from Josephine Byrnes, Hugo Weaving and Phil Collins in particular, who seems made for the part. First-rate production design by Brian Thompson is crucial to the film, particularly Collins' house which resembles a set from *Toys*. Sadly, however, *Frauds* runs out of steam, jokes wear thin and the film's resolution feels pat and predictable.

On a more optimistic note, *Excursion to the Bridge of Friendship*, the debut short film of Christina Andreef, another New Zealander making films in Australia, which screened in Un Certain Regard, is a delight. Polished and quirky, it tells the story of Nadezhda Ivanova, a Bulgarian folksinger who writes a letter to a strange woman in Sydney, requesting sponsorship so that she can bring her ancient songs to a new land. Filmed in black and white and billed as a "silent musical", Andreef uses intertitles wittily and inventively. In twelve minutes, Andreef has created a world of immediately recognizable characters and a situation known only too well to most of us.

Farewelling five filmmakers off to Cannes is a little like sending a contingent of swimmers to the Olympics: everyone wants results and there is huge disappointment if they falter. This is cultural cringe of the worst kind because it blames the artist who, on the contrary, should be commended for foraying into new forms of cinematic expression. Such cultural cringe condemns the artist and constrains the critic. It also raises the question of the nature of funding by state and federal bodies, and whether this should be either more conditional or run out of steam.

Nothing (UK), a joyous interpretation of Shakespeare's play which should direct audiences to Shakespeare (as well as the box office) through the sheer vitality of his production and the performances of his stellar cast, was screened in the latter part of the Festival, as was Ken Loach's *Raining Stones* (UK). Loach, whose *Riff-Raff* won accolades at Cannes last year, was awarded the Cannes Jury Prize for *Raining Stones* this year and richly deserved to do so. Far more subtle than his fellow social realist, Mike Leigh, Loach's tale about unemployment in a north London housing estate blends comedy with social tragedy in a unique way, making *Raining Stones*, which is never didactic and always entertaining, his best film yet.

For overall excellence, Asian films dominated the Festival quietly: Tran Anh Hung's *The Scent of Green Papaya* (Vietnam-France); Lan Fengzheng's *The Blue Kite* (Hong Kong-China), which screened in Quinzaine; Hou Hsiao-Hsien's *The Puppetmaster* (Taiwan), a slow-moving, superlative film which deservedly won the second Jury Prize awarded this year; and Chen Kaige's magnificent *Farewell to my Concubine* (Hong Kong-China), which shared the Palme d'Or this year, a decision disputed by no one.

Based on Lilian Li's popular novel, Chen Kaige with the help of his three principal actors, Gong Li, Zhang Fengyi and Leslie Cheung, has forged a mighty epic which spans fifty years of Chinese history, beginning in 1925 with the rigorous, cruel training of two young boys, Xiaolou and Dieyi, for the Peking Opera, and ending with the turbulent political and social changes wrought upon China by the Cultural Revolution in the 1970s. The heart of the film, however, is the enduring love of Dieyi for Xiaolou, and how Dieyi comes to identify with the tragic royal concubine, Yu Ji, in the opera farewell, bringing him to stardom opposite Xiaolou as her master.

At the press conference, Chen, flanked by his Hong Kong producer, Madame Hsu Feng, and Leslie Cheung, who plays the androgynously beautiful artist Dieyi, Chen said that he and his generation of filmmakers began making films that broke with the cinema of the past, "because we were fed up with propaganda films". Earlier at a luncheon, he was open about the covert means he employed to introduce the forbidden theme of homosexuality into his film. While the Chinese people are becoming more open-minded, they cannot move too quickly into forbidden areas of behaviour. Rather, they must be treated subtly. "I see this film as being a passport to making other films about terrible times", he said.

As filmmaking costs continue to rise and the global market further dissolves the borders between nations, China is ready to become a dominant force in international filmmaking by coupling its vast market and resources with the enterprise of Taiwan, which is starved of a market to expand into. Hong Kong's future is allied to both. This makes Asia and the Pacific Rim a prime target for expansion. All the evidence from Cannes and elsewhere shows that international co-productions are the way of the future. In this light, the public wrangling over the nationality of *The Piano* indicates a need to come to grips with changes in the international film culture.
RESERVOIR DOGS

STEVE BUSCEMI AS MR. PINK IN QUENTIN TARANTINO'S RESERVOIR DOGS.
Reservoir Dogs tells of six professional criminals brought together for a jewellery heist – strangers known to each other only by their colour-coded names. The heist is the brainchild of a father-and-son crime team – Joe Cabot (played by veteran tough guy Lawrence Tierney) and Nice Guy Eddie (Chris Penn) – and it is a carefully-orchestrated robbery, where no prior knowledge of the criminals could jeopardize the plan. But the job goes violently wrong and it is soon realized the bungled heist is the result of a double-cross.

The film is the first feature for writer-director Quentin Tarantino, and it brings together extraordinary acting talent for what is a magnetic ensemble of characters. Heading the cast as Mr White is Martin Scorsese regular Harvey Keitel. The others include Tim Roth as Mr Orange, Michael Madsen as the psychotic Mr Blonde, Eddie Bunker as Mr Blue, Tarantino himself as Mr Brown, and seasoned character-actor Steve Buscemi as Mr Pink.

After a string of small roles in notable films like Mystery Train (Jim Jarmusch, 1989), Miller’s Crossing (Joel Coen, 1990) and Barton Fink (Joel Coen, 1991), Reservoir Dogs finally gave Buscemi greater breathing space. Here, among other things, he discusses his character Mr Pink and the making of the film.

What made you become an actor?

I never really analyzed the reason. Acting was just something I fantasized about when I was a kid. Then, after I saw Dog Day Afternoon [Sidney Lumet, 1975] and the performances of John Cazale and Al Pacino, I decided that was the type of acting I wanted to do.

To me, there is a lot of comedy in Dog Day Afternoon, yet it wasn’t a comedy. I loved the intensity of the characters and the realness of the whole film, including the look of it. It was based on a true incident, and, in fact, the true incident was even more bizarre than the movie. They couldn’t put everything in the movie; they had to trim the real detail.

I love the energy of what it was about, and the acting I think is just incredible.

Were there any acting influences from Dog Day Afternoon?

I’ll tell you the person I’m very influenced by is John Cassavetes, not only as an actor, but especially by his own films and the acting in them. He has a great face, and he gets good actors and good faces and good performances out of actors, like in Faces, Shadows, The Killing of a Chinese Bookie and A Woman Under the Influence¹. And, of course, there is Martin Scorsese’s films with Robert De Niro and Harvey Keitel.

What is your acting background?

I started out doing stand-up comedy when I was around 20 years old, but I only did that for about 2 years. I then started doing some experimental theatre on the Lower East Side in Manhattan, and I hooked up with another actor-writer, Martin Boone. We wrote and performed our own theatre pieces.

Perhaps the first time you were seen in film by Australian audiences was Parting Glances [Bill Sherwood, 1986], in which you had a major rôle. Then came a series of small character parts, in films like New York Stories (Martin Scorsese episode, 1989), Mystery Train, Miller’s Crossing and Barton Fink. Character actors often get stuck in a particular groove, but that is quite an odd mix of films.

I’ve been really lucky. I fell in with a good group of people, and was lucky enough to get some good parts. A lot of them have been small but memorable characters. I like being a character actor.

Was one of those films a turning point for you?

Parting Glances is still my favourite of the parts I’ve played. That came very early in my career, so it was a turning point. It took a while to get a part as complex as that character, and I think I’ve done that now with Reservoir Dogs and another film called In the Soup [Alexander Rockwell, 1992].

In between Parting Glances and these two films, I did a lot of smaller parts, or just characters that you see for a little bit but who make an impression. At the same time, you really didn’t learn a lot about them and that was sort of frustrating. Having played such a

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good part early in my career, I was a little spoilt. But things definitely changed with Reservoir Dogs and In the Soup, which I did back to back.

In the Soup is about a young filmmaker trying to get his first feature financed and he hooks up with a shady producer, who is not really a producer—he's a con man and thief. But this man is such a character that the filmmaker learns a lot about life through him. The filmmaker doesn't end up making the movie; it's really a kind of love story between these guys.

How did you get cast in Reservoir Dogs as Mr Pink?

I auditioned for it after I got the script from my agent. Quentin had known of my work, and we had talked on the phone. Then Harvey Keitel paid for Quentin and the producer, Laurence Bender, to come to New York because they couldn’t afford to and Harvey wanted them to see some New York actors. I just auditioned like every other actor did.

Harvey had casting approval, but I didn’t know Harvey at all before Reservoir Dogs.

The characters of Reservoir Dogs are played with full-on energy. At the same time, because they're strangers to each other, they have to play off one another without any prior knowledge. Did Tarantino give the cast any special briefing on playing those roles?

Actually, Eddie Bunker, who plays Mr Blue, was a real-life thief. So he was our unofficial technical adviser.

We had a two-week rehearsal period where we talked about a lot of things. It was one of the best rehearsal periods I’ve ever gone through. It was very thorough and we really explored every aspect of the script. We even rehearsed scenes that weren’t written. We just made up different situations that these characters might be in; little improvisations.

There’s a good deal of the scenes that look improvised, like the scene between Mr Pink and Mr White, when White is clicking his fingers while trying to light a cigarette.

We actually didn’t improvize anything while we were shooting and we didn’t write any new scenes through improvisation. We did embellish some of the scenes, though, where we came up with pieces of business. For instance, that scene in the bathroom was totally scripted, but with the cigarette thing I think I added a line when he says, “Have a smoke,” and I say, “I quit!” That came out of the situation, but 95 per cent of the film was scripted.

It doesn’t really matter because what you see of me is the character. I feel like it wasn’t me coming up with little lines, it was the character.

Reservoir Dogs has been talked about quite a bit as quoting a few films and directors from the 1950s and '60s. Did Tarantino sit the cast down in front of a video monitor and say, “This is what I want!?”

No, not at all. I had seen Stanley Kubrick’s The Killing [1956], which Reservoir Dogs is reminiscent of. But Quentin didn’t tell us to watch anything. We just rehearsed it on our own and he didn’t say he was going to try to make it like something else.

You’ve worked with experienced directors like Martin Scorsese and Joel Coen. What was it like with Tarantino, given that it is his first film?

He is as experienced as anybody else I’ve worked with. I really feel directing is in his blood. He has been waiting his whole life to do this film. Tim Roth used to say, “Quentin has been directing this movie in his head for 29 years.” I wouldn’t say he knew exactly what he was doing every step of the way, but even the most experienced directors don’t know that, either. I think he had a good attitude towards the film. I liked his kind of energy.

Quentin is very focused. Even a lot of the camera work was scripted, as far as knowing when characters are to be off-screen and when the camera stays on one character. He wrote that kind of material and that was the way it was shot. Some people had suggested that he should cover scenes, and he would say, “No, I would never use it. I don’t want to see Mr Pink in this scene. I want to do a close dolly on Mr White’s face.” This is what happens in the last scene, for example. It’s one take as Mr White crawls over to the ramp and cradles Mr Orange’s head.

Mr Pink is a fairly comical character, but he also has to suddenly switch over into a dramatic mode?

I didn’t see it as a switch. If the audience finds him funny, that’s fine, and if it doesn’t, that’s fine too. The point is I wasn’t playing Mr Pink for laughs.

From the first time reading the script, I was very aware of the humour in it, but as an actor playing that character I couldn’t really go for laughs. And Quentin didn’t direct us to go for any laughs. We all knew this stuff was funny, but we just tried to make it as real as possible. The humour comes out of something that is very real. In that way, you also get laughs that we didn’t know were in it, and people laugh at different stuff.

An example would be the torture scene between Mr Blonde and the cop. It always has some people walking out and other people laughing. How do you decide how to play that scene? You can’t play...
Reservoir Dogs

it for laughs and you can’t play it as though it’s going to be shocking. You can only play the scene the way it is written.

I wasn’t in that scene, but Michael is very funny and is very scary. Quite a few of the characters are paired off in terms of loyalty – Mr White and Mr Orange obviously, and Mr Blonde and Nice Guy Eddie – but Mr Pink isn’t. He is something of a loner and that’s why he is a survivor.

I never really thought about it. I don’t think he is a loner. He doesn’t have much emotional input for anyone else, because he didn’t have the same experience the others share with each other. Maybe he could have if he had escaped with Mr White, for instance. But I know what you mean, because I think that Mr White was drawn to Tim Roth’s character even before they got into trouble together. I just think Mr Pink was very careful. He was told not to get to know these other guys, and he takes his job very seriously.

So, I don’t think he is a loner. He is the most professional and that’s why he is a survivor.

Do you think Mr Pink is a primary contender for being the informer, even though we see the flashback of him shooting it out with the police, because in the pre-credit sequence the business about tipping marks Mr Pink’s difference from the others?

When I first read the script I didn’t suspect him as the informer. The only time that came up for me was in the scene with Harvey Keitel when he asks me how I escaped the police ambush. At one point in rehearsal, it occurred to me that he was asking that question out of suspicion. That was the only time for me.

The reason Reservoir Dogs is controversial is obviously because of the violence, particularly in the torture scene. How do you feel about the whole violence debate?

I don’t view stories as simply violent stories. I want to do good scripts, good movies, and if they have violence in them then that’s what is part of the story.

Personally, I don’t like movies where there is a fight scene every five minutes, and I don’t particularly like the Arnold Schwarzenegger films. I thought The Terminator [James Cameron, 1984] was very violent, whereas I don’t think Reservoir Dogs is excessively violent. The violence in Reservoir Dogs is very real and very disturbing, and it has been getting a lot of attention. But it is not even as graphic as some movies I see.

To me, the violence in it is justified because of who these guys were. I didn’t really have a problem with it, although I squirmed when I first read the script. And I remember when I saw the torture scene I could hardly watch it.

You’ve been quoted as saying, “Quentin makes you feel every blow.” Can you elaborate?

I think as an audience member you do feel the violence, whereas in some movies audiences are kind of desensitized to it and don’t realize how much violence there is in other films – even with something like Home Alone [Chris Colombus, 1990]. That’s probably what I meant.

I think we made a good movie that is different from what is being put out right now. It’s a smart film. You don’t really have to work hard to watch it, but it does require something from the audience other than passively sitting back and just watching. You do think about it after the movie is over. It is a character film and that is what I really like about it. I’m proud to have been a part of it.

It’s a small-budget film that is quite creative and relatively successful. Do you believe it may make studios re-appraise the way films are made these days?

I don’t think so. It didn’t get nominated for any Academy Awards, and wasn’t a huge box-office hit. So, I don’t think it is going to affect the way movies are made by the studios, or the stories that are told. I hoped it would, but I don’t think so.

In the after-glow of Reservoir Dogs, what is next for Steve Buscemi?

Right now, I am doing a studio film called Airhead with Michael Lehman and a couple of others. I’ve also written a feature that I want to direct. I’ve also made a short film which I’ve been trying to get into the festival circuit. It’s titled What Happened to Pete? I submitted it to the Sydney and Melbourne film festivals, but I don’t know what happened to it. I haven’t heard.

The feature is called Trees’ Lounge, which is the name of a bar in Long Island. It’s about this guy who lives in a white middle-class suburban town and his life is just a series of one mistake after another. It’s a little bit of a comedy of errors, but again it’s a character film. There are a lot of characters in it and explores the incestuous nature of a small community that doesn’t really have a lot to offer some people. If they don’t get married and have kids, they just end up drifting along. They don’t drift out of town, they just drift along with the closed community.

I’m trying to raise the money for it right now. I was hoping to shoot it this summer, but it didn’t happen, so hopefully I’ll be able to shoot it next spring.
Australian Film Commission

The Melbourne office has moved to:

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CINEMA PAPERS 94 - 33
Ten years ago, Ross Lansell and Peter Beilby indicated the inadequacy of our cinema chronicles in their introduction to *The Documentary Film in Australia*:

> the output of the documentary sector of the industry has always outstripped feature film production, and is the backbone of the film industry; but documentaries, like the proverbial iceberg, have remained submerged, awaiting their chronicler, whether verbal or visual.¹

All too often, cinema studies have exclusively concentrated on post-1900 fictional films. The myths surrounding "Soldiers of the Cross" (1900) and *The Story of the Kelly Gang* (1906) are retold with progressive embellishment, while earlier or more noteworthy Australian documentary achievements are ignored. The implication is that these two fictional productions were the only creative output of a barren period. The reality is almost the opposite.

By listing all of Australia's earliest films, the documentary character of our pioneering industry should be self-evident. Preparing a filmography of this nature is much more than an academic exercise. Many 'lost' films are unidentified or wrongly identified in our archives, awaiting the rediscovery that this data will assist. Three 'lost' 1896 films by Australia's first cameraman, Marius Sestier, have already been located through this research, two locally and one in France.²

### A BLINKERED PERSPECTIVE

Many cinema histories fail to recognize the creative evolution of editing and story-telling techniques in non-fiction films. These developed into "feature-length" productions by 1897, a decade before the advent of fictional features.

Our first view of a "feature-length" news film was given in Sydney during September 1897.³ It is a record of the Corbett-Fitzsimmons boxing match at Carson City, Nevada, shot on 17 March 1897, running about 75 minutes on special "Veriscope" film of 56mm gauge.⁴ With unedited coverage and a static camera, it demonstrated no creative manipulation. Cinematic techniques soon overtook it.

In the many long films taken of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in London (22 June 1897), several creative improvements were applied. R. W. Paul used three cameras at various points along the procession, with editing in-camera to eliminate static moments, and then intercut the negatives to provide a comprehensive view. The coverage also saw the birth of the camera 'pan', as Paul built a special worm-drive head for his tripod to allow it to follow action.⁵ These elements of visual syntax and "time compression" evolved as a matter of economic imperative, economizing on film usage. The British film historian Stephen Bottomore's article, "Shots in the Dark", in *Sight and Sound* (Summer 1988) used this example to demonstrate narrative construction in news films long before it appeared in James Williamson's *Attack on a Chinese Mission* (1901) or Edwin S. Porter's *Great Train Robbery* (1903).⁶ The same elements of narrative form can be found in many of Australia's
earliest actualities and news films. Most of these have never previously been listed, in spite of their extreme historical significance.

**Forgotten Documentaries**

Of the Australian documentary producers working in the 1890s, only Marius Sestier receives consistent coverage in the standard histories. Other pioneers are equally worthy of a place in the roll of honour.

Alfred Haddon shot the world's first in-situ anthropological research films in Torres Strait during September 1898. These survive. Fred Wills produced the world's first governmental films in Queensland during 1899 – the first Australian multi-shot films exhibiting editing technique. These also survive.

*The Austral Underworld* (1900) and *Under Southern Skies* (1902) are major feature-length documentary productions of the Salvation Army's Limelight Department, both long-forgotten. Major parts of *Under Southern Skies*, a massive two-and-a-half-hour documentary tracing Australia's history from exploration to federation, survive today.

Newspaper reports and the surviving films provide conclusive proof of our industry's documentary inclination. Australian film production supplemented and complemented a predominantly imported fare. In that role, local producers gravitated towards the news coverage and documentaries which didn't require expensive studio facilities. We developed considerable expertise in that field. Audiences were attracted by the novelty of seeing themselves and their familiar surroundings on the screen. It helped to span the vast distances across our continent. Bush residents could view sporting events and parades in the major cities via film. Industries and tourist attractions from remote corners of the country could be seen Australia-wide. Histories which only trace the development of Australian fictional film have entirely misrepresented our production industry's *raison d'être*.

Luckily, many of Australia's earliest films survive. As a precious record of Australian history, their value equates with the product of our first printing press, or with the first Australian photographs. Originally viewed as an ephemeral technical novelty, these films are of steadily increasing value with the passing of time. No representation of colonial Australia is more powerful and vivid than that given by our earliest movies.

**Bonds of Empire**

In the 1890s, Australia was a remote collection of British colonies, a cultural backwater embracing the new nationalist feelings which led to federation in 1901. Our four million European colonists were isolated from the events and the arts of their distant homelands. Actuality and news films provided them with a window on the hub of their cultural life.

Like most of our colonial trade, the bulk of film imports came to us from Britain and Europe, where non-fiction film was far more favoured than in America. Raymond Fielding's book, *The American Newsreel*, speculates on the reason for this trans-Atlantic difference and concludes:

American film producers were inclined to favour theatrical fare over journalistic fare. In contrast to the French producers, the first American filmmakers tended to bring subjects to the studio rather than to take the camera to the subject, a practice which understandably favoured theatrical manipulation rather than naturalistic documentation [...] The early Edison and Biograph [American] cameras were the size of steamer trunks and could not by any stretch of the imagination be considered portable. The French Lumière camera, on the other hand, was much smaller and was easily carried from location to location [...] The news film content that resulted was as much the consequence of technological imperative as of artistic inclination."

Australia's first flurry of kinetoscope shows used American films, but by late 1896 they surrendered to the market dominance of British and French imports. This situation persisted until World War I and the rise of Hollywood. The popularity of European film was partly due to the Australian impact of the Lumière and R. W. Paul projectors which were used to show them, and partly due to audience familiarity with the geographic locations they exhibited.

Our non-fiction film consumption was encouraged by the British film magnate, Charles Urban (1867-1942), whose London-based "Warwick Trading Company" produced a sizeable proportion of the films and projectors used in Australia after 1897. As late as 1910 Urban was quoted as saying:

With the life and scenery of the world, in every land upon which the sun shines, waiting to be recorded [...] time spent in finding ways and means of photographing artificial comedies or artificial tragedies by artificial light is wasted.
IS THIS AUSTRALIA’S OLDEST SURVIVING FILM?
This rough 8mm copy from a Lumière movie negative held by A. J. Perier is probably a Lady Brassey Awarding Blue Ribbon to “Newhaven”, Derby Winner, shot on 31 October 1896—three days prior to the 1896 Melbourne Cup. It matches original reviews of the film and the event very closely. This copy was taken from the NFSA video, Federation Films, with the permission of Ken Berryman, NSFA Melbourne office manager.

While film copyright records confirm that the American industry turned almost completely to fictional film production by 1907,12 documentaries retained their appeal in France, Britain and Australia. The Pathé company introduced regular weekly newsreel services to those three countries before similar production was attempted in America.13 It was symptomatic of fundamental differences between American cinema and ours.

Film Distribution in Australia: 1890s
Initially, there were no specialized cinemas in which films could be shown. Exhibitors usually bought their films directly from British manufacturers, taking a set programme on tour through various public halls. Metropolitan showmen usually exhibited films as an interlude on a vaudeville programme. Exhibitions of film by itself were rare, and usually associated with news coverage of some notable event—perhaps a horse race or a Royal pageant. Venues devoted solely to the exhibition of film were limited to the major cities, and generally didn’t survive after 1898, when the medium’s early novelty declined. Specialized cinemas were not properly established until 1908.

Film was especially welcome as an entertainment medium in the Australian bush, where it had no great competition from quality theatre and vaudeville. Portable and inexpensive, it brought city scenes to country halls on an increasingly regular basis as the 19th Century drew to a close. Contrary to the popular image of the “picture show man” in a horse-drawn waggon, the itinerant exhibitor of the 1890s generally travelled by rail or by coastal steamer.14 He stopped for a few days in each town, the duration dependent on regional population and his show’s popularity. In this way, the exhibitor simultaneously was the distributor in this pioneering period.

A particularly well-established Melbourne film pioneer was the “lanternist and limelight apparatus importer” Alexander Gunn, with a shop and office at 242 Little Collins Street. He established a reputation for popular slide show entertainments from 1889, adding motion pictures to his repertoire in mid-1897.15 His services were available to clubs and organizations who hired him to bring his portable projection plant to venues right across Victoria. Eventually, his company became a leading cinema advertising concern, producing the familiar slides which precede film shows today. Gunn’s son later recalled his father’s difficulties in importing films during the 1890s:

In the early times, Mr. Gunn had to buy all his films from London from such makers as R. Paul, Gaumont, Cricks [&] Martin and [J. A.] Williamson. We would receive a list giving the names of the various films, the length and a [telegraphic] code word attached to each.

My father had to put on his thinking cap and pick from one to six films on their titles only, and then cable the code word to London and chance his luck, also his money. The film cost 2/- per foot in those days and the total amount had to be cabled to London at the time of ordering, and we sat back for six weeks or so [awaiting their arrival]. The hiring of films was unthought of then.16

When film had to be imported without the opportunity of a preview, the more predictable usefulness of a local production made
 FRAME ENLARGEMENTS FROM SESTIER’S FILMS OF 1896 MELBOURNE CUP EVENTS.
Copied from NFSA video, Living Melbourne, courtesy of Ken Berryman.

(1) ARRIVAL OF TRAIN AT HILL PLATFORM, Flemington
(A) The train moves in. A sole policeman in white helmet waits to scrutinize the crowd.
(B) Train halts, passengers reach through the doors to grab handles and open carriage. Another train shunts in the distance.
(C) Passengers exit train, first men, then women in lacy hats. Smoke from a distant engine is seen above carriage.

(2) CUP WINNER “NEWHAVEN”, TRAINER WALTER HICKENBOTHAM, JOCKEY HARRY GARDINER
W. Hickenbotham leads the horse around in circles before the camera, apparently outside the horse’s stables.

it a better investment. It could also generate desirable local newspaper publicity for the exhibitor. Naturally, Gunn became an early exhibitor of local film, though he doesn’t seem to have produced these subjects himself.17

The difficulty of importing film directly from England eased in the later 1890s when several local photographic warehouses established Australian sales agencies for British and French producers. Méliès, Paul, Lumière, Warwick and Gaumont all had Australian representation by 1899. Two of the larger Australian dealers retailing their films were Harrington’s Limited and Baker & Rouse. Both had Sydney headquarters and both published their own journals, *Australian Photographic Journal* and *Australasian Photographic Review* respectively. Before 1903, these were the principal Australian information sources for cinematic developments and equipment exchange. New and used films were often advertised in the classified sections of both magazines. Researchers should note that these classifieds were removed from the New South Wales State Library copies before binding, but the Mitchell Library sets are intact. They document the sources from which Australian cinema developed.

**The Exhibitor’s Creative Role**

Most of the early projectors, particularly the Lumière machines, could not accept films exceeding about 90 seconds in length.18 Film subjects were mostly sold in 100-foot reels through the 1890s, and were only available “joined” or in greater lengths by special order. The sequencing of film programmes at this stage was the prerogative of the exhibitor, rather than the producer.

Initially film programmes aimed at a maximum of variety, with as little similarity between successive minute-long films as possible.19 In Australia, the earliest programme to progress into some sense of continuity was probably the Sydney premiere of Sestier’s “tableaux” of the 1896 Melbourne Cup, which placed the various scenes into a rough chronological order, presenting the series as an integrated group.20 The practice was not maintained, and subsequent showings reverted to isolated segments of the coverage being sandwiched with unrelated subjects.

This “sandwich-programme” principle only began to evolve in Australia after coverage of *Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee* (1897) proved the profit potential of single-subject film shows. By then, cinema’s initial novelty was on the decline. Film was increasingly shot on specific subjects for specific purposes. Exhibitors often assembled films of similar character to form a narrative thread, frequently illustrating a lecture. In this manner, narrative feature films evolved, first as exhibitors sequenced existing films (and slides) on a single subject, then as films were shot to link existing films into a narrative sequence, and finally as an entire narrative was shot and sequenced by the producer.

In the past, researchers have found reviews of these single-subject programmes, and leaped to the conclusion that they’re fully-fledged feature films. A classic example is the mythology surrounding “Soldiers of the Cross”. This was Herbert Booth’s Salvation Army lecture, illustrated by a programme of slides and short film inserts by various makers, including the Salvation Army. After Booth’s biographer, F. C. Ottman, seized on it as being a “feature film” in his 1928 book21, the myth became an Australian icon through unquestioning repetition. The 90-second Lumière films used for this lecture’s illustration will be listed in our future instalments.

**An Australian Production Record**

During the 1890s, the few available films seldom exceeded two minutes’ duration and rarely contained more than one camera set-up. Because exhibitors purchased prints rather than merely borrowing them, many copies of each film were disseminated. The survival rate of films made before the advent of film libraries and exchanges is consequently better than one might expect.
We therefore publish the following filmographies and producer biographies in the hope that more of Australia's earliest films will be rediscovered, identified and preserved. Commencing with this issue's list of local films made during 1896-97, successive instalments will progressively record the output of our industry's pioneering period.

MARIUS SESTIER FILMOPHARY

The activities of this Lumière company cameraman, who made Australia's earliest documented films, were fully discussed in our previous instalment. All of his films were of 60 to 75 feet in length, providing about a minute's screen time. Advertised film titles were not of fixed wording at this stage, being more often in the nature of a content description. I have tried to use the most commonly encountered title of each, or the most unambiguous brief description possible. French titles are appended in parenthesis.

(1) Passengers Alighting from Paddle Steamer “Brighton” at Manly Wharf, on a Sunday Afternoon (probably shot 25 October 1896).

(2) Arrival of Governor Brassey and Suite at Flemington Racecourse

(3) Bringing Out the Horses
which may be the film described here, but the exact fit to the 1896 description renders this unlikely.

(5) Arrival of Train at Hill Platform, Flemington (shot 3 November 1896).
About 300 passengers depart a Cup train at Flemington station, while another train leaves the station simultaneously. The print has been released in the NFSA video, *Living Melbourne* (1988).

(6) Crowds Near the Grand Stand, Melbourne Cup (shot 3 November 1896).
Premiere 19 November 1896, first mentioned in *The Age* (Melbourne), 16 November 1896, p. 6. Lumière catalogue number 418 (*Melbourne, les courses: la foule*).
Promenaders, mostly upper-class folk, move about on the lawns with sunshade umbrellas and suits, the Flemington grandstand at the rear. Walter Barnett appears three times. According to *Ballarat Star*, 19 April 1897, “the view on the lawn at Flemington enables one to recognise Mrs. Brough, the well-known actress.” Brough is also mentioned in a *Brisbane Courier* report of this film, 10 May 1897, p. 6. The print has been released in the NFSA video, *Living Melbourne*.

(7) Arrival of Governor Brassey and Suite at Flemington (shot 3 November 1896).
A police cordon in summer uniforms (white helmets) holds back spectators while vice-regal carriages stop and passengers alight, moving towards the camera. Victorian Governor Lord Brassey leads the group past the camera at close range, followed by Admiral Bridge, Western Australian Governor Sir Gerald Smith (with wife and daughter), Viscountess Hampden (wife of New South Wales Governor), Lord and Lady Magheramore, Hon. T. A. Brassey, Lady Idina Brassey, Lord Richard Nevill, Lord Shaftesbury, several military VIPs and Miss Darley. Members of the public close in on the rear of the group as they pass. The print has been released in the NFSA video, *Living Melbourne*.

(8) Afternoon Tea Under the Awning, Flemington (shot 3 November 1896).

(9) Finish of the Hurdle Race, Cup Day (shot 3 November 1896).
Premiere 24 November 1896, first mentioned in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 November 1896, p. 2. No surviving print is known.

(10) Weighing Out For the Cup (shot 3 November 1896).
This is a rather nondescript view of horses passing the camera in a leisurely way on a lawn in front of a gentlemen’s lavatory, with spectators milling about. Horses pass from right to left, with men in suits on their backs, on their way to the weighing scales, out of frame. Walter Barnett parades flagrantly in front of the camera for some time, pointing at the camera and obstructing the horses. The print has been released in the NFSA video, *Living Melbourne*.

(11) Bringing Out the Horses (shot 3 November 1896).
Premiere 24 November 1896, first mentioned in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 November 1896, p. 2. Probably the same film is advertised under the name, *The Saddling Paddock*, for its Australian showings. Lumière catalogue number 421 (*Melbourne, les courses: Sortie des Chevaux*).
This film must survive in France, as a frame enlargement from it appears in Jacques Rittaud-Hutinet’s book, *August et Louis Lumière: les 1000 Premiers Films*, Paris, 1990, p. 177. It shows horses moving through the crowd near the grandstand, with the camera looking over the heads of men in the foreground. It is curious that this film was not repatriated to Australia with the others of the 1896 Melbourne Cup in 1969. An effort should be made to retrieve it. No copy exists in Australia.

(12) Start of the Melbourne Cup Race (shot 3 November 1896).
As the only reference to this film is the one cited above, the advertised item may be the product of exaggeration or wishful thinking, or perhaps this is another description of the foregoing item. The existence of this film awaits confirmation from further research.

(13) Finish of the Melbourne Cup Race (shot 3 November 1896).
Premiere 24 November 1896, first mentioned in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 November 1896, p. 2. Lumière catalogue number 422 (*Melbourne, les courses: La Course*).

CONTINUES ON PAGE 62
I am a Keon Park man. I was born there and obviously will die there. Keon Park is the most obscene spot on the earth. It has an old squash court, the old Bostik glue factory, hundreds of lost heroin-addicted geography teachers who can’t get any work, a couple of depressing cricket pitches with hardly any concrete left in them, and one writer. Me.

Keon Park is the ultimate white man’s happy hunting ground. You reap reap crucified eating a sherbet bomb and pushing a trolley up a hill with no sewerage on it, carrying useless or not bad scripts for imaginary movies. Still, I love Keon Park. It has given me bite. It has taught me hatred. I have been able to defend myself in the performing arts in Australia by reverting to type: a Keon Park thug.

All of my writing, in a career spanning fifty Hills Hoists and covering a million sufferers in a million Melbourne backyards, all this work, has been about suburban misfits like me. They are all about lostness and foundness. Little things like life and death. Cups of tea and glimpses of heaven, seen through a crack in Everyman’s window. I write about what’s up with us, like going to the dentist, as I did in 1970, and getting a rough quote on getting my jaw removed. I write about my grandmother’s funeral service, a lot about poor people, even more about drunks and homeless folks. I write about what lollies sacked posties suck on the red rattler to get your head read. Sad, it is the quintessence of sad. Funny, it is funnier than the grave. I know those homeless men in the park behind The Children’s Hospital. Brian’s film is the longest hour of the longest night. It cries; you watch.

Brian believed for some reason that I understood film, that I could offer some suggestions for cuts and give him technical advice. I have devoured all film, and have written lots of scripts, perhaps the best-known being A Woman’s Tale, co-created with Paul Cox. That movie tells the tale of Sheila Florance, dying. It’s a comedy. And it’s sadder than living all your life in Albert Park. I don’t know anything about anything. I have an instinct for wistfulness, that’s all.

That’s because I’m a dreamer. I’m sad for a living. And I’m a millionaire. Somehow or other I can write. There’s no school for it, apart from men’s eyes.

Somehow or other, Santhana Naidu, an old Malaysian cobbler of Cox, and Brian McKenzie and I started writing this movie about a Muslim boy who arrives in Separation Street, Northcote, from what heaven he calls “Our Town” in the steaming cauldron that is Malaysia. We started writing this funny and gently sad dream of this displaced boy, Ahmat, and his trials and tribulations, in Northcote.

Senthana Naidu first met hanging around the pingpong table at Illumination Films, a shop that sells dreams instead of Omo, in pretentious Albert Park, where every single deserted hot pant-suit old mum has a baby boy at the age of 43, and they all become frustrated filmmakers. Every single baby in Albert Park is a filmmaker addicted to flat white coffee.

Santhana has worked hard and long for Paul Cox, putting up with his crazy tantrums, such as beating babies at pingpong one second after they arrive by caesarian method in the editing room. Sonny, as we call him, is perfectly charming and calm, and is always remembering his hometown, called Seramban, a hundred rolls of film from Kuala Lumpur. He dreams of his birthplace, and smells The Durian Tree fruit, he recalls lopping twelve-foot tigers and he sees, on his side, in his sleep, the portrait of his mother and father smiling in a kind of mythical jungle.

I have written some movies with Paul Cox, the only man in the arts to smoke so much you can’t see him at the writing desk; just a column of revolving German pipe smoke is all you can relate to. He is old-fashioned and brilliant, and he is possessed of a beautiful laugh, and I love him, and he works too much and will die, I hope not, one day of everything related to movie-making. It’s too hard, he said to me once, even though he beat me 21-19 at pingpong, only after an argument, and the stark fact that his serve, the final one, the flick one, hit a bit of cake crumb on my side of the net, and spun off, leaving him victorious and more full of smoke than ever.

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Sonny Cox is brave, and there’s an end to it. He also treats me well, and that’s never really happened before. Sonny and I started to make friends, even though once he jokingly strangled me among the gent’s runner piles at Melbourne Sports Depot. I was going to put him into the cops, but he didn’t mean it, so I didn’t. Sonny is a nice guy who also smokes too much. So do I.
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For four years I lived in Northcote, in Separation Street, where an old man, a Scotsman, got run over by the Mooney Valley trots bus one night, at the tender age of 93, with two bottles of Invalid Stout under his arm. "Bob Jane T Mart" you could read all up his stinking old tartan dressing gown. In that disastrous thoroughfare, that dangerous track of flung-off recaps and dead bodies, in that awful, choking, polluted hell-hole, I made only one friend, one acquaintance, in all that tedious time. His name was Said Tawadros. He ran a collapsing Milk Bar. It sold stolen People magazines and it sold warped Indian Jazz Records stuck, crammed hard into the arseholes of white, stale Italian bread on bizarre display in the window. Never was there a mixed goods business remotely like Said's.

One of the most heartrending evenings I have endured is the memorable occasion when I'll Be Home for Christmas was screened to an audience of admirers and drunkards, current homeless chaps and social workers at The State Film Centre, at the arse-end of Parliament House, several years back. Brian asked me to make a speech about homelessness, which I did. I am good at homelessness and I never shut up, so I did it, with relish. I turned on the old hobo charisma.

It is long, the film, and upsetting, unsettling and funny, straight from life, and it depicts such things as homeless men gorging on, an Olympic lot of guzzling grog. There are a lot of pathetic tales and sorrowing speeches in it. Cinéma vérité behind The Children's Hospital. It is the best of its kind, and the fact that it has never been shown on telly is a disgrace.

I made what I estimated to be a not bad ad-libbed speech about the spontaneous kindness of strangers, the wit of them, the way society sneers at them (us) and I got a round of genuinely-felt applause (I assumed), but the big boobo I made was telling all the men there:

Look, you chaps, don't fuck off after the film of Brian's. My wife and brother have brought stacks of alcohol. 'I think there's three dozen bottles of beer left, aren't there, Sarah?' And Robo has brought a bottle of Black Label and a few of red and white, and there's plenty of smokes, so stick around after the tearjerker and we'll have a proper grog-on.

Little was I to know that every man there had taken the pledge. They were all in AA. And all hanging out. That was one of the biggest oversights of my life, I suppose. Anyway, on to Malaysia.

The Malaysian film is based on Sonny Naidu's life, when he arrived in Melbourne in the swinging 1960s, jet-lagged and Mus-lim-eyed, tired and over-excited. His brother, who was studying at Melbourne Uni, made Sonny a giant T-Bone, Sonny's first go at what we call "Home Cooked Proper", and he leapt into the meat with due interest, only to vomit. In Seramban, Sonny had never come across a giant lump of Aussie meat. The poor bastard was extra crook.

Sonny has always wanted to write about the cultural hiccup between his hometown and that leap into the Keon Park world. Melbourne must have seemed very strange to him as a young pupil of life, commerce and intellectual life. Melbourne is strange no matter how you look at it.

Brian's skills with millions of micro-cassette tapes and collecting strange wisps of random anyone, his love of battlers and knowledge of the human condition; Sonny's Seramban past and his interest in that which is true, dislocated and all the films he has helped make for his friend Paul Cox, his history mixed with my love of little wins and losses for little people - we wrote the Malaysian story using our dislocated selves, tapes, hoarse all-night talkings, the remembrance of thongs past, as I tramped for ten days through the steaming jungles of Malaysia in a pair of $1 bright blue ones. The toe-things have had it now.

Ahmat, a young Muslim, helps out at his father Rashid's coffee stall, in what we call affectionately "our town", something of a play on the Thornton Wilder. His dad wants Ahmat to become a brain surgeon. He sends his boy off to Melbourne, his first experience of Northcote and crooked relatives and good people as well from "our town"; and Ahmat suffers sea-changes. He stays with the strange Said Tawadros, his uncle, who runs the weird milkbar.

The first night there, rolling out his prayer mat to face Mecca, he faces Froot Loops. Prays to them. It is a rites-of-passage play, and
DELUSION

ROSE LUCAS

Road movies have always been an opportunity to take things to the limit. Everything is in transit, if not in heavy duty transition: cars and motor bikes screech their way along highways, wheeling through desert landscapes in clouds of dust; cop cars take up the challenge, but usually get left behind in these dubious trails of glory; and people, who find themselves in a marginal territory so different from the security of home and town, seem to be either looking for something new and/or they’re on the run from something old.

Most particularly, the road movie has functioned as the quest narrative of the automobile era. Prophets of old may have wandered out into the isolation of the wilderness to lose a sense of themselves in the known world and to find some new kind of vision or inspiration. The road movie has speeded up the pace and it has thrown in a range of visual, aural and intellectual stimulants, but it still basically tells the same story: taking a turning off the main road of life may mean running the risk of losing the plot altogether, but it also contains the possibility of new directions. Most of all, it’s a lot of fun, especially if you survive the particular kind of rite of passage it offers.

Newcomer Carl Colpaert’s Delusion has it both ways: it follows in the tried-and-true narrative tradition of the road movie, yet also throws in a few spoofs and hairpin bends of its own.

George (Jim Metzler) is a yuppie businessman whose computer business, Mirage XT, is going under, causing George to take his first unexpected turning. He embezzles vast sums of money and heads off with the cash in the boot of his Volvo, with the aim of setting the business up in a few spoofs and hairpin bends of its own.

However, Colpaert continues to tease audience expectations of the thriller/road movie genre. Loud melodramatic chords ironically announce the “significant” moment when Patti’s pet lizard, Johnny, jumps out of his glass jar or when George is rescued by the unlikely bikergirl (Angelina Fiordelissi), who tells him she thought he was her man whom she lost “in the revolution”. “Which revolution?” hollers George as he climbs on to her Mad Max-style machine; “The sexual revolution”, she replies.

Also, when Patti threatens to leave Chevy, Colpaert has them replay a piece of dialogue from that classic of American cinema, Citizen Kane (Orson Welles, 1941), when Kane’s second wife walks out on him. “You can’t do this to me”, Patti demands. “Oh, so it’s you it’s being done to”. Patti returns, thus signalling both the overweening egotism that masks Chevy’s infantile nature and her own departure.
The character of Patti, who is certainly a visually lustrous addition to the scene, also serves as a form of critique on the macho competitiveness and violence of Chevy and George, especially as they metamorphose into bizarre alter-ego versions of each other. On one level, she is the conventional door-mat, the gangster’s moll, who is tacitly complicit with his violence, and an adornment in his grubby world when she is not just the “tenderloin” there for his sexual pleasure. On another level, she is discreetly disenaged from both the violence and the tenderness of Chevy’s world. As she tells George, she’s not on anyone’s side: “I’m in it for myself.” If anything, her deepest feelings seem to be evoked by Johnny, the lizard, the weirniest of the film’s phallic symbols.

In the final scene, which mocks the heroic shoot-outs of the Western narrative, George and Chevy stand locked together by their hatred, their fear of and identification with each other, and their selfish desire for the ill-gotten cash which lies between them like a bait. Patti’s departure at this point might be read as callousness on her part: Is she as ruthless as them, because she abandons them to each other? Or, rather, does her departure indicate quite a major rejection on the film’s part of the now foolish aggression played out by the male characters? By walking out – or actually by driving out in Larry’s ute – and especially by leaving behind the snare of the stolen money which had led George to this “Death Valley” showdown in the first place, Patti indicates a rejection of the entire game of heroes and villains, of greed and violence, and leaves the boys to fight it out between themselves.

It’s a nice, “politically correct” touch perhaps, and certainly it offers a little more hope than the desperate careening off the cliff by Thelma (Geena Davis) and Louise (Susan Sarandon). Perhaps it’s the only way to really get away with a road movie these days without looking too passé. Colpaert gives us some of the excitement of the chase, the glittering gruesomeness of the gangster world, and the “finding the truth about yourself through the experience of crossing boundaries” routine, while also making us feel that he knows this is already a much-travelled narrative route.


THE HEARTBREAK KID

Breaking away from family and cultural ties to pursue independence is the key theme in The Heartbreak Kid. Based on the stage play of the same name, this warm, multi-layered coming-of-age film explores the lives of an Anglo-Greek school teacher and a student who fall in love despite opposition and disapproval from family, friends and colleagues.

Caught in cultural crossfire, Christina (Claudia Karvan) has divided loyalties to the views expressed by her traditional Greek parents, husband-to-be and the school where she teaches, which are at loggerheads with her own progressive beliefs. This is economically expressed in the film’s opening scenes, where the viewer takes a glimpse at Christina’s family, assembled to celebrate her engagement. Her parents, comfortably well-to-do, have thrown a swanky party for their only daughter, evidenced by the well-dressed crowd, the abundance of champagne, and the line of expensive cars decorating the driveway and streets. The engagement has all the trappings of being a perfect affair, except for Christina’s uneasy smile. The viewer gets the feeling the trappings and brouhaha have overwhelmed her; she is having second thoughts about marriage, which everyone has taken as a fait accompli. Faced with the embarrassment of backing out, which would mean disgracing her family, Christina takes the easy path and resigns herself to a typical Greek marriage. It is only when Christina falls in love with her student, Nick (Alex Dimitriades), that she develops confidence and emotional strength to break away from smothering family ties.

Nick, in the meantime, comes from the opposite end of the Greek social scale. Raised by a single parent, who works in a factory, Nick is a working-class Greek who presents a challenge to Christina, who sees his potential and is frustrated by his lack of interest in studying. His interest in Christina is ignited when she lobbies for the official acceptance of a school soccer team that Nick has attempted to establish.

Both Nick and Christina have an idealist and passionate streak which lands both in conflict. In fighting to establish Nick’s soccer team, Christina finds herself “playing mother”, at first with the staff and then later in co-opting Nick’s father (Nico Lathouris), an ex-soccer star, to coach the team.

Nick is attracted to Christina on two levels: she is the mother he does not have, which earths his stony nature, and she is also a foxy-looking teacher who turns his schoolboy hormones haywire. Nick’s youthfulness and energy inspires Christina; he is the antithesis of Dimitri (Steve Bastoni), her fiancé and “father-in-training”.

Christina, concerned by what people will think, vacillates about having an affair with Nick. Fi-
side of the screen. It is as if the camera cannot contain the action. By contrast, during love scenes, Jenkins opts for a more static camera treatment, allowing the actors to build their own microcosm with the frame. The scenes have a natural charm and spinoiness, thanks to Jenkins' unobtrusive direction.

In terms of its portrayal of ethnics, The Heartbreak Kid continues to build on the breakthrough style of Wogs Out of Work and Acropolis Now by creating multi-dimensional ethnic characters instead of grabbing laughs by just "soaping" their cultural idiosyncrasies. A great deal of attention has been paid to developing the stage characters and plot for the film medium, to prevent it appearing stilted and stagey. The script radiates good humour, which, rather than mitigate the film's dramatic scenes, lends a personable feel.


LOVE IN LIMBO

KARL QUINN

To note that David Elfick's Love In Limbo is a beautifully-designed film is to point to both its greatest strength and its greatest weakness, for it is surely one of the best recent examples of the triumph of style over substance. Ostensibly a rites-of-passage story in which young Ken Riddle (Craig Adams) makes the transition from boyhood to manhood in a Kalgoorlie brothel, the film is probably more fruitfully understood as a celebration of the emergent prosperity and changing morality of post-war Australia.

Ken lives with his mother, Gwen (Rhondra Findleton), and his sister, Ivy (Maya Stange), in a modest and modern house in Perth. Obsessed by the mysterious world of sex, Ken channels his fascination for the female form into a lucrative sideline by copying the figures from his mother's dress-making patterns, disobeying them and then selling the pornographic cartoons to his equally eager schoolmates. When he is sprung in the act (of selling) and expelled, Ken decides to chuck in school in favour of a job at the clothing factory owned by his uncle, Bert Bollinger (Bill Young).

The workplace seems a far more liberated zone than the schoolyard, but Ken's mother nonetheless feels it necessary for her son to receive the old birds-and-bees lecture from the closest thing he seems to have to a father, his hapless uncle. The scene is one of the best in the film, with the flow of information rapidly changing direction as Ken patiently explains concepts like "climax" to his intrigued and obviously unformed uncle, while his aunt patiently waits outside the door wondering how on earth something which takes so little time to do can take so long to explain.

Back at the factory, Ken becomes friends with smooth-talking Max Wiseman (Martin Sacks), the quintessential salesman and something of a ladies' man. Max introduces Ken to the exciting world of jazz clubs and fast women, but Ken soon realizes he is out of his depth and forms a friendship with Barry (Aden Young), an altogether less polished, but no less successful, version of the homme fatale. When Barry buys a battered old Holden, Ken sees the chance to make a move on his sister's best friend, Maisie (Samantha Murray), and talks Barry into taking Ivy as his partner on a double-date to the drive-in. Of course, Ivy doesn't want a bar of Barry, and Maisie isn't too keen on Ken, so the Riddle kids are left together in the front seat of the car while Maisie and Barry jittersbug to the rock-and-roll movie, before retiring to the back seat of the Holden for a marathon petting session.

Clearly, then, Ken's desire and attempts to lose his virginity are what provide the narrative steam of Love in Limbo, and he is a sympathetic and familiar-enough character to engage our interests adequately to care about how, when and with whom it will finally happen. But despite the perpetual fantasizing to which Ken is prone and we are privy, there is little sense of desperation in Ken's approach, and thus little sense of tension in the film. Only one scene really seems to capture the feeling adequately — that in which Ken helps his mother to remove a dress on which the zipper has become stuck, and is thus briefly confronted with the sight of his topless, suddenly eroticized, mother. Tension seems an essential element in the successful rendering of teenage male frustration, and a vital ingredient in the realization of the comic potential of the scenario. Films like The Summer of '42 (Robert Mulligan, 1971), and even those of the ilk of Porky's (Bob Clark, 1981), manage to milk that tension for, respectively, nostalgic or crude comic effect, but Love in Limbo lacks such an edge and so comes across as somewhat bloodless — though not colourless.

The design of the film is staggeringly opulent, with reds, yellows and blues screaming for attention in the ultra-modern 1950s house, furniture and objet d'art designs, as well as in the Australian landscape through which Ken, Barry and their prudish workmate, Arthur (Russell Crowe), travel on their way to finally do the "beast-with-two-backs" in a Kalgoorlie brothel. At times, this design is used to comic effect (as in the above-mentioned birds-and-bees scene which takes place amidst the minimalist but over-designed "nowness" of the wealthy Bollinger living room), at others to pure aesthetic effect (as when the boys pull up to an outback gas station where the bowser, the corrugated iron, the red earth and the Shell logo all add up to an image somewhere between a Russell Drysdale painting and a Mojo petrol advertisement).

Whatever the intention at any given moment, the visual style of the film is joyous and attention-holding throughout. But it still begs the question, "What for?", because it is easy to dismiss this ultimately lightweight adventure as a post-modern exercise of the most superficial kind: all picturesque and no perspective. And while the film is enjoyable enough, one can't help but wonder why it was made (then again, one occasionally reminds oneself that it is just a film, Ingrid).

Still, there are moments when it seems that there is quite a lot going on in Love in Limbo. Gwen, for instance, is necessarily interesting: a single mother at a time when to be such was relatively uncommon; determined to seek a career at a time when to do such was relatively unusual; sexually active when to be so was to risk the wrath of the moralists.

Of course, what Gwen represents is very probably not so much a departure from the reality of the female experience in the 1950s as it is a departure from the televisial and filmic representation of that experience. This applies equally to other elements in the film — such as...
the admission of the existence of prostitution, and the presence of migrants as both integrated and non-integrated members of the community — and might be reason enough to conjecture that Elfick has actually dressed a fairly sophisticated revisionary agenda in the clothes of lightweight entertainment.

In the unlikely event that that is the case, the question of veracity arises. Robert Drew noted in his Who Weekly review that anyone who actually grew up in Perth in the 1950s may quibble with some of the details of Elfick’s film. Being a child of the 1970s, I am in no position to comment upon whether or not the film gets this right. I can only note that Elfick’s vision of the 1950s as a time and a culture on the brink of a consumer and sexual revolution seems to articulate what so many of the teen and rock-and-roll films of the era could only intimate. It is as if in Limbo were a 1950s film that somehow allowed to break the code of silence that surrounded those areas that were still considered taboo — most notably sexuality — while still maintaining its surface coherence.

In that sense, it is reminiscent of Jim McBride’s equally uprooting Jerry Lewis biopic, Great Balls of Fire! (1989), and — to stretch a point — David Lynch’s Blue Velvet (1986). But with neither the intrinsic biographical interest of the former nor the graphic subterranean nastiness of the latter, Love in Limbo can’t quite break out of the never-never land of accurate, but fairytale, pointless, stylistic reproduction.


ORLANDO
RAYMOND YOUNIS

What would you see if you lived for 400 years? What would you learn? And what of the mysteries of gender, death and history? These are the types of questions that Sally Potter, the director of Orlando, is interested in. The novel by Virginia Woolf (upon which this film is based), though it deals with such questions, is not quite the sort of book that would give satisfactory or authoritative answers to these. Indeed, the tensions that are generated between book and screenplay, novelist and director, text and image, are quite fascinating.

Woolf’s novel, it must be said, was intended to be an exploration of androgyny, of ambiguous or shifting personæ within a personality. (In the history of film, this type of exploration is not rare: consider Bergman’s and Godard’s interest in the subject as well as the idea of the double in the films of Tarkovsky.) The novel was supposed to provide a portrait of Vita Sackville-West. Though Woolf had set herself the serious objective of transforming “biography” as a genre, the novel was also intended to give her some fun, to satirize, in a good-humoured way, the self-importance and pomposity of the male sex, of men’s alleged preoccupation with facts, logic, evidence and the cold light of reason — all of which, it seems, Woolf had observed in her father. (It is a pity that distinctions which would seem to be commonsensical were not drawn between the life of a single person and the lives of many others who cannot be encapsulated in stereotype, oversimplification or caricature.)

The major problem for Potter, one would think, in adapting the novel to the screen is the claim that this may well be one of Woolf’s most superficial books — a claim that is reinforced by the fact that it was preceded by two masterpieces, Mrs Dalloway and To the Lighthouse, and succeeded by two not inconsiderable works, The Waves and Between the Acts. And the film itself may be open to just the same sort of criticism. But more of this later.

The plot is intriguing. Orlando (Tilda Swinton) is, first, a man, then a woman, who lives through four centuries. As a man, he is given property by a queen on the condition that he never “wither” or grows old. He then experiences unrequited love, writes poetry, though not nearly as successfully as Orlando does in the novel, is sent to Asia as an ambassador, is wooed by a smitten archduke from England — called Harry (John Wood), what else? — transmogrifies into a woman and returns to merry England where he becomes a victim of salon wits such as Pope and Swift before rejecting marriage proposals, losing quite a deal of possessions and discovering the importance of self, soul and an overriding sense of individual resolve.

The film is cunningly structured in accord with one of the most memorable of Elizabethan metaphors, the Seven Ages of Man. The first age is called “Death” and, not surprisingly, people perish, though Orlando becomes a man of property and means. The second age is called “Love”, and again there is nothing cryptic here, as Orlando seeks a wife. Shakespeare’s Othello is glimpsed and clearly the killing of Desdemona is intended to foreshadow the recurrent motif of “withering” and the mutability of a way of life. (This point is reinforced vividly in the image of a dead woman with a basket of fruit frozen beneath a transparent layer of ice.) The title of this section is also ironic since one of the salient symmetries is introduced here: the treachery of both the male and the female.

From love, Orlando proceeds to dabble in poetry and diplomacy in the next two sections, called “Poetry” and “Politics”. But public life cannot assuage the pain of failed love and constant solitude, so, before the re-entry into society and the emergence of the fifth age, a sea-change occurs. Unfortunately, Orlando discovers that women are not just as treacherous as men but no less unhappy or unfulfilled.

In the sixth age, “Sex”, despite the film’s insistence on the point that masculine and feminine are just different aspects of the one personality — a somewhat Jungian idea — a number of differences are in fact suggested. Here, the masculine is unfettered, attractive as well as repellent, and concerned with abstract notions such as “liberty” and with the pursuit of grand universals, whereas the feminine is concerned with personal identity and the unities of the self.

In the final age, “Birth”, Orlando is left with a child and her progression, if that is what it is supposed to be, is codified in a text which is a product of the ‘heart’ rather than, one presumes, a product of the mind. But this text is also something that emerges from and possibly transcends the tumultuous world of the great wars. We must, it seems, imagine this Sisyphus happy.

Overall, the film is both intriguing and attractive. Admittedly, the view of marriage which it betrays towards the end is somewhat simplistic and dull, and not quite as fair-minded as the view in the novel is. The humour of the book, too, has not translated particularly well, the sharpness of Woolf’s satirical thrusts against the writing of biography through her appropriation of
parody, inflation and irony is lost, and one is left with the thought that Orlando in the film does not seem to have gained more than one or two insights (none of which are uncontroversial) despite four centuries of education! But, the production designers have done a marvellous job, and the use of colour coding (for example, pale shades and tones of Uzbekistan) is functional and suggestive. And the editing and shooting — done in such a way that they suggest a discontinuity between the time spans and present the narrative as a sequence of carefully-articulated, fantastic tableaux — are polished in general. The techniques themselves, in fact, remind one of the chasms that can divide the past and the present, and of the need for that affirmation which is imaginatively transposed into metaphors and image of the recreated self.


**THE REFRACTING GLASSES**

*Anna Dzenis*

I really started to get interested in making films when, would you believe it, I saw Ken G. Hall making *Smithy* in 1946. In some large and expensive house there was this enormous film crew, with a giant 35mm camera and people with yellow make up. I was like a boy watching over the fence and I was fascinated. The other thing that happened round the same time was I went to pick up my young sister at a birthday party and the parents were showing the little kids *Ballet mécandie*[1924] by Ferdinand Léger, because these kids were always interested in ballet. The fact that I was drawn to these two different things may explain the way my work has always gone.

— David Perry

Through the same act by which he spins language out of himself he weaves himself into it, and every language draws a circle around the people to which it belongs, a circle that can only be transcended in so far as one at the same time enters another one.

— Wilhelm Von Humboldt

The *Refracting Glasses* is a curious bricolage of narrative fiction and documentary fact. It is a film written, produced and directed by artist-filmmaker David Perry, a leading figure in the vanguard of Australian experimental film production.

A visual and aural diary, *The Refracting Glasses* is woven around the meditations and journeys of the fictional character-artist-filmmaker, Constant Malernik. Constant (Leon Teague) begins his creative working life in Sydney in the early 1950s. Like most artists, he is obsessed by many things. He is particularly compelled by the art of the early 20th Century and of the Bolsheviks.

These fascinations motivate and even dominate most of his personal and creative life: Constant's quest is to understand the complex and difficult relationship that exists between aesthetics and politics. Indeed, his character becomes the embodiment of that dilemma. But the more he interrogates his motives and purpose, the less he understands. He travels to New York to view early cubist paintings that he really admires, and later to Russia, the penultimate pilgrimage in search of his heroes — the artists of the Russian Revolution — only to be devastated by the contemporary social decay of this once great revolutionary culture. Though his art leads him to politics, his travels lead him from revolutionary romanticism, perhaps even enlightenment, to revolutionary disillusionment.

To construct his argument, Perry plundered his own life, art and artistic concerns as subject matter for the film. In fact, Perry's own compelling portraits of the Bolsheviks, which are featured throughout the film, are what the film was initially based on. Perry also plays the mature Malernik and provides the reflective and inquiring voice of his character.

Despite the complexity of the story and issues involved, Perry is not without a sense of humour. Perry even looks like Trotsky, and it has been suggested that all his paintings of the Bolsheviks also look like him. On the other hand, this is really at the heart of the film. To the extent that these elements are present the film can be said to be autobiographical. What becomes apparent in its telling, however, is that the idea of the centred subject and, by implication, the self of autobiography, is increasingly thrown into question — refracted, one could say — just as the complex relationship between art and politics in the late 20th Century finally collapses into questions of self, identity and survival.

These concerns are most clearly articulated in the form of a dialogue. The fiction of Constant Malernik confronts the fact of David Perry with questions about artistic practices, political ideals and philosophical poetics. Constant himself vacillates between the voice of the pragmatist searching for tangible answers to his artistic questions, and the voice of the philosopher who is entertained by the arguments and enjoys the quest. There are also other voices. There is the Voice of God (Taylor Owens) whom Perry has likened to the Australian film industry. This is a female voice, often cynical and dismissive, who continually challenges Malernik: "Who cares about the Bolsheviks?", she says; "People just want a good story." There is also the voice of her producer, who curtails the debate and just wants to hurry these people along. As Constant searches and quests to know, he encounters others with experiences and longings to recount. Voices multiply, intersect, support and contradict each other.

The richest, most poetic, densely-allusive site of refraction lie in the fascinating and complex images. The film is a collage of forms and styles. Photographs, paintings, documentary footage, dramatized fiction, optically printed special effects, and computer animation are juxtaposed, echoing, commenting and providing ironic counterparts to each other. These images, forms and examples are further refracted as we are shown paintings and drawings in books, film strips containing previously projected images now held up to the light; television screens in rooms, in cars, framing and reframing people; computer screens writing texts that have just been spoken or the questions that are being asked; the artist with his camera; the projector with its light beaming at us after the film has run through. Many of these surfaces are further overlaid with the play of light and shadow, of wind-blown leaves and branches, flickering, oscillating like the cinematic apparatus itself.

In part, the film is a homage to these beloved objects — the materials of creation — and their admired creators. These are the sources of inspiration and meaning, the beginning of the
quest. The first image we see is a hand drawing onto a sheet of paper. The film is densely packed frames and heightens the emotional rigour of these images. In the midst of all this, there is Malernik's Bolex camera on a tripod becomes the lives of his heroes, scanning the pages of his Braque exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art books, and plotting his way to a Cubist Picasso-in New York.

Just as Cubism was a style of collage and refraction, working against a single point of view, and Russian Constructivism was characterized by the linking together of disparate elements, Refracting Glasses collages and montages its diverse moments, formal styles and points of view. Though these revolutionary art movements are so essential to Malernik's vision, his sense of self, they are also about the dissolution of self, meaning no longer being centred on a single subject, or single point of view. Malernik's (and Perry's) dilemma, therefore, becomes the problem of the subject: that is, how is the artist to reconcile subjective artistic vision within a political consciousness?

As Malernik journeys across continents, through time, into the past, searching for threads, links, patterns, pieces to the puzzles he has created, increasingly his obsessions, the objects of his attention, the sources of his interrogations, his encounters, become further complicated.

Exactly half way through the film, Malernik is on a train, a young man with a movie camera. It is 1953. He is intrigued by the significance of this date. Malernik reflects that this is the year "Stalin died. Tatlin died [and] Picasso did a very bad portrait of Stalin." Through the train window we see flickering images from the past. Any journey inevitably involves one in the crossing of boundaries. On this train he meets a man, like himself, who never existed. He meets the subject of the infamous literary hoax: Ern Malley (Iain Gardiner). Two poets, Stewart and McCauley, created Ern's poems by collaging other texts, and created a character they considered crude and uneducated, who was to have left school at fifteen and someone whom they believed could never be an artist. This fabrication, which was once considered so scandalous, is now seen by some as one of the first moments of post-modernist practice.

On the train, Ern is given form, brought to life, enacted. He is given a figure, a face and a voice. He speaks to Malernik. He recites his poems. Once again, there is a curious tension between fact and fiction. Perry claims to feel a strong sense of identification with this non-academically trained artist. (Perry apparently left school at fifteen.)

However, there is something even more important about Ern Malley's presence. The fact that Perry brings to life something that was only ever imagined or dreamed about is a testament to the power of the aesthetic-creative act. Perry paid $10,000 to Pavel Kryal, a Czech animator living in Sydney, to animate Tatlin's Monument to the Third International into being. This massive inspired monument, that was never built, never was, becomes constructed before our very eyes. In another sequence, Tatlin's man-powered flying machine, the Letatlin, is also animated into life, flying across the frames of celluloid, bringing into reality a long-held dream. These are some of the most wondrous sequences in the film — the poetic transcendence of artistic endeavour. The impossible becomes possible. But something else changes when Malernik and Lydia (Lydia Fegan) travel to Russia. For Constant, this is a journey from the artefact to the source of his inspiration. In Russia, however, he seems immobilized. He even describes his documentary practices as "impressions" rather than "constructions". The style changes from the poetic to the diaristic, and we begin to watch something reminiscent of a personal travelogue. For a while the story even becomes Lydia's as she spends time with her family and locates herself within a community, within a history. When Lydia has to return to Australia, leaving Malernik alone in Russia, the story becomes his once more. Only now he seems to have lost his way. He drives through Russian streets, searching for something that no longer exists, or maybe never existed. He visits the site of his imaginary construction of Tatlin's monument to the Third International. He has become a mute in a deaf landscape searching for something he seems no longer certain of.

Among the last images of the film, we see Malernik standing next to a Russian boy who offers him a cake. He seems lost. The words he speaks are of the beliefs and commitments of others, almost as if his own capacity has left him:

Later Constant thought of Alia [his Russian language teacher], saying that Russia taught her to care for others, and [his Russian interpreter] Ludmilla's passion for fairness and equality, and of the kindness and warmth of Lydia's [Russian] family in spite of all the difficulties.

This is a subtle, humble ending to a film of true inventiveness, of breadth of style, and inscribed sense of purpose. It is a film that David Perry has described as having grown out of images, rather than text. And it is the power and poetry of these images that remain with the viewer, while eagerly awaiting David Perry's next refraction of his life as an artist.

1 Cantril's Filmsnotes, No. 51/52.
2 Theodore Adorno, Prisms.
3 Cantril's Filmsnotes, No. 69/70


RICH IN LOVE

A narrative preface at the beginning of Rich in Love points to a contemporary family drama which draws its main characters into cathartic change. The film itself, by Australian director Bruce Beresford, is rather more a hollow formula-offering that has been shunted off the same Hollywood production wagon responsible for Driving Miss Daisy (1989). Despite a few redeeming qualities, mostly in the acting department, it appears short on passion and inspiration, and big on predictability.

Based on the novel by Josephine Humpreys, the film trapes its way through a crisis in the Odom family, whose home is set on the waterfront in South Carolina. It begins interestingly enough with a middle-aged man, Warren Odom (Albert Finney), arriving home from a fishing trip to find Helen (Jill Clayburgh), his wife of 27 years, gone. A note signed by her has been intercepted by the pair's teenage daughter, Lucille (Kathryn Erbe), re-written, then handed to her father. The viewer has reason to believe the road ahead will be an eventful one as Warren enlists Lucille on a series of whims-driven searches for the wife.

The early tension slackens, however, as Warren resigns himself to his loss and retreats into a type of nostalgic sleepwalk, oblivious of the fact that Lucille has made major sacrifices to help him. What we are left with is a story that focuses on the complexities of relationships where, for the first time in his life, the patriarchal Warren is forced to look at his young daughter (and, later on, an older daughter) as someone with a life and opinions of her own.

Albert Finney is quietly convincing in War­ren's transition from self-satisfied husband to gomorrh brooder then, ultimately, new-age man of sorts. One suspects, however, too much has been demanded of the highly-esteemed Finney. For one, he had to swap his classic Shakespearean inflection for that of a laboured Southern drawl, which, after a time, becomes an impediment to meaningful emotional exchange between himself and Erbe, who gives a good showing of a teenager whose strait-laced conventionality belies an insight beyond her years. In fact, Finney and Erbe barely manage to hold the picture together until the much-needed arrival of an older daughter, Rae (Suzy Amis), and her new husband, Billy McGuen (Kyle MacLachlan), about a third of the way through.

The screenplay by Alfred Uhry (who won an Academy Award for Driving Miss Daisy) rehashes a thing or two about relationships and the fragility of the human condition, but does not conjure up enough dramatic tonic to make this fairly commonplace family dilemma as riveting as it might have been. Even with the arrival of new, essentially disparate characters and new conflicts, it has all been seen and done before.

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LUCILLE (KATHRYN ERBE) AND RAE ODOM (SUZY AMIS). BRUCE BERESFORD'S RICH IN LOVE.

Warren falls for a fiery redhead, Vera Delmage (Piper Laurie), and suddenly gets a spring in his step, while young Lucille shrugs off the advances of her high school admirer, Wayne Frobinness (Ethan Hawke), in favour of big sister's new beau.

The tone of the film remains fairly subdued, except for a few moments of humour and some illuminating exchanges about life and love. "Marriage tells you who you are, then it's gone and you're a blank page", says Warren at one point.

In style and content, the picture bears similarities to Carl Schultz's Australian drama Travelling North (1987), which portrays the relationship between an elderly man (Leo McKern) and a younger divorcée (Julia Blake). Both films are set on the waterfront and deal intrinsically with the fabric of emotional ties, but, for mine, Travelling North, for all its carefully observed simplicity, forges far deeper into the obscurity of her high school admirer, Wayne Frobinness (Ethan Hawke), in favour of big sister's new beau.

The oddly titled Rich In Love rolls along with a kind of affectionate pathos - as, one might say, does life - without really attaining the sense of catharsis to which it constantly alludes. It would be reasonable to expect this moment has arrived when the passive, pasty-looking Helen surfaces for the first time more than an hour into the piece. Yet, for all the build-up, Helen's return is so anti-climactic that it would have been better to leave Jill Clayburgh's part on the cutting room floor. (Clayburgh's character is not helped by confusing dialogue which has her, in one breath, stating that "We [Warren and I] drew love to its conclusion", and in another, "That's why I love him.")

Clayburgh is merely a token piece in a cast that has too little demanded of it. Suzy Amis is the only performer who fills her character's shoes with real depth and substance as the pregnant and temperamental Rae.

True to Josephine Humphrey's novel, Rich In Love is set in South Carolina where rambling houses, big trees and water fill the canvas, but are inconsequential props on the screen. The film could have done more to capture the essence of its locale in greater depth as both a counterpoint and a contributing agent to the drama, in the way Paul Schrader's culturally surreal New Orleans reflects the inner turmoil of the characters in Cat People (1982).

Beresford's regular director of photography, Peter James, has an aesthetically pleasing eye, but he and his director are prone to framing scenes involving a draught horse's urinating in front of a car is a needless distraction, while another lengthy episode in a nightclub - for all its possibilities - does little more than introduce a minor character, Rhody Pooie (Alfre Woodard), whose contribution to the story is effectively zero.

The incidental score by the late Georges Delerue is easy to listen to and serves as an appropriately benign backdrop, but several key songs risk over-statement (such as "I've Been Loving You Too Long" in the nightclub scene). Rich In Love is good to look at and easy to listen to, but fails to lift the spirit or mind. If it is remembered for anything at all, it should be the following (now very fashionable) epilogue: "A chapter of ordinariness out of the book of life."

pendence. Kate echoes this feeling when, in a fit of anger, declares to Will that she is sick and tired of “getting sucked into his life”. It is only when Will loses the race that he realizes how much he needs Kate, both professionally and emotionally.

In the third chapter, Will learns how independent Kate is, which only makes him more determined to woo her back. Kate and her new love interest, Joe Heiser (Stellan Skarsgard), test gliders at an isolated airfield. Like Will, Kate has thrown herself into her work, which has not been very successful. She has become aloof and resigned to her life until Will reappears. Will and Joe discuss plans to win back the Cup. Kate initially greets the idea with scepticism and hostility, but Will’s change of attitude coaxes her on side. In this chapter, the parallels between love and career continue. Will is faced with a dual task: to win back his love and to regain the Cup. But in order to do this he must not compromise his principles; his love of sailing and his desire to win must not dominate and usurp his life.

To succeed, he has to battle with the establishment. Faced with lack of funds and a dream, Will enlists the PR help of Morgan Weld’s daughter, Abigail. She is initially viewed as a bimbo by Kate and Joe, but earns her stripes with her gift of the gab and her contacts. Abigail is caught between being won over by Will’s determination and the lure of taking the Cup and finally proving to her father her worth. The film raises some clichéd but often true viewpoints, such as a man’s worth cannot be measured by money, greed causes downfall, never let pride stand in the way of apology, and, the old chestnut, love conquers all.

Salvaged by some spectacular sailing sequences, Wind is an overly ambitious look at one of the world’s most expensive sports and the price individuals pay to win the America’s Cup. Its portrayal of the Australian competition as (pardon the image) sinking below the belt to win the Cup is sure to offend some Aussie patriots. The schmaltzy ending undercuts the film’s cynical commentary about the nature of the sport and its effect on relationships, likening the film to a Mills & Boon romance set on the high seas.


WILL PARKER (MATTHEW MODINE) AND KATE BASS (JENNIFER GREY), CARROLL BALLARD’S WIND.

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CINEMA PAPERS 94 • 49
You know you are in Hong Kong when the pre-screening slides tell audiences to turn off their pagers and mobile telephones. Not that they do and the incessant beeping precludes snoring during movies. Still, that is about the only reminder at the festival of the commercial hustle and bustle that is Hong Kong.

Now in its seventeenth year, the Hong Kong International Film Festival is not only the most important festival in our region but also a great cultural event. It is not just a collection of previews for the art-house circuit. The international round-up and American independent film sections of the Festival would have been of great interest to local festival-goers because Hong Kong does not have a developed art-house circuit and this might well be the audience's only chance to see these films. However, from an Australian point-of-view, many of these films have already screened here, and it is the Asian cinema section of the Festival that usually holds the greatest interest, as many new films get shown here first.

Unfortunately, few of the major Asian directors had any new works at Hong Kong this year. Zhang Yimou, Hou Hsiao-Hsien, Edward Yang, Wu Ziniu, Stanley Kwan and others were all still working on new films. Chen Kaige's long-awaited epic about Beijing opera actors, Farewell to My Concubine (Bawang Bei Ji), had to be excluded because Cannes Festival rules forbid prior screenings at other festivals, even though the film had already had a successful release in Hong Kong. In these circumstances, it is disappointing, but perhaps unsurprising, that there were many competent but few outstanding Asian films at Hong Kong this year.

The one major exception was Malaysian-born Taiwanese director Tsai Ming-Liang's Rebels of the Neon God (Ching Shao Nien Na Cha), a film about juvenile delinquency and urban anomie set in the grunge of modern-day Taipei. The main character, Hsiao Kang, is a teenager bored with cramming schools and coming home to dinner with his parents. He becomes fascinated with an older youth, Ah Tze, a petty thief who steals from phone boxes to fuel his video game habit, after Ah Tze smashes Kang's father's taxi. To his parents' uncompromising fury and despair, Hsiao Kang drops out of school.
and seeks revenge. Or is it that he wants to get to know Ah Tze?

As intriguing as the ambiguous narrative is Tsai’s closely-observed detailing of the lives of these marginal people in modern Taipei, from the video parlours and street stalls they hang out to at Ah Tze’s apartment. The latter is ankle-deep in drain water that comes and goes at the will of the wayward plumbing. When Hsiao Kang smashes up Ah Tze’s beloved motorbike, Ah Tze accepts bad luck, picks his way through the sodden debris and gets on with life.

No other Asian film displayed the same sure feel for quiet observation of telling visual detail, and the local critics agreed that this is the Asian find of the year. Apparently, Rebels of the Neon God was declined by the Melbourne Film Festival on the grounds that it is too difficult for local audiences. Let’s hope that proves wrong.

Other films were noteworthy for thematic concerns, but all were heavily dependent on dialogue and drama, lacking the visual style and innovation of Rebels of the Neon God. From Taiwan was The Wedding Banquet, which had already shared the Golden Lion as Berlin in February, and was this year’s closing film at Hong Kong. Heraldised as a crowd-pleasing comedy, some critics are saying this is 1993’s Strictly Ballroom (Baz Luhrmann), on those grounds. Although not cinematically ambitious, it breaches social taboos because it deals with homosexuality. The main character lives in New York with his Caucasian lover. When he helps out a friend by agreeing to a passport marriage, his family travels from Taipei for the momentous event, and much farce ensues.

The Wedding Banquet shared the Berlin prize with Oilmaker’s Family (Xiang Hun Nu, Xie Fei) from the People’s Republic. This was widely considered a diplomatic award. The film is a competent melodrama about the life of a woman entrepreneur caught between the feudal values she was brought up with, and which oppress her in her personal life, and the modern world of the burgeoning Chinese marketplace. The film offers insight into contemporary Chinese life, and is lifted by a moving, bravura performance from Mongolian actress Siqin Gaowa in the main rôle.

However, while director Xie Fei’s work is competent it is also uninteresting, except when he steals shamelessly from the work of his former students at the Beijing Film Academy, including a wedding scene lifted straight out of Zhang Yimou’s Red Sorghum, hand-held shots from inside the red bridal sedan and all. Perhaps it is not surprising that the Hong Kong organizers decided to run the film in the regular screenings and not feature it, despite the Berlin award.

Oilmaker’s Family reveals just how much the cinema of the People’s Republic is suffering after its heyday in the 1980s. Now it is being squeezed from both sides by the demands of the box-office in an ever more commercial economy and by the post-Tiananmen censor.

The opening film, woman director Ning Ying’s second feature, For Fun (Zhao Le), was a charming comedy about a group of retired Beijing opera fans. Although very enjoyable, well-acted and well-observed, it is handicapped by a minuscule budget and a totally innocuous storyline designed to keep the censor happy.

The slick opportunism of Huang Jianxin’s tenement comedy, Stand Up, Don’t Bend Over (Zhanzhi luo, bie paxia), with its message that money can overcome all political differences, appealed to Hong Kong audiences apprehensive about 1997, who gave it a spontaneous ovation. However, it came as a bitter disappointment to those who remember the radical expressionist style and biting political satire of his earlier films, such as Black Cannon Incident and Samsara, both made before Tiananmen. Indeed, his new film would be better titled, “Lick My Boots, Don’t Complain”.

Other promising Asian features also proved compromised. Twinkle (Kira Kira Hikaru, George Matsuoka) and About Love, Tokyo (Ai ni tsuite, Tokyo, Mitsuo Yamanigamachí) promised well with their respective themes of homosexuality and the lives of mainland Chinese students in Japan, but a tele-feature look and sentimentalism undermine the interesting material. Also from Japan, I’ve Heard the Ammonite Murmur (Ammonaito No Sasayaki Wo Kita, Isao Yamada) is a beautiful to look at fantasy about a brother-sister relationship bordering on incest, but it doesn’t have the brittle edge and hidden depths of the similarly-themed March Comes In Like a Lion of two years ago.

Other films came garlanded with government awards and praise, but we all know that is no guarantee of quality. The government-sponsored Equatorial Trilogy: Procession (Arak Araken, Teguh Karya) from Indonesia and the Japane-Indonesian-Thai-Philippine portmanteau film, Southern Winds (Slamet Rahardjo Djarot, Mike de Leon, Cherd Songsri, Shoji Kokami), were predictably line-toeing, with the exception of Mike de Leon’s excellent fantasy satire in the latter about The Philippine Ministry of Entertainment’s search for something new to sell. After going through schoolteachers who enliven their class by fire-breathing and an all-singing, all-dancing crucifixion, they determine the one thing The Philippines has no shortage of is picturesque misery, squallor and despair.

Taiwanese director Wang Tung’s Hill of No Return (Wu Yan Der Shan Chiu) is a movie of no end. Clearly inspired by Hou Hsiao-Hsien’s City of Sadness and Edward Yang’s A Brighter Summer Day, Wang has also decided to make a long, long historical epic. However, where Hou and Yang chose topics sensitive today, Wang has chosen the brutal treatment of miners by the Japanese during the 1930s, something the present government feels completely comfortable about, and so he has won many awards but achieved little impact with audiences. Also, where Hou and Yang are international masters of subtile observation, Wang’s film tends to endless
Soap opera, despite its carefully-observed period detail.

Similarly, Park Chong-Won's Our Twisted Hero (Woorideul-ui Ilgeojin Young-Woong) aspires to radicalism with a story about tyranny and the difficulties of democracy and the rule of the law in a high school. However, by setting the film in the 1950s and depending upon the authority of a new teacher to resolve the situation, Park's admittedly well-made and acted melodrama hardly represents a challenge to present-day Korea.

In these circumstances, one turns to the ever-dependable, energetic and lively cinema of Hong Kong to save the day, and save the day it did. However, it must be noted that the best of this year's films may not play very well with audiences unfamiliar with Hong Kong cinema as they depend heavily on pastiche and references to past Cantonese cinema. What local critic and film festival organizer Li Cheuk-to has noted as a post-modern tendency has been building for a couple of years now.

The most accessible films in the tendency stem from a return to the martial-arts genres and swordplay of the 1950s and '60s. Classic director Tsui Hark continues his successful revival of the late 19th century hero Wong Fei-Hung with Once Upon a Time in China III (Huangfeihong zhi san shiwang zhengba), which marks a return to straight martial-arts films likely to appeal to foreign audiences despite the nationalistic theme. Swordsman II (Xiao ao jianghu II Dongfangbubai, Ching Siu-tung) and Swordsman III (Dongfangbubai fengyun zai qi, Ching Siu-tung) mark a return to another type of martial arts, inflected this time by Taoist magic, with characters weaving mysterious spells and leaping through space and time in a manner that delights local audiences but may seem unconvincing to the sceptical and literal imagination.

If the Asian features were rather a mixed bag, the documentaries were better. Australia's Senso Daughters and Mrs Hegarty Comes to Japan by Sekiguchi Noriko went down a treat, and Noriko was surrounded by crowds of eager questioners after the screenings.

Appropriately in the year of the Festival's tribute to the great Japanese documentarian, Shinsuki Ogawa, who died in 1992, Living on the River Agano (Aga ni Ikiru, Satoh Makoto) takes up Ogawa's baton with excellent results. Like Ogawa, the filmmakers went to live with their subjects, and, as in Ogawa's films, the subjects are plagued by social ills, in this case Minamata disease as the result of mercury poisoning. The power of the film comes from the fact that it does not focus so heavily on the disease and the locals' efforts to fight for compensation as it does on how they go about their daily lives despite their sufferings. This is a depth of understanding, sympathy and observation that could only be reached by following Ogawa's technique of living in the community, and is the complete antithesis to the conventional requirements of documentary objectivity. The resultant film seems slow at first, but rapidly becomes engrossing, moving and totally compelling viewing.

As well as Living on the River Agano and the tribute to Ogawa – composed of Narita: Peasants of Second Fortress (Sanrizuka - Daini Toride no Hitobito, 1971), Narita: Heta Village (Sanrizuka - Heta Buraka, 1973), A Song at the Bottom (Dokkoi Ningen-Bushi/Kotobuki-Jiyu Rodosha no Machi, 1975) and, longest of them all, The Tale of Magino Village: Sun Dial of a Thousand Years (Magino-Mura Monogatari 1,000 nen Kizami no Hidokei, 1986) – a significant body of independent videos by mainland Chinese documentarists was featured. Until recently, all filmmaking in China has been completely under the control of the State. However, the advent of the video camera has made independent videos by mainland Chinese documentarists was featured. Until recently, all filmmaking in China has been completely under the control of the State. However, the advent of the video camera has made independent videos by mainland Chinese documentarists was featured. Until recently, all filmmaking in China has been completely under the control of the State. However, the advent of the video camera has made independent videos by mainland Chinese documentarists was featured. Until recently, all filmmaking in China has been completely under the control of the State. However, the advent of the video camera has made independent videos by mainland Chinese documentarists was featured. Until recently, all filmmaking in China has been completely under the control of the State. However, the advent of the video camera has made independent videos by mainland Chinese documentarists was featured. Until recently, all filmmaking in China has been completely under the control of the State. However, the advent of the video camera has made independent videos by mainland Chinese documentarists was featured. Until recently, all filmmaking in China has been completely under the control of the State. However, the advent of the video camera has made independent videos by mainland Chinese documentarists was featured. Until recently, all filmmaking in China has been completely under the control of the State.
through private screenings only, since most of their films are not cleared by the Chinese censors. The results are often crude but fascinating.

The earliest of these documentaries began to appear a year or two ago, with Wu Wenguang’s “Bumming in Beijing,” a lengthy work about the lives of marginal artists and other members of the counter-culture in mainland China. Wu’s most recent work, shown this year at Hong Kong, was “1966: My Time in the Red Guards” (1966: Wo de hongweibing shidai). Now middle-aged businessmen and doctors, these are the kids who followed Mao’s calls to rebel against the elders and created chaos throughout the country. Wu’s interviews contain many fascinating details, and the clips from fanatical Mao-worshiping documentaries of the time are compelling, but in this case one cannot help wishing he had edited out some of the repetition from one interview subject to another.

More satisfactory are “Graduated!” (Wo biye le, The Structure, Wave, Youth, Cinema Experimental Group) and “The Sacred Site for Asceticism” (mChims-phu, Wen Pulin, Duan Jinchuan). The former consists of smuggled interviews with students about to graduate from Beijing and Qinghua Universities. They are asked about their attitudes to love and life at university, before campus officials intervene complaining about filming without permission and apparently unaware that they are being caught in the act of government censorship. Some of the students appear coarse and stupid, others pretentious, and some opportunistic. Certainly, none of them appear heroic.

Only gradually, after the interviews pick up again, does it dawn on the viewer that these are the same students who griped the world’s attention with the 1989 student democracy movement in Tiananmen Square. For obvious reasons, that event is only discussed directly occasionally, but the momentum of the proclamation “I graduated!” (despite what they did) and the emotion generated by their imminent parting suddenly becomes clear.

Equally unlikely to receive the approval of the Beijing regime is “The Sacred Site for Asceticism,” a sympathetic video about a Tibetan mountain and the devotees who live on it made by Han Chinese documentarians. Watching this film, there is no doubt that despite all the government’s claims that Tibet is and always has been an integral part of China, we are watching another world.

Neither “The Sacred Site for Asceticism” nor “Graduated!” are highly sophisticated works, given the very limited resources available to their makers, but both are moving and acquire added significance when one considers the difficulties and obstacles encountered in making this sort of material in China today, and the commitment to filmmaking necessary to motivate their creators.

It is this commitment to cinema that animates the Hong Kong Film Festival as a whole. Even in a moderate year like this, with few exciting discoveries, one cannot help but be impressed by the work that has gone into this event and feel that it is a model for film festivals around the world. As well as the two major regular sections offering a round-up of the latest international and Asian cinema, Hong Kong features a series of focuses and retrospectives that make it a major event in international film culture that goes beyond commerce and is a true contribution to the culture of our region.

This year’s Festival included: a retrospective on Cassavetes; the works of the Iranian children’s filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami; a section on American independent work; a focus on recent international documentary; and a major retrospective of local Mandarin-language musicals from the 1940s through to the ’70s, which was in many ways the highlight of the Festival and a treasure trove of unexpected discoveries.

Obscure though many of these films are, no screening I went to was less than two-thirds full. This is remarkable in a city with a very limited arthouse circuit and relatively few film culture events outside the Festival itself. Yet the Hong Kong International Film Festival has worked hard since its inception despite limited funding to build a loyal and faithful audience who appreciate its significance and the rare chances its screenings present.

Unfortunately, no event in Australia can hope to compete with this cinematic banquet. Perhaps it is not only in business management that we can learn from our Asian neighbours?
This is Orson Welles

Margaret Smith

Orson Welles admitted that he would have rather made films in America than anywhere else. But his own flamboyant nature, huge talent and provocative personality were too much for the Hollywood studio bosses, and Welles was forced into exile, making his films in any way he could.

So when Universal asked him to direct Touch of Evil in 1956, on Charlton Heston's suggestion, Welles thought he'd come home. During the filming, the Universal heavies would watch his rushes and compliment him. Then they'd ask, "When are you going to sign a four or five year contract with us? Please come and see us." Then they saw the finished cut film, and were shocked. Welles says, "The picture rocked them and catapulted him to Hollywood. Welles doesn't acknowledge is that his glib just loose.

Most of the time it is Bogdanovich who is asking the questions, but sometimes their roles are reversed. Welles comments, "Emotional force can charge up a living theatre, but on the screen it's reversed. Welles comments, "Emotional force becomes even more interesting. We are given a magnificent Ambersons (1942) went terribly off course. Orson Welles is more self-conscious than any of his other films."

Welles' own fame and notoriety haunted him all his life, but Peter Bogdanovich never felt Welles had received the critical acclaim he deserved. In 1961, Bogdanovich organized a retrospective of Welles' work for the Museum of Modern Art, and wrote a 16-page booklet on him. When Welles and Bogdanovich finally met in 1968, and decided to do a book of extended interviews, they also embarked on a complicated friendship that was to last 17 years.

They met intermittently and Bogdanovich followed him round the world, turning up on various movie sets where Welles was either directing or acting. But when Bogdanovich's own career floundered and he suffered a personal tragedy in the early 1980s, the tapes were put into storage. They were only resurrected after Welles' death in 1985, with the help of Welles' long-term companion Oja Kodar, and have taken almost as long as some of Welles' films to reach the public.

But now, finally, with This is Orson Welles, we have a feast as Bogdanovich satisfies his insatiable appetite, and asks Welles seemingly every possible question about his filmmaking.

Bogdanovich writes in his preface that he was motivated by the "damaging books" on Welles by Charles Higham, Pauline Kael and John Houseman "that did nothing to increase Orson's chances of getting a job as a director. One book grudgingly gave him only Kane, the other two tried to take even this away."

Most of the time it is Bogdanovich who is asking the questions, but sometimes their roles are reversed. Welles comments, "Emotional force can charge up a living theatre, but on the screen it's reversed. There's often trouble keeping it in focus. Strong feelings can get very messy. What the camera does, and does uniquely, is to photograph thought. Don't you agree?" The more Hollywood-oriented Bogdanovich replies, "Maybe, I'd like to have a little more time on that one."

Welles regarded radio as a friend: "You can hear a phony feeling before you can see it." His famous hoax radio broadcast, "The War of the Worlds" in 1938, convinced the listening audience that America had been invaded by Martians, and catapulted him to Hollywood. Welles doesn't mention its writer, Howard Koch, in This is Orson Welles, and Pauline Kael has accused him of often taking too much credit for the show when the press hysteria broke, thus ensuring that Koch didn't receive the same publicity.

But on the collaboration of Herman Mankiewicz in the writing of Citizen Kane, Welles is much more generous. He tells Bogdanovich that his contribution to the script was "enormous."

Nevertheless most of This is Orson Welles is about his own contribution. Welles reveals that he borrowed the famous breakfast scene from the theatre, and scripted some of the more unusual edit points during rehearsals. Bogdanovich asks whether "deep-focus camera set-ups increase the ambiguity of a movie, because the director doesn't make choices for the audience - they can decide who or what they want to look at in the frame?"

Welles replies, "That's right. I did a lot of talking about that in the early days of my life as a filmmaker - when I was more shameless and used to sound off on theory... It strikes me as pretty obvious now; I don't know why I came on so strong about it."

Later Bogdanovich asks, "Would you agree, in general, that Kane is more self-conscious directorially than any of your other films?" Welles agrees and says, "There are more conscious shots - for the sake of shots - in Kane than in anything I've done since." He continues, "There's a kind of unjustified visual strain at times in Kane, which just came from the exuberance of discovering the medium... Now let's talk about something else."

Welles clearly objects to those who want to know everything about Kane while ignoring all his other films. When Bogdanovich does get over this preoccupation, This is Orson Welles becomes even more interesting. We are given a detailed account of how the editing of The Magnificent Ambersons (1942) went so terribly off the rails.

Welles had been sent to Rio on a crazy political mission by Nelson Rockefeller, and editor Robert Wise was then at the mercy of the RKO studio bosses, who in turn were at the mercy of preview audiences. Bogdanovich quotes from a letter he received from Welles where he explains that, "The South American episode is the one key disaster in my story, so of course, you'll want to get it straight."

"This is newly urgent for me, because, once again, the legend that grew up out of that affair has lost me the chance to make a picture... Mr Higham seems to have spooked them... Once again I am the man who irresponsibly dropped everything to whom it up in the carnival in Rio, and, having started a picture there, capriciously refused to finish it. No use trying to explain that I didn't fall down to South America for the fun of it... It was put to me that my contribution as a kind of Ambassador extraordinary would be truly meaningless. Normally, I had doubts about this, but Roosevelt himself helped to persuade me that I really had no choice."

Welles is very persuasive on this, and really there is no reason why we shouldn't believe him. It's certainly true that more than any other single event, the Rio fiasco changed his career and he was never really welcomed in Hollywood again.

But the other reason that Welles himself acknowledges is that his scripts were just too
dark for Hollywood. He was delving into a side of human nature that wasn’t really box-office (with the exception of The Stranger, 1946, which Welles didn’t write), and lacked the gloss and glamour of Hitchcock, Wilder and other directors of the time.

Welles in his indomitable way kept choosing films that had unusually very off-beat themes. The Stranger was the first commercial film to use footage of Nazi concentration camp atrocities; his two Shakespearian films, Macbeth (1946), were plays with tragic heroes and extremely pessimistic endings (Welles himself says that Macbeth has “a sort of terrible magic”) and The Lady From Shanghai (1948) portrays all its amoral characters with a sort of chilling precision.

But This is Orson Welles also has moments which show his great mirth. Welles tells Bogdanovich that he struck a deal from a Russian investor courtesy of Winston Churchill. Welles was in Venice at the same hotel as the great man, and Welles says that as he passed his table in the restaurant, “I bowed to him. And Churchill – I don’t know why, for reasons of irony, to send me up, I can’t imagine why – half stood up, bowed, and sat down. I suppose it was some kind of joke. Well, the Russian afterward said, ‘You’re close to Churchill’, and the deal was closed right then.”

Throughout the book Welles is an apologist for his art, but he also has intriguing words to say about almost everything involving filmmaking. On acting he tells Bogdanovich, “An actor never plays anything but himself... He simply takes out what is in him. And Churchill – I don’t know why, for reasons of irony, to send me up, I can’t imagine why – half stood up, bowed, and sat down. I suppose it was some kind of joke. Well, the Russian afterward said, ‘You’re close to Churchill’, and the deal was closed right then.”

When Bogdanovich asks him about regrets, Welles replies that he has millions of them. “But, you know, I like the people who are ready and willing to make fools of themselves – being, as I am, a full member of the fraternity”.

One of the greatest regrets explored for the first time in This is Orson Welles was that The Trial (1963) was so misunderstood. He tells Bogdanovich, “You know why you don’t like The Trial? You haven’t seen how funny it is – how funny I meant it to be. Tony Perkins and I were laughing all the way through the shooting.”

At another point in the book, Welles adds, “What made it possible for me to make the picture is that I’ve had recurring nightmares of guilt all my life. I’m in prison and I don’t know why – going to be tried and I don’t know why. It’s very personal for me. A very personal expression, and it’s not at all true that I’m off in some foreign world that has no application to myself; it’s the most autobiographical movie I’ve ever made, the only one that’s really close to me.”

Welles’ lifelong battle to remain a filmmaker against incredible odds makes him an amazingly endearing figure, even though one senses that his memory of events may differ from others. Bogdanovich describes it as his “seemingly perpetual youth: he never became an old veteran, a gray sage, but rather kept to the end a sense of that first flash of irreverent and innovative genius with which he fired all the art forms he touched, all the other artists he inspired”.

On Welles the man, Bogdanovich writes that, “he was a remarkably courageous man, yet he was perilously sensitive and vulnerable in a far more painful way than his confident demeanour or his boisterous exterior personality would suggest”.

So if you are looking for the definitive work on Orson Welles, this is certainly it, though the book still leaves some skeletons in the cupboard. This is Orson Welles comes complete with a very detailed chronology of Welles’ career, plus the written scenes from The Magnificent Ambersons that were deleted and/or reshoot by the studio, and detailed editors’ notes that try to clear up some of the major contentions surrounding Orson Welles.

You can read this book and make up your own opinions, which certainly can’t be said for the other books that have been published on the man, his life and his art.

‘WELL, I HEARD IT ON THE RADIO AND I SAW IT ON THE TELEVISION...’

Marcia Langton, Australian Film Commission, Sydney, 1993, 93 pp., pb, rrp $14.95.

Marcia Langton’s commissioned essay is defined by the author as an “attempt to stimulate debate on a theoretical and critical approach that could guide and inform the Australian Film Commission and other readers and policy-makers in the development of policies and programs to encourage Aboriginal production and distribution” (p. 81). It does this by repeatedly demanding an anti-colonialist perspective on representations of Aboriginality.

As Annette Hamilton notes in her Foreword, “Marcia Langton’s commissioned essay is defined by the author as an ‘attempt to stimulate debate on a theoretical and critical approach that could guide and inform the Australian Film Commission and other readers and policy-makers in the development of policies and programs to encourage Aboriginal production and distribution’ (p. 81). It does this by repeatedly demanding an anti-colonialist perspective on representations of Aboriginality.

By virtue of being Aboriginal, as Langton observes, such essentialism homogenizes Aboriginal diversity without regard to the intersections of race with "cultural variation, gender, sexual pref-
Langton’s discussions of Jindalee Lady, Night Cries: A Rural Tragedy and Jedda highlight her concerns with both sexism and racism and the necessity to acknowledge their intersection in colonialist representations. Her experience as the lead in Tracey Moffatt’s Night Cries: A Rural Tragedy gives a particular vitality to her reading of this film in which she identifies a “feminine gaze” in which “all men are disappeared”.

Her discussion of the discursive formation of Aboriginality stresses that all films are fictionalized accounts. They are not transparent reflections of reality but highly-constructed mediations. This is equally true of Aboriginal self-representations as of non-Aboriginal representations of Aboriginality. However, the lack of first-hand contact with Aboriginal people for most Anglo-Australians ensures the dominance of colonial racist discourse in much mainstream Australian film and television. Langton identifies some of the familiar stereotypes and icons of Aboriginality which are produced when dialogue with Aboriginal people is missing. They include the ‘stone age savage’, the Pelaco Shirt Aborigine, Venus Half Caste, Marbuk, Evonne Goolagong and Benelong. These “are figures of the imagination generated by Australian image producers. They are safe, distant distortions of an actual world of people who will not bring down the fence of David Bradbury’s State of Shock in Filmnews several years ago. Langton’s position is a profoundly liberal one. She is opposed to anything which may restrain dialogue and creativity, and she sees the cringe about negative portrayals of Aborigines as leading to banality and conservatism.

One of the most interesting sections of the essay concerns Jindalee Lady. This interest derives as much from an unarticulated sub-text as from what Langton actually says. It is essential to realize that what led to the commissioning of this essay was director Bryan Syron’s accusation that the AFC’s initial refusal to provide post-production funding for Jindalee Lady constituted racial discrimination.

Given this background, Langton’s equivocation about the aesthetic merits of Jindalee Lady is perhaps understandable. In a strangely tangential discussion in which she draws parallels with Madonna’s video clips and Paris is Burning, she suggests that Jindalee Lady is “married, ironically, both by misogyny and a paternalistic ‘political correctness’”. Langton asks “Why is it OK to be portrayed as one-dimensional or as a brainless bimbo, and not as habitually drunk?” (p. 27) She acknowledges that Jindalee Lady’s low-budget soap formula shouldn’t demand rigorous internal logic, but nonetheless laments its evasion of social and political conditions, and its romanticism of an essential Aboriginal spirituality. She leaves as a rhetorical question the issue of whether such a film should have been funded by one of the pre-eminent Australian film institutions. (p. 84)

This is one of a number of questions which Langton leaves hanging in this essay. Another which is particularly tantalizing is her suggestion that Imparja has “failed in some respects” because of the commercial nature of its licence and its dependence on expensive satellite technology. (p. 18)

However, Langton’s account of the social and cultural underpinnings of community video and television production (Yuendumu, Ernabella, BRACS, CAAMA) is well documented and informative. Her analysis of the negotiations between the Warlpiri Media Association and the filmmakers over the Jardiwarnpa fire ceremony reveal the possibility of equitable, non-colonial collaboration. Similarly, her description of the video re-enactment of the Coniston massacre shows how complex kinship relationships and story-telling rules were replicated in the video-making, and also how western technologies and
While the breadth of Langton's allusions is rich, she at time seriously overreaches herself. In an 80-page essay, one shouldn't necessarily require comprehensiveness or rigorous scholarship. But her claim that there is no sizeable body of critical literature about representations of Aboriginality is manifestly ill-informed. For example, some of the writers whose work she ignores are Graeme Turner, Kevin Brown, Stephen Muecke, Catriona Moore, Bob Hodge, Vijay Mishra, Tim Rowse, Heather Goodall, et al., and Colin Johnson and Stuart Cunningham on Jedda — not to mention the work of Karen Jennings and David Hollinsworth!

Another weakness of an essay which purports to be about aesthetics is the relatively scant attention paid to cinematic features such as generic conventions, narrative structures, modes of address and other textual devices. Her attention to the politics of representation and to the modes of production and reception is much weightier. This imbalance seriously mars her discussion of Jedda and Crocodile Dundee and "Crocodile" Dundee II. She only cursorily addresses Jedda's melodramatic imperatives, for example (see Cunningham's Featuring Australia). And her dismissal of Crocodile Dundee as perpetuating racist myths and stereotypes is disappointingly superficial and ignores her own injunctions about the need to recognize multiple readings. Her selective quoting from Meaghan Morris' essay on Crocodile Dundee fails to acknowledge the anti-colonial potential which Morris and others have identified within the film.

Such concerns do not diminish the significance of this essay in asserting the need for open and courageous engagement with the complex issues of representing a colonized people as active subjects rather than objects of the white gaze. Langton is good at popularizing theory and, at its best, her essay is both provocative and challenging. It should certainly achieve its aim of stimulating debate. Most significantly, it opens up some spaces in both film practice and commentary in which "Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal artists, including film- and videomakers, [can] say and do what they would like to say and do" (p. 8).

Note: Karen Jennings' Sites of Difference: Cinematic representations of Aboriginality and gender is to be published in August 1993 by the AFI as the first in their it's of monographs, The Moving Image.

DIGITAL NONLINEAR EDITING: NEW APPROACHES TO EDITING FILM AND VIDEO

GRAMMAR OF THE EDIT
Roy Thompson, Focal Press, Great Britain, 1993, 118 pp., pb, rrp $49

Editing film was long considered resistant to technology. This belief is changing because users of film and video are trying to find new ways of combining the two forms, and this attempt is revolving around the use of computers. Furthermore, the editing process is becoming increasingly complex with the increase in computer-generated imagery and 3D animation.

The emergence of digital nonlinear editing techniques and systems will fundamentally change the manner in which pictures and sounds are combined, rearranged and viewed.

Digital Nonlinear Editing aims to provide detailed explanation of the changes to traditional editing techniques, and of different ways of bringing various media and ideas together.

Grammar of the Edit, on the other hand, is a small beginner's manual on how to make an edit. It is not designed for the professional or experienced editor, but is for the beginner to learn good basic practices of editing. The author concentrates on where and how an edit is made and not on the machine with which it is done.

DIRECTING CORPORATE VIDEO

Directing Corporate Video is, of course, for those considering either a full- or part-time career in corporate television. As with other such publications, it is designed to establish a framework for opening the door to the corporate video world.

The book is divided into four parts. The first deals with defining the directing profession, and in exploring the differences between the corporate world and the entertainment industry. Part two looks at the basic aesthetic skills a director places on the foundational knowledge of the director's rôle. The third part establishes a typical production scenario intended to illustrate how the knowledge and skills are applied on the job. Finally, part four provides advice and looks at the means for starting up one's directing career.

The book also provides case studies, and the appendices contain examples of the various types of organizational, business and creative documents used daily by the typical corporate director.

GROWING UP ITALIAN IN AUSTRALIA
State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, 1993, 212 pp., pb, rrp $19.95

This is a collection of non-fiction stories and essays by eleven young Australian women of Italian descent talking about their childhood. Its immediate interest for the readers of Cinema Papers is that this collection contains a story by well-known independent filmmaker Monica Pellizzari.

Like her films Velo Nero and Rabbit on the Moon, Pellizzari's story explores the conflicts of experiencing a dual cultural background. She tells of growing up in the western suburbs of Sydney, within an insular and protective family environment where the need to break away grates against Italian patriarchal traditions and where, being a woman, to cast aside her predetermined future is an extra hurdle.

Pellizzari's story aside, the collection as a whole is well worth a read for anyone interested in the growing concern with issues of cultural difference and ethnicity — issues which a breed of non-Anglo, independent filmmakers (Pellizzari among them), and critical commentators are currently engaged in.

The book is the result of a literary competition organized by The National Italian-Australian Women's Association, in co-operation with Alitalia Airlines. The essays, to quote the Association's President, "are a vital documentation of a period of our history, a period of Italian immigration to this country which needs to be recorded in detail" (p. ix). To which one can add, that as ethnicity becomes a major concern of the Australian cinema, this collection provides insight to the textual and thematic issues being grappled with.

JEAN-LUC GODARD: SON + IMAGE, 1974-1991

This publication accompanied the MOMA retrospective Jean-Luc Godard: Son + Image, a presentation of Godard's projects from 1974, when he first incorporated video technology into his work, through 1991 when he wrote and directed Allemagne année 90 neuf zero (Germany Year Zero) for television.

This is a beautifully conceived publication, with the most immaculate photographic reproductions. Apart from Raymond Bellour, included are other luminary Godard commentators as Gilles Deleuze, Alain Bergala, Jonathan Rosenberg, Peter Wollen and many others.

The book will receive an in-depth review in the next issue.

MANAGEMENT AND THE ARTS

Management and the Arts highlights the importance of developing managers in the arts. Its specific purpose is to coach the potential arts manager in how to help an organization and its artists attain their goals. To meet the objectives, the arts manager must develop and apply skills
from disciplines such as business, finance, economics and psychology. It is an introductory book intended for use by the arts undergraduate, and only hopes to provide useful information about how an arts manager can be as effective as possible with given resources.

THE PRACTICAL DIRECTOR
Mike Crisp, Focal Press, Great Britain, 1993, 189 pp., pb, rp $59.95

The Practical Director is essentially a beginner's guide book to basic ground rules in visual language and technique. Its central aim is to initiate solid craft skills for the new or inexperienced director. Because film is a collaborative art, the book highlights the need for young filmmakers to acquaint themselves with the skills and instruments of other personnel in the production. This is not as detailed as other Focal Press publications, but still a good starting point for understanding what's involved in the production and post-production phases.

THE SOUND STUDIO
Alec Nisbett, Focal Press, Great Britain, Fifth edition 1993, 388 pp., pb, rp $89.95

This is a highly technical book, yet it aims to strike a balance between the creative people in production and the technically proficient who deal with the recording and engineering aspects of sound. Sometimes there is little common ground between technical perfection and the aesthetic needs of work at a ground roots level. This book, however, assumes a desire for high standards at all levels in that, according to the author, "high quality work sets a standard by which all else may be measured".

The emphasis is on general principles, but this is a very detailed "A to Z" book of the sound studio which is essential in developing aural perception and critical faculties. The author demonstrates a thorough knowledge of the field, taking into account new technologies.

WAITING ... A COMEDY OF ERRORS AND EXPECTATIONS
Jackie McKimmie, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1993, 77 pp., pb, rp $12.95

This is the screenplay to the Australian film comedy by writer-director Jackie McKimmie in which Clare (Noni Hazlehurst), an artist and mother-to-be, residing at an isolated farmhouse in an idyllic bush setting awaits and hopes for the perfect home birth. Unexpectedly, however, three women converge from all directions to assist.

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Waiting was nominated for five AFI Awards and the Australian Writers' Guild AWGIE Award for Best Feature Film Screenplay in 1991. ●

The number of releases of film music on CDs continues to grow, and very little of any real value and interest seems to be overlooked these days by the record companies.

Releases reviewed this issue range from music for Westerns in the 1950s to music for science-fiction in the 1990s, and, while the quality may vary, the standard overall remains high.

One point for complaint: nearly without exception, the cover "notes" for film-music discs are entirely inadequate. Sometimes it is even difficult to discover who the composer is. Rarely is any information of any use, or interest, given.

UNTAMED HEART (VARESE SARABANDE YSD 5364)
Like the film, Cliff Eidelman's score for this surprisingly sentimental piece moves gently along without creating much interest. Strangerly, although the only written notes that come with the disc have director Tony Bill call the composer "the best of the new" young composers, the opening and closing music on the disc were not included in the film, replaced, if I recall, by versions of the old hit, "Nature Boy".

斡poric would be the best word to describe the music, especially with the moderate tempos which are used throughout. Even tracks called "Stabbed" and "Hockey Game" don't upset the overall placidity for very long.

INDECENT PROPOSAL (MCAD 10863)
The seventh track on this eight-track disc lasts for 25' 20" and is called "Instrumental Suite", consisting of five separate but hardly distinct selections. Anyone with any interest in film music would recognize the composer as John Barry almost immediately. Rich, spacious string chords and single-note piano meander relentlessly on, and could have come from any recent movie scored by this composer.

Once again, slow tempos are the order of the day and there is nothing here to disturb one's being carried peacefully away to slumberland. The other seven tracks are also on the slow side, but at least the vocals and arrangements all differ. Track 3 ("I'm Not In Love With You"), written and performed by Dawn Thomas, is pleasant and the old standard by Hoagy Carmichael, "The Nearness of You", is performed by Sheena Easton on Track 5 nicely enough but, as if overcome by the general torpor throughout, the tempo is too slow.

THE DARK HALF (VARESE SARABANDE YSD 5340)
To complete a trio of releases this month all suffering from monotony of tempi comes Christopher Young's spooky score for yet another movie based on a Stephen King yarn. There are plenty of ingenious sounds and it is well performed, partly by the Munich Symphony, partly by synthesizers and electronic percussion, but after Track 1 ("Prologue and Tumor"), which lasts 6'14", there seemed no real reason to hear in full the remaining 12. This will undoubtedly be effective with whatever visuals director George A. Romero dreamt up, but, as a listening experience, it has limited appeal.

ARTICLE 99 (VARESE SARABANDE YSD 5355)
I have only just caught up with Danny Elfman's score for this movie, serio-comic in tone, about scandalous conditions of care at a Veterans' Hospital. Elfman is always interesting, and, even though the first two tracks on this disc could have been written by any number of film composers, the third track ("Mayday") is undeniably his, with its jagged rhythms, use of harp, piano and woodwinds scurrying along and keeping the ear alert.

Without having seen the film, one is uncertain whether the references to Bernard Herrmann are friendly plagiarism or have something to do with the action. Even though this is a conventional-sounding score, Elfman admirers will perhaps want to add it to their collections. Try Track 11 ("End Credits"; 6'46") before you buy.

DAVE (GIANT 9 84510-3)
Ivan Reitman's "populist comedy", about a guy who's a dead ringer for the U.S. President, seems to be a movie made for attractive visuals and a patriotic air. Certainly James Newton Howard's score is both attractive and patriotic in a gentle, non-bombastic way.

Howard uses a big orchestra here but the scoring is never overwhelming, and Marty Paich puts it all down with skill on an immaculately-engineered disc. Track 6 ("She Hates Me") is a good example of this charming score from the one-time keyboardist for Elton John.

BOOKS RECEIVED
FROM PRECEDING PAGE

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Ivan Reitman's "populist comedy", about a guy who's a dead ringer for the U.S. President, seems to be a movie made for attractive visuals and a patriotic air. Certainly James Newton Howard's score is both attractive and patriotic in a gentle, non-bombastic way.

Howard uses a big orchestra here but the scoring is never overwhelming, and Marty Paich puts it all down with skill on an immaculately-engineered disc. Track 6 ("She Hates Me") is a good example of this charming score from the one-time keyboardist for Elton John.
Tracks 5 and a good work-out through the rest of the disc. But seems to be able to summon up at will. heard on Track 2, is very attractive and is given JURASSIC PARK sample Track 4 ("Journey To The Island") to Another big score from John Williams for Spielberg's dinosaur movie. One has only to resist the sort of full-bodied, sweepingly-meric. know we're in Williams' territory, but it's hard to what neglected "great", Vic-torian romance, and only in the cinema, and take even clearer here than in the movie itself, this disc is an excellent memento of the film. One can hear the clever lyrics - some supplied by Tim Rice after Ashman's death - but credit should go to the ingenious Menken-Ashman combination for the Westerns of the past. Like Me" (Track 6) - but credit should go to Michael Sarolun and Danny Troob as well for the excellent orchestrations, and to the vocal work of Bruce Adler, Jonathan Freeman and others. This is a beautifully-engineered disc.

**ALADDIN** (WALT DISNEY RECORDS 473708-2)

Though the songs aren't quite up to the standard supplied by the ingenious Menken-Ashman combination for The Little Mermaid and Beauty and the Beast, and are given rather short-shrift in the movie itself, this disc is an excellent memento of the film. One can hear the clever lyrics - some supplied by Tim Rice after Ashman's death - clearer here than in the cinema, and take even more pleasure in the vocal characterization.

Robin Williams' Genie steals the show - listen to him enjoying himself on Track 2 ("Legend Of The Lamp") and smartly vocalizing "Friend Like Me" (Track 6) - but credit should go to Michael Sarolun and Danny Troob as well for their excellent orchestrations, and to the vocal work of Bruce Adler, Jonathan Freeman and others. This is a beautifully-engineered disc.

**JURASSIC PARK** (MCAD 10839)

Another big score from John Williams for Spielberg's dinosaur movie. One has only to sample Track 4 ("Journey To The Island") to know we're in Williams' territory, but it's hard to resist the sort of full-bodied, sweepingly-melodic, symphonic-sounding score this composer seems to be able to summon up at will.

The main theme from Jurassic Park, first heard on Track 2, is very attractive and is given a good work-out through the rest of the disc. But perhaps the most original sounds are found on Tracks 5 and 6 ("The Raptor Attack" and "Hatching Baby Raptors"), an exciting and eerie blend of orchestral effects with added male voices on 5, and a gentler but imaginative and restrained intermingling of high strings, female voices, woodwinds, harp and piano on 6, which creates an otherworldly effect. There should be big sales for this one.

**LOST IN YONKERS** (VARESE SARABANDE YSD 5419)

Disney Studios produced this latest version of Twain's classic, and one can tell from Bill Conti's music that they haven't emphasized the darker elements of the tale. There's a very folksy feel to this score and plenty of sparkle. The "Main Title Theme" will give you the idea. It is well played and the Jack Eskew orchestrations are excellent, but the recording sounds a bit dry and compressed at times.

**THE ADVENTURES OF HUCK FINN** (VARESE SARABANDE YSD 5418)

Elmer Bernstein has been around a long time and it's a pleasure to hear his happy-sounding and nostalgic score for this Neil Simon movie, smartly orchestrated by Chris Boardman and Emile A. Bernstein. Nothing very deep or profound, but easy to listen to, and, as a disc, varied in style and tempo. It is a bit old-Broadway sounding from time to time, but then this is a Neil Simon play, so whaddya expect?

**THE OUTER LIMITS** (LEGEND CD7)

Disney Studios produced this latest version of the film. One can hear the clever lyrics - some supplied by Tim Rice after Ashman's death - but credit should go to the ingenious Menken-Ashman combination for the Westerns of the past. Like Me" (Track 6) - but credit should go to Michael Sarolun and Danny Troob as well for the excellent orchestrations, and to the vocal work of Bruce Adler, Jonathan Freeman and others. This is a beautifully-engineered disc.

**RIO GRANDE**

This round-up concludes with two other soundtracks from the past by a somewhat neglected "great", Victor Young, both Westerns but of very different types. Rio Grande was made for Republic Studios and directed by John Ford, and one has just to play the main title track to be taken back to the Westerns of the past. Sentiment is never far away and "I'll Take You Home Again Kathleen" gets a pretty good work-out, along with other traditional tunes.

The main theme is all Victor Young, however, and nice to have. There are too many tracks by the Sons of the Pioneers, overall, but, since the CD has 23 tracks, it seems churlish to complain too much.

Johnny Guitar was a starring vehicle for Joan Crawford as Vienna, owner of a frontier saloon and a tough cookie. The men, including Sterling Hayden's Johnny Guitar, aren't the equal of Joan and Mercedes McCambridge in this over-the-top and too-rarely-seen curiositi.

Made in 1953 by Nicholas Ray some years after Rio Grande, the score has a faintly Mexican theme (Peggy Lee added a lyric and sings it on Track 2), and lots of melodramatic atmospheric stuff to go with the melodramatic action. These discs, like the Fellini, are not the highest hi-fi, but are original soundtracks from forty years or so ago, so it's not surprising. Notes for Rio Grande are well worth reading, being part of a conversation with Harry Carey Jr. The notes for Johnny Guitar sound like the original puff from Republic Studios - anyone who uses the phrase "glorious Trucolor" has got to be a publicist!

NB: As usual, many thanks to Readings for supplying the CDs for review.
Given the story is set before the war, do you see any parallels between those times and today?

We have hit the point where we should really appreciate our development. We have travelled very fast and have only learnt to celebrate the exterior. Our society is geared to ignore the interior. Death, for instance, doesn’t exist any more. When did you last see a dead body? People don’t die any more among people who love them; they die among strangers in bright little rooms in hospitals – preferably drugged out of their brains!

I have no hope at all for this civilization. I used to think that there was a little glimmer of hope, but there is none for me. I find it very sad and upsetting at times. I turn the television on and see nothing that appeals to me. I go into shops and find nothing that excites me. I read the papers and see nothing I like. I’m not a bitter old man, but I’m very disappointed. I had high hopes and maybe this is the reason I am travelling back. We must pick up a few thoughts from these earlier times to start rebuilding, otherwise we have nothing.

I’m making, too, a very silent protest against the whole development of film. This is why it will be hated very much. I shouldn’t be making these period films because I was doing really quite well and I should have stuck to that!

The idea of picking up on aspects from “back then” could be perceived as naïve in that it often sounds as though earlier times were always more innocent.

I’m saying this purely in terms of our environment. It is like we live in a cathedral, where we have run rampant with guns and shot holes in the ceiling. Instead of going around repairing those holes, we have sold a franchise to somebody at the entrance of the cathedral who sells umbrellas or rents them out, so you can walk through the cathedral when it rains. There might even be different people selling various colours of umbrella.

This is regarded as very interesting and important. But we should tell them to get fucked, climb up to the ceiling and repair the holes.

*The Nun and the Bandit* appears to be a definite stylistic change for you.

Yes, though you always make the same film. It’s just a matter of different form. Here, I wanted to open the front door and go out into the street. That’s the only difference.

Does that mean attempting to reach a broader audience?

I find the idea of catering to a particular audience the most ludicrous thing on earth. Despite all my gloom and doom, I have much more faith in the individual than most. I still tend to believe that there are people rising from the ashes and standing on their own feet. I’ve always been able to survive because of that belief.

I don’t say that because I’m an egomaniac, or because my ideas are right, but because I do everything with my heart and soul as best I can. I am not motivated by greed or hatred, and, hopefully, not by ignorance.

Are your films aiming for a greater audience by the urgency of the issues they raise, such as the environment?

I certainly never have an audience in mind, even though, of course, I love to share.

For example, I worked myself silly for two years in an environment like Australia to make a film like *Vincent [The Life and Death of Vincent Van Gogh]*. That is a very weird thing to do: two years, day and night, obsessively working on a film. It was an enormous job and I did most of it on my own, with the help of a very few friends.

When the film was firstly screened to a full house – it wasn’t totally ready, but it had been cut – almost everybody walked out. You have to be very tough to survive something like that.

We couldn’t get a distributor, and I was in incredible trouble financially. A lot of people wanted their money back. Then it screened in the Vancouver Festival and the audience exploded. They kept it up for about half an hour and to such a degree that I had to flee the cinema.

A few months later, it was suddenly picked up by some big critic in the States and the film blossomed. Now it has become quite a classic. It plays everywhere in repertoire houses, except in Australia. We still make sales and the film will live for ever. We are getting so many letters from all over the place and it gives me great joy.

If one sets out to work for an audience, already the substance has gone. Collectively, we have no judgement. So, I never concern myself about an audience, though I worry myself sick about it. My films are a message of love I hope to share. I see that as some sort of holy duty, but I can only do it in my particular way.

*Why are your films better received overseas than here?*

It’s something to do with this tall poppies thing. I have always tried to say what I think and I’ve made enemies – not that I notice who these people are.

Also, don’t forget I’m a migrant. There are only about three million original white Australians and they are pretty much like rednecks and very racist.

Look at the people who hold all the so-called important jobs in this country; look at all the television presenters, the politicians. They all come from that stock of three million rednecks. They certainly don’t come from the wonderful ethnic mixture.

I’m a migrant who, in a fairly bizarre way, is successful. I don’t think that appeals to anyone very much. To some it does. I am not a consumerist type of person. I couldn’t go on the Steve Vizard show and crack jokes about it all. That’s my biggest sin. By having a particular attitude, it’s interpreted as arrogance. But I don’t think I’m arrogant. I do think I have something to contribute and I do think a lot of my films have been very good diplomatic things for Australia. They have been seen very widely. They are not indulgences that have no commercial sense. I don’t think anybody else can say that their films, in general, return their money. In that respect, I am a very commercial proposition they should be proud of. I say this with a very humble heart.

To what degree are the performances in *The Nun and the Bandit* improvised?

I think you always make a film during the shooting; you don’t do it beforehand. I always allow the actors to contribute as much as possible.

In fact, I have improvised on every film I have made. If it doesn’t feel right, I never stick to the script, even if it was written by me

A film doesn’t have that much to do with literature or theatre; it is far more related to painting or dance or music. So, I’m not terribly concerned about the dialogue at times, which some people regard as a weakness in my films. It probably is, sometimes. All the talking in films gives me the shits. I’d rather see a silent film. In fact, my films are getting more and more silent.

Given that you use the same actors quite consistently, do you ever fear audiences experiencing a sense of déjà vu?

It’s up to them. You can have that sense of déjà vu or you can trust the actors.

I’ve often been attacked for using the same actors, but look at what Ingmar Bergman achieved with the same group of people. In
the films they made not directed by him, they become very ordinary. But with Bergman, they really fused all their talents and created something unique and special.

I've had so many chances, even in America, to work with all the so-called big shots. But when you meet these people and look at what they really have done, it's nothing! I won't give any names because I don't think it's fair. But there are hideous examples of overrated people who couldn't act their way out of a paperback. It is amazing how film can lie.

On Exile, I used totally different people. They are very young and had never worked with me. They didn't know what hit them! And I didn't know what hit me! It was a very interesting and exciting learning experience.

Claudia Karvan and Aden Young are quite spectacular and very wise for their age. At 20, I didn't know anything! I was a baby. They are only 20 but are very mature people and extremely talented. They have an incredible range of emotions and are capable of expressing them all. To tap into all that will take a few films.

So you intend using them again?

Oh, yes. But when I use them three or four times, people will say exactly the same thing about déjà vu!

Other projects

[ANDREW L. URBAN, RAFFAELE CAPUTO]

Last year you did a segment on erotica and you have a great variety of projects coming up, one of which is an American project.

Originally it was an American film, but now it is an Australian-German co-production. It is set in Iran, but shot in Israel. It's a big film, the biggest one I've ever attempted.

From your own script?

The original idea isn't mine, but I re-shaped the script with the writer and now it is a 50-50 thing.

I have never done this sort of thing before, but I like the idea. It's basically about the Bahais and the Bahai religion, and how they were treated.

Barry Dickins  CONTINUED FROM PAGE 41

there are a million ups and comic downs. For ten days, Sonny, Brian and I drove through mud and slush and endless pineapple and palm plantations to find anyone interesting to develop the story, and we bumped into witch doctors, and pompous barristers who chuckled at the tragic and meaningless Barlow-Chambers executions; we collided with fourth century money-lenders, badminton boasters, drugged tennis coaches, scrub wits and on-the-spot Honda spare-parts dealers who can repair a busted gearbox with pine cones and mysticism.

I have lots of Indian and Malaysian friends in Melbourne and Sydney. We are threading these disparate souls and ghoulish children and bright happy lot milkbar owners and their homesick wives into the plot. I had culture shock at K. L. Airport. But I get culture shock at Young and Jacksons. I have always wanted to get away from people like me in my films. Brian and Sonny have allowed me to be freer, go further, be sadder, more wistful, funnier.

The Student of Medicine is an appeal to universal homesickness.

There's no cure for the vanishing heart.

The only part-cure is fun. And discovery. At least it is for this Keon Park Man. Keon Park Man forced to look at Asia. I close my eyes and still see, three months on.

The film is close to being made, but I'm still not quite sure whether I'm going to do it. I've just helped them because I believe in it.

How did you become involved in Eroticon?

ZDF, together with a German production company, asked me whether I wanted to do this sort of thing. They had set up this series and asked ten directors to do one episode each. They will probably make a feature out of it as well.

It was fun to do and it was left totally up to me. After all, what is erotica? It surely is not Madonna.

We produced our episode here and sent the components over. It was shot just before Exile, in a period where we had a bit of time. In one respect, it was quite a commercial step - backwards or forwards!

Do you have any other projects?

I have a film planned in Europe called Suicide of a Gentleman, and also I've been working for years on a film on Nijinski's life. It's very hard to get the right support. It's a similar sort of thing to Vincent.

Nijinski wrote a quite stunning diary. It's basically the words of a madman, but it all makes enormous sense and it links up with Vincent Van Gogh and his struggle. There is no insanity there; it is just the fact that he wanted to give to others that killed him. The people who didn't love him killed him. That misconception of love always intrigues me.

Vincent Van Gogh and Nijinski both talked about this white light, about a piercing stare from behind. What does that mean? Perhaps it is that one moment of glory, like the ballet dancer who spends ten years practising how to stand on one toe and on the big night there is one second of ecstasy before the toe breaks. But that's enough; we must not expect any more.

Van Gogh and Nijinski are perfect examples of great inner beauty. There was no taking at all, only giving, and the world of course was never ready. It treated them both like madmen and they had miserable lives.

I always say to people who feel Vincent was mad, "No, he wasn't mad at all. He had a marvellous life with moments of unbelievable ecstasy, which very few people will ever experience." What else do you want in life?
This is shot well back from the boundary fence at the winning post, with spectators in the foreground. The horses gallop past in the distance, and the camera concentrates on the reactions of the spectators. It opens with men looking back towards camera for Barnett's direction, and, as the race finish draws close, Barnett runs out from behind urging the spectators to wave their hats. He backs out of the picture to give the camera a clear view of the race finish, then a stream of happy punters pass on their way to collect their winnings as the film cuts out. The print has been released in the NFSA video, Living Melbourne.

(14) Cup Winner "Newhaven", Trainer Walter Hickenbotham, Jockey Harry Gardiner (shot 3 November 1896). Premiere 24 November 1896, first mentioned in The Sydney Morning Herald, 24 November 1896, p. 2. Lumière catalogue number 423 (Melbourne, les courses: Le Gagnant). Gardiner in jockey colours and Hickenbotham in suit lead "Newhaven" from his stable. Gardiner mounts and Hickenbotham leads the horse around in circles in front of the camera, occasionally going completely out of the picture. The print has been released in the NFSA video, Living Melbourne.


The Sydney Morning Herald, 25 November 1896, p. 8, states that the second of these views, taken at Victoria Barracks, Sydney, by permission of Lt.-Col. H. P. Airey, showed "the guns and gunners [apparently] flying past the spectators at full gallop". No print is known.

(17) People Passing St. Mary's, Sydney, Sunday Afternoon (shooting date unknown).

Lost since 1896, this frame enlargement is from Marius Sestier's film, Bringing out the Horses, a sequence of the starting moments of the 1896 Melbourne Cup, which was not recovered from France with the rest of the coverage in the 1960s. The film is currently the subject of correspondence between Australia and France, and will hopefully return to this country in time for its film centenary.

The following films are either by Sestier or by a Baker & Rouse employee using Sestier's camera:
(20) Sea and Breakers, Coogee Bay, Sydney (shot c. May 1897). Premiere 5 June 1897, first mentioned in Brisbane Courier, 5 June 1897, p. 2. No print is known to survive.

(21) Elizabeth Street, Sydney (shot c. May 1897). Premiere 26 June 1897, first mentioned in Brisbane Courier, 26 June 1897, p. 2. No print is known to survive.

FILMS MADE BY H. WALTER BARNETT AFTER SESTIER'S DEPARTURE

The final Australian films made by the Sydney photographer H. Walter Barnett after his successful collaboration with Marius Sestier were a series of four items, each 50 feet (50 seconds) in length, of the stars of 1897's cricket tests at the Sydney Cricket Ground, probably shot on 16 December 1897. Paper contact prints of a half-dozen frames from each of these Lumière films were registered for copyright at the British Public Records Office in Kew, Surrey, on 1 February 1898. The films were subsequently offered for sale by the Warwick Trading Company in London, and were widely exhibited in Australia. Warwick's 1898 Descriptive List of New Film Subjects itemizes these:
(22) The English (Victorious) Team Leaving the Field at the Conclusion of the Match.

Warwick Trading Company catalogue number 3001. "The players file slowly through the gate, which is immediately in the centre of the view, and each is clearly recognisable by the audience as he passes." No print is known to survive, except for the copyright strip of six frames.

(23) The Australian Team Leaving the Field (Sydney Cricket Ground).
Warwick Trading Company catalogue number 3002. "Here, again, the features of the various players are reproduced with marvellous exactitude, and the picture affords a continuous source of delight to the audience as each well-known figure is recognised in turn and is enthusiastically cheered." No print is known to survive, other than for the copyright strip.

(24) Prince Ranjitsinhji Practising at the Nets (Sydney Cricket Ground).
Warwick Trading Company catalogue number 3003. "This picture gives an excellent idea of the popular player's method and style, and also affords a good opportunity of studying the marvellous celerity and power of his strokes." A 37-foot section of a film answering this description, certainly featuring Prince Kumar Shri Ranjitsinhji, the great...
est batsman of his day, survives in the British Film Institute in London. It may also, however, be a subsequent film of Ranjitsinhji which was offered by Warwick in 1901 (cat. no. 6915) filmed in London on 19 June 1901. Confirmation of the film's identity must await comparison with the copyright registration strip. Film appears in the documentary, Celluloid Heroes.

(25) Prince Ranjitsinhji and Hayward at the Wickets, S.C.G. Warwick Trading Company catalogue number 3004. "This is a picture which always arouses intense interest and enthusiasm, for it represents these two popular players during the actual progress of the game. At the moment the picture opens Prince Ranjitsinhji has just made a hit for four, and the accomplishment of these runs is an incident which invariably calls forth the greatest applause." No print is known to survive, other than for the copyright strip.

Next Issue

In our next issue we will look at the films of Ernest Jardine Thwaites and Robert William Harvie, as well as unveiling the work of Sydney's first indigenous filmmaker, Mark Blow. Then on up to Queensland to tell the tale of the start of production there, by G. Boivin (1897) and Professor A. C. Haddon (1898).

Acknowledgements

The current project has emerged from the Queensland Vintage Film Project, funded by Griffith University (Brisbane). Pat Laughran is alone responsible for the project and its funding, without which this series would have been impossible.

Of the National Film & Sound Archive contingent, I remain indebted to Ken Berryman, the Melbourne office staff, and particularly Meg Labrum, NFSA Documentation Officer.

As usual, the assistance of my professional colleagues, Graham Shirley, Clive Sowry, Judy Adamson, John Barnes and Bernard Chardere, was vital. This group toils incessantly in resurrecting obscure but vital pieces of film documentation, much of which has been channelled to this series.

George Ellis of the Salvation Army Archives, Ian MacFarlane of the Victorian Public Records Office and Tony Marshall of the W. L. Crowther Library in Hobart made essential contributions to the data base. Foster Stubbs came up trumps with, in all likelihood, the oldest surviving Australian film. His co-operation is profoundly acknowledged.

The newspaper library staff of the State Libraries in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia provided the core of my data base. I hope that they may recover from numerous access requests.

Lastly, my thanks go to Prudence Speed, who assisted with my photography and consented to be my wife while this article was written.

Footnotes

2. Arrival of a Train at Hill Platform was in the National Film & Sound Archive (NFSA) but wrongly identified as "Arrival of Train at Melbourne 1898". Lady Brasseys Awarding Blue Ribbon to "Newhaven", Derby Winner was held by W. J. Foster Stubbs. Bringing out the Horses (Lumière 421) is held by the Cinémathèque Française.
7. A. C. Haddon Papers, Cambridge University Library. Haddon's journal refers to filmmaking on 1, 5 and 6 September, 1897, on Murray Island (see item 1030).
9. Refer NFSA video Federation Films for Royal Visit 1901 and Commonwealth Celebration Day 1 January 1901 segments of this production.
17. Nearly all Gunn's local films can be connected with the productions of E. J. Thwaites and R. W. Harvie in the 1890s.
18. Longer films would not fit on the machine, and their excessive weight and resultant inertia would resist the intermittent mechanism, causing the sprocket holes in the film to tear. Later projectors solved the problem by placing a continuously rotating feed sprocket immediately above the intermittent.
19. Typical examples of Carl Hertz and G. Neymark quoted in the second instalment of this series. Refer also Musser, loc. cit., p. 258 et seq.
**Synopsis:** When a mining colony on Jupiter's moon, Io, explodes, five children and their parents are forced to flee to a derelict space station orbiting above them. They hastily convert it into a life raft and embark on a hazardous voyage across the solar system to Earth.

**OCEAN GIRL (series)**

Prod. company: Westbridge Productions
Dist. companies: Telis Images
Budget: $3.58 million
Prod. production
Production 7/6/93 ...
Post-production 7/6/93 - 25/2/94
Principal Directors
Mark Drastich (eps 1-7)
Brendan MacHer (eps 8-13)
Producer Jonathan Mark Shift
Line producer Gina Black
Exec. producers Jennifer Clevers
Scriptwriters Peter Hepworth
Neil Luxmore
Jenny Shaper
David Boyle
Jennifer Cole
Scott Van Cut
Tracy Wat
Laurie Black

Planning and Development
Story editor Peter Hepworth
Script editors Michael Joshua
Jennifer Shaper
Synopsis:

Just another Domestic
Principal Production
Producer: Oliver Howes Film Production
Director: Oliver Howes
Producer: Tony Peterson
DOP: Bruce Hogan
Sound: Matthew Brand
Other Credits
Script editors: Matthew Brand
Music: Tony Peterson
Laboratory: Visualeyes
Duration: 30 mins
Sponsor: NSW Police Service
Synopsis: A training touch-screen interactive video designed to teach students how to communicate effectively with an organization's personnel to elicit information as preparation for the creation of computer systems for that organization. The design allows students to make choices and through those choices if a mistake is made they can experience the ramifications of that mistake.

**DELIVERING COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE**

Prod. company: Peter Smith Productions
Principal Credits
Director: Peter F. Smith
Producer: Peter F. Smith
Scriptwriter: Thrilling & Wittig
DOP: Mal Hamilton
Sound: Paul Moss
Other Credits
Script editor: Scott McEwing
Music: Library
Producer: Karen Watson
Laboratory: Acome Video
Gaige: Bellcam SP
Sponsor: Dept of State Development
Synopsis: This video is designed to promote New South Wales as an international business opportunity. The video argues persuasively for the allocation of investment in NSW by showing they can experience the ramifications of that mistake.

FOR WHOSE SAKE?

Prod. company: Honky Tonk Angel Productions
Principal Credits
Director: Rob Crawford
Producer: Rob Crawford
Scriptwriter: Rob Crawford
DOP: Geoff Burton
Sound: Rob Staker
Other Credits
Director: Brendan Maher
Producer: Tony Peterson
DOP: Bruce Hogan
Sound: Matthew Brand
Other Credits
Script editors: Matthew Brand
Music: Tony Peterson
Laboratory: Visualeyes
Duration: 30 mins
Sponsor: NSW Police Service
Synopsis: A training video for the New South Wales Police Service aimed at making all officers familiar with the legislation and procedures of all facets of domestic violence. The video uses actors and police to enact typical situations of domestic violence which require police intervention.

**WORKPLACE PROVO**

Prod. company: World's End Productions
Principal Credits
Director: Adrian Brant
Producer: William McKinnon
Scriptwriter: Thrilling & Wittig
DOP: Kriv Stenders
Other Credits
Camera asst. Christopher Gill
Off-line editor: Adrian Brant
Music: Phlip Rigg
Manager: William McKinnon
Prod. assts. Kristin Henderson
Michaela Settle
Gauge 16mm to Betacam SP
Duration: 10 mins
Sponsor: NSW Police Service
Synopsis: A workplace video that works with workers and employers to make the workplace a safer and more efficient environment. This video gives an overview of the range of workplaces—city and country, high and low tech, large and small—which WorkCover's brief covers. It is designed to promote the WorkCover Authority and to increase public awareness of WorkCover's role—to prevent as many work-related accidents as possible and to provide a safer environment for everyone.

**CINEMA PAPERS 94**
A Damage Report from the Laboratories

While talking with Clive Duncan (the new manager of Melbourne's Digital Film Labs, once VFL), he described the laboratory experience given as part of the formal training when he started as a cameraman at the ABC: "In the early days of my training, I was sent down to Cinevex to learn about the workings of the laboratory. I had a day there. The ABC was short staffed, so I never went back and I missed out on a massive slice of what should have been my education in the industry."

Today, if anything there is less contact with the laboratory as part of the camera assistant's training. With the economic reality that video will be a big part of their production experience, outside the film schools no one is going to take the time to talk about what happens after the film cans have been dropped into the night safe, unless the individual cameraperson takes the time to follow the process through for him- or herself. Unless the director of photography can talk about the relationship between lighting ratio, stock contrast ranges and less common techniques such as force processing and standard printer lights, taking a trial-and-error approach to learning about the craft could take years.

The temptation to play safe and avoid experimenting will also put creative freedom and a chance to develop individual styles back years. 16mm personal filmmaking used to be one way that you could learn about the boundaries of the stock and the relationship to processing and prints; now that's too expensive for most individuals.

It's my experience that the still photography assistants have a better understanding about the technical parameters of exposing and processing film than many of the cinematographers I've worked with (the still photographers often deal with the lab a number of times daily and often do test exposures before exposing the final frame, so it's an easier and faster learning curve).

There is also a lot less that the laboratory can tell you, now that the neg-to-tape telecine transfer has eliminated the one-light workprint in many cases. Without a workprint to project, a laboratory neg report is reduced to a damage report.

Hence the title for this collection of stories on the current state of our laboratories. When we've been down so long that anything looks like up, the careful optimism here is reassuring.

Fred Harden

In the wake of an economic depression, and an increasingly electronic world, the Sydney labs are both looking to the future with confidence. I spoke with Martin Hoyle, Marketing Manager at Movielab, and Peter Willard, Atlab's General Manager. Both showed great confidence in the industry at present. Peter Willard felt that the industry was "surviving well for the time of year, considering the obstacles to growth, and the economy in general". Movielab, according to Hoyle, had done at least ten major films this year – mostly documentaries and features – and was continually growing.

New intermediate stock revolutionizes blow-ups

At Movielab, in the Film Australia complex at Lindfield, Martin Hoyle spoke about the switch to documentary and feature productions going through the lab at present. Several productions recently have been shot on Super-16. Hoyle was enthusiastic about the excellent results of the 35mm blow-up, and said that Kodak's new intermediate stocks 5244 and 7244 are the key to the success:

With the old 7243, you could always see the grain building up. That's why 16mm optics were never very good. But now the new stock – 7244 – is much better. It uses the EXP grain technology like the camera negative stocks, and the results are amazing.

When a 35mm blow-up duplicate negative is required from a Super-16 production, there were always two ways of doing it, with arguments for both. Making a contact-printed Super-16 interpositive was much cheaper than a 35mm blow-up interpos (4,000 feet of 16mm blows up to 10,000 feet in 35mm) and usually eliminated the tendency of negative splices to jump in the blow-up printer. However, the quality of the 16mm interpos was never as good as it might have been on 35mm.

Now that problem is gone, and a Super-16 interpositive gives results that match 35mm on the older stock. Using the new stock for the dupe negative as well has made for the best-ever results.

According to Martin Hoyle:

The printing lights are very different from the old '43 stock, and it looks different as well: it's a light
pinkish colour, more like stills negative — not the orange colour of the old stock. We did all the tests with Kodak to get the new standards.

The blow-ups are printed for Movielab by Rick Springett of Springett Optical Services, which has recently changed premises to move into the Movielab area at Film Australia.

**Super-16**

While discussing blow-ups, Martin Hoyle commented on some other points for Super-16 productions:

The framing of the shots is quite critical: although the camera view-finder is marked up for 1:1.66 ratio, the blow-up will be projected in 1:1.85. Sometimes, we've had to re-position some shots a bit higher or lower in the frame to avoid cutting things off. That's the advantage of doing the blow-up on an optical printer — it gives more power for correcting those shots where they haven't framed for the tighter ratio.

**The Post-production Supervisor**

Budgets are getting slimmer, crews are getting smaller, schedules are getting faster: but at the same time, post-production is getting more and more complex, as film gauges, editing formats and sound techniques are mixed and matched in ever-increasing variety. Hoyle highlighted one key role that should never be skipped on:

We've had productions coming through where the budget has been cut and cut just to get the film started at all. Shooting ratios have gone from 10:1 to 8:1; a five-week shoot has been cut back to three weeks; the crew have finished up exhausted. With a tight budget, usually they don't have a workprint, so the shoot is being judged from a video monitor. If it was planned for 35mm, maybe it's gone to Super-16 to save money.

By the time it gets into post-production, it's complicated! Often the budget hasn't allowed for a post-production supervisor. The editor doesn't have time to act as one. So, the lab ends up having to sort out facilities, arrange sound dubs, mixes and a whole host of other things outside the lab.

Martin Hoyle's advice is that every production should allow for a supervisor to follow through and tie up the final post-production stages: "If more features are going to a tape edit, then a post-production supervisor is essential."

**New 35mm wet-gate printer at Movielab**

The latest acquisition at Movielab is their 35mm Schmitzer wet-gate printer. The Schmitzer is a total immersion attachment that fits onto a standard Model C contact printer (the universal printer that has been the work-horse in most labs for the past 30 years). As negative and raw print stock run past the printing gate, they are totally submerged in a chamber of wet printing fluid, tetrachlorethylene. This liquid matches the refractive index of the film base itself, thus making scratches or other surface blemishes totally invisible. Martin Hoyle recalled one recent production:

*We printed *Etcetera in a Paper Jam* wet gate. It's a 35mm short from the AFC. Some of it had picked up camera scratches from the pixilation techniques they used, running at 4 frames per second. The wet gate completely eliminated the scratches — and it looks sharper too. The fluid brings the negative and the stock into better contact, so the definition is better.*

**Rick Springett moves to Lindfield**

Springett Optical Service has been a feature of Milson's Point ever since the closure of A.P.A. in 1978. But after 15 years, Rick Springett is taking his business to the Film Australia complex at Lindfield.

Business for a film optical company has changed dramatically over those fifteen years. Rick pointed out that film optical work for commercials had been declining rapidly as video effects became more and more powerful. However, there was a corresponding increase in cinema commercials. These were usually re-makes of the successful television version.

When an agency has spent a fortune on tape effects for a TV commercial, all too often when the cinema version is needed they simply send the one-inch master out for a kine transfer to 35mm film. Of course, they don't have much control over the quality of domestic receivers, but, with a cinema commercial, where the projector must be within a certain brightness and the screen has to be standard, they can achieve good results. So, it's worth remaking the opticals on film. Most times the opticals would cost less than a kine transfer anyway.

According to Rick, SOS had stayed out of the feature market because it didn't really fit with the demands of his commercial clients:

With TV commercials, everything has to turn around in 24 hours. If you're doing opticals for a
feature, you can get locked into it for weeks at a
time. Then you can’t service the commercials
clients.

But as film opticals for TV commercials are
decaying, so SOS is finding more cinema work.
In particular, Rick is now ideally placed to print
blow-ups for Super-16 productions. For Black
River, he made the titles by way of a 35mm
interpos, but the body of the film was printed at
Movielab to a Super-16 interpos, and then blown
up by Rick to make a 35mm dupe negative.

Rick says the main reason for his move was
that the lease had expired on the old premises:

It’s convenient being next door to Movielab for
some of their work, but I still get my hi-cons
processed at Atlab. So, I’m quite independent of
both labs.

**Telecine compatible intermediates**

Kodak’s new intermediate stock, 5244, crops up
again as a tool for improving telecine transfers.
It has always been difficult to get exactly the
same results on a telecine transfer as would be
expected in the cinema. Firm believers in neg­
to-tape transfers are matched by equally ada­
mant supporters of the television contrast print.
The trouble with neg-to-tape is that the nega­
tive encompasses an enormously wide range of
brightnesses on a more-or-less linear scale, and
there is no video system that can accommodate
the whole range. The loss is most noticeable at
the low signal end of the range; in the case of
negative, that leads to burnt-out skies with no
texture.

A normal theatrical print actually increases
that contrast, although it stretches the mid tones
and rolls off the highlights and shadows very
smoothly to give the classic “film look”. Unfortu­
nately, in contrasty scenes (that is nearly every
scene that isn’t lit expressly for television), trans­fers
from prints lead to massive areas of shadow,
in which everything from the mid-tones down
tend to disappear into black.

The traditional low-contrast print improves
matters somewhat, especially if the production
is specially graded for television. But now Atlab
is trying a new approach: the telecine-compat­
ible intermediate, or TCI.

Atlab has run tests with three video houses –
Apocalypse, Omnicon, and Videolab – supply­
ing test prints for transfer on the new 5244
intermediate stock. According to Peter Willard,
the results are “very encouraging”. Kodak’s Gary
O’Brien points out that telecine transfers from
intermediate stock are nothing new: but the
masking on the 5244 is new. Kodak is obtaining
Telecine Analysis Film (TAF) samples on the
new stock, so that the film can be complemented
by a matched masking set-up on the telecines
themselves.

A Kodak newsletter describes similar work in
the U.S.: John Sayles’ Passion Fish was trans­ferred
from 5244 at the Tape House Editorial
Company in New York. Telecine Director John
Dowdell said:

The intermediate print provides the proper toe
and shoulder and straight line that fits magnifi­
cently with the Ursa. The 5244 has allowed me
to get remarkably close to the experience I
would hope to have watching a projected print.

Transferring from a graded positive saves
time – the film grader has done much of the work
and places every scene in the right part of the
telecine’s response range. The advantage of
using the new intermediate stock is that shadow
densities are much lower than they would be on
a normal print, so it’s easier for the telecine to
respond in the shadow range, without having to
sacrifice the highlight detail.

Peter Willard was keen to stress one point:

This technique uses the new 5244 intermediate
stock, but we’re using a special set-up to suit the
telecine’s requirements. Don’t confuse it with an
interpos: you can’t take a TCI and use it to dupe
from, or to make prints.

Atlab is recommending the TCI mainly for
transfers of commercial and non-theatrical pro­
ductions, and further information may be had
from Atlab’s Jim Parsons.

**Workprints revisited**

It’s impossible to discuss anything about the
labs these days without the issue of workprints
coming up. Peter Willard – as always, with the
latest statistics at his fingertips – reports that this
year 60 per cent of Atlab’s 35mm negative
processing was “process only”, compared with
27 per cent last year. In 16mm, the percentage

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without workprint has risen from 58 per cent to 72 per cent. Peter believes that the cost of workprints is not the major issue:

Non-linear editing has every advantage over a film cut - it wins on creativity, on speed, and on the overall cost, not just the workprint saving. When you have everything going that way, it doesn't leave many arguments in favour of film editing.

But both labs are agreed on the disadvantages when there is no workprint. As Martin Hoyle explained:

We've had shoots where there have been focus problems and lighting problems that weren't evident on the tape rushes. It wasn't until we came to make an answer print that these problems became apparent. The film grader only sees a half-inch video of the final cut - which looks fine - then puts the negative up on the colour analyzer and, 'Oops!', all of a sudden there's a possibility of disappointment. And at that stage, everybody's reputation is on the line. It needs a workprint at the time of the shoot. Taking sample rolls from each set-up is one way: but if there's a problem, what are the chances that you'll get it in the roll that you've printed?

Grading upgraded

Meanwhile at Atlab, Filmlab Engineering has recently completed an upgrade to the second Colormaster film analyzer. Now both machines are fitted with the "Prismatic" gate, so the negative can be viewed "on the run". Previously, the second machine only allowed the image to be seen in the stop-frame mode (the only way to grade, but hard to see the continuity from scene to scene). Atlab believes this upgrade will considerably improve productivity and results in grading all productions.

In addition, Atlab's negative matching department has switched up from their initial OSC/R junior negative-logging system to the full OSC/R. Peter Willard explained that all their work was now logged and negative matched using OSC/R, whether editing was on video or workprint:

The only thing we don't do is give OSC/R rushes reports - the negative is logged after telecine transfer, ready for cutting when the EDL comes back.

The full system extends OSC/R's capabilities to NTSC (30 fps) timecodes. First production to use this feature is Lorimar Telepictures' The Flood.

Atlab expands (2)

Atlab's new laboratory on the Gold Coast has been open for three months, and already has a number of productions to its credit. The latest and biggest production is The Penal Colony, produced by Gale Anne Hurd for Platinum Pictures.

The processing facility is within the Movie World studios, and facilities include 35mm and 16mm developing, printing, and grading right up to answer print. Services such as negative matching, sound mixing and optics, as well as blow-ups, are all provided by the main lab back in Sydney. Says Peter Willard:

Most overseas or co-productions will finish overseas, so they only need a rushes service, while local productions tend to do post-production in Sydney. But we're offering the full facilities, and, if the demand is there, we'll provide more services up in Queensland.

The lab operates an overnight rushes service, and is open through the day, mainly for enquiries, film deliveries and maintenance.

As well as major productions, local commercial producers, Telescan, the Australian Film Company and Roly Poly, have been big users of the laboratory.

The lab was established with the help of a Queensland Government grant of $500,000, part of an on-going programme by Premier Wayne Goss to attract film and television production to Queensland.

THE RISE OF THE POLYESTER-BASED PRINT

Fred Harden reports

Polyester (the common name for polymer Polyethyleneterephtalate) is formed from the combination of two petrochemical industry by-products. As a base for film emulsion, it is a (currently) cost-effective alternative to triacetate (formed from cotton and wood products), which has been the chosen film base for motion-picture stocks for some years. It has been used for machine leader, sound stock, archival films and was widely used for bulk printed Super 8. In still photography, it is a widely-used flat stable base. Yet despite attempts to introduce it as the preferred motion-picture base and its acceptance in Europe, it has had marginal impact in Australia until recently.

Agfa uses the trade name GEVAR for its polyester base and its current print film, CP-10, is a competitively priced and processing compatible with the Eastman print stocks. It is significantly different in that it doesn't use a carbon
black backing layer that is conventionally used to absorb the light scatter, or "halation", that comes from the light bouncing back from the base layers. Stocks with the black backing require a pre-bath and brush wash to remove the carbon. The Agfa CP-10 stock uses an anti-halation technique Agfa calls CLD, Controlled Light Diffusion, which is a special coating between the three emulsion layers and an anti-halation coating between emulsion and base. The savings for the laboratory are in time and water use; for the client, the advantages come largely from the stock itself.

The properties of polyester are superior mechanically, toughness, tear resistance and lower brittleness which reduce film breaks and scratching, and extend perforation life. Extended print life and smoother transport from the more flexible base are just two of the reasons that are attractive to distributors. The thinner base also means reels are smaller (or can have a 15% longer projection time for the conventional diameter) and there is a 6% weight advantage which can reduce shipping costs. For archival (or just traditional long-term) storage, there is no "vinegar effect" caused by the release of acetic acid by hydrolysis in cellulose triacetate. Prints can also be stored without concern for shrinkage extending the traditional life of a library print. The first major release on the Agfa stock locally is the Hoyts Fox Columbia Tri-Star picture, *Hot Shots! 2* (Jim Abrahams).

There have been a number of traditional reasons for avoiding polyester stocks. Unless there is a cut in the edge of the film, it won't tear and this was supposed to mean that, instead of the film snapping, if there was a jam in printing, processing or projection, it would damage the machinery.

The idea that the film should be used as a clutch is a bit of an old chestnut and was laughed at by the people I spoke to. At the labs, Cinevex's Grant Millar pointed out that everyone uses clear polyester leader to feed and follow the film by the people I spoke to. At the labs, Cinevex's Grant Millar pointed out that everyone uses clear polyester leader to feed and follow the film. The chance to "stop signing cheques and get back to more hands-on administration of physical film". Clive believes that as an administrator:

It is service that Clive believes is the basis of what's happening today in society and business: It's the time of the 24-hour suit or the five-minute hamburger. People want things 'now' and, apart from planning a feature film, people don't look six months into the future, particularly in advertising. Once upon a time you used to be able to tip if you point out to them that maybe they were at fault. It's the nature of business. We already deal with the states that don't have labs, such as South Australia, W.A. and Tasmania, and, with the new technologies and couriers and fax machines, there is no reason why we couldn't service a feature film out of Sydney. We've just done a job where the rushes were flown down overnight, we processed and telecined them, and put them on a plane. They were watching their rushes on cassette at ten o'clock the next morning in Queensland. So it can be done.

### The born-again lab

In the Warren of buildings that was Victorian Film Laboratory in Hawthorn, Clive Duncan's office is strategically placed at the front door and under-stated to the point of being, ah, shared. With laboratory supervisor Steve Mitchell, the only hint that the office belongs to the world that now the name Digital Film Laboratory, stickily-taped to the front door, suggests, is the background hum of the portable computer on Clive's desk.

The reason for the austerity became obvious after a few minutes of conversation: DFL is soon to move to the AAV building complex in Bank Street. Melbourne, a move that has occupied Clive's time since he took up his position four months ago.

From his camera-operating, then director-cameraman, background, Clive was obviously an experienced choice for the position as General Manager of The Film Business, a Sydney-Melbourne commercial production company. It was his friendship with Melbourne's acclaimed editor Mike Reed that led to him being offered the chance to "stop signing cheques and get back to more hands-on administration of physical film". Clive believes that as an administrator:

You have to have a passion for the industry or you could just as well be making plastic rubbish bins. As a freelancer for twenty years, I think I understand how complex and emotional the industry can be, and, if you understand the characters, you can give better service.

It is service that Clive believes is the basis of what's happening today in society and business: It's the time of the 24-hour suit or the five-minute hamburger. People want things 'now' and, apart from planning a feature film, people don't look six months into the future, particularly in advertising. Once upon a time you used to be able to tip them off by saying, "Well we do have specific run times", but not today. I don't know if it's a good thing but more and more people are working on the weekends and you just have to service them on weekends.

In all businesses customers come and go for lots of reasons; it may be service or technical. In this business, you don't get a second chance. The lab side is fairly unknown to most people and they don't give you the right of recall. If they think that you've done wrong, they won't wait for an explanation: they change to your opposition, especially if you point out to them that maybe they were at fault. It's the nature of business.

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### The greening of Bank Street

We're about to shift to South Melbourne and be the 'born again lab'. With things like positive pressure air conditioning, it will lift the cleanliness side of our game considerably. With the growing importance of telecine, neg dirt comes from somewhere and, if you can wipe it out on your side, it helps everyone to pin-point the problem.

We've also had discussions on the chemical side with Kodak and, if we put in the new machine at Bank Street, it will be the first green lab that recycles and reconstitutes all its chemicals. We are doing it to meet the requirements of the authorities and also to be seen to be ecologically aware. It saves money because you are not tipping things down the drain. But you have to spend money first.

We're remodelling one of the floors in the AAV building, so hopefully we will be shifting the dry section of the lab there very soon. You have to be perceived to be making a change, just changing the name and the manager won't do it.
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Watching the cash flow

This should be seen as a positive move and we've been waiting for cash flow to do it, but we decided that unless we do it, the cash flow won't improve. To improve your business you have to spend the money.

I think AAV and Mike Reed bought the lab for two reasons. A film laboratory can be a financially-viable business. Once you've bought the plant and equipment, it can return a small but steady profit. The reality is that it's still film that's 16 and 35mm wide, the only side that has really changed in the hardware is that analog meters are now digital. It's like the internal combustion engine: the heart is the same, but the control gear is different and that gives you a more sophisticated edge.

The other reason was an emotional one, especially for Mike. VFL was one of the premier labs in Australia; it just hadn't kept up with the times.

Film tech meets digital

Film is still the best medium to gather information, but not the best for manipulating the images afterwards. It's very expensive and time- and labour-intensive to rotoscope things, to do film mattes and hi-con mattes with all the registration difficulties. Doing these things digitally makes much more sense.

Cinema is re-emerging as a social event. The complexes in all the suburban shopping centres point to a return in cinema-going after years of television. So, whatever we do digitally now has to be able to be returned to film for release and now it's possible.

That's why we've called ourselves Digital and why we're investigating Cineon and the alternatives that we see happening. There will be conventional methods around for a long time; the contact printers, etc., are all attractive because of the high costs that this new hardware will pass on. The commercial companies will embrace it first because it gives them a hook, and that's why there will probably only be a few of the big houses doing digital opticals in Melbourne and Sydney. It will come down to who is the most financial. I can see a war between those with the most cash flow.

Film and video have been too remote for too long. It's time that people started to talk and get their act together and that can happen if it's just a matter of a walk through the building and be at the telecine chain and the digital suites. Obvi­ously there are advantages for clients with that feeling of security. But we are going to make it first because it gives them a hook, and that's why there will probably only be a few of the big houses doing digital opticals in Melbourne and Sydney. It will come down to who is the most financial. I can see a war between those with the most cash flow.

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The cameraman is losing contact with his footage. With a workprint the lab can say, 'Hey, this looks a little overexposed here; check your meter', or 'The colour looks like there's been an 85 left on.' But the telecine operator will just grade all that out, and it's not until the neg pull is done, and we are matching the final, that anyone finds a problem. The cameraman can be way off beam with a new stock, or maybe it's as simple as the gels on the lights being faded and worn out, and he can kick the gaffer and say 'Put fresh ones on, it is looking a bit pink.'

Telecine operators also have to be educated in the ways of film so that they can see these things with a final film release in mind. If you put

The other Melbourne laboratory is, of course, Cinevex, sited almost across the road from the ABC in Elsternwick and the last remaining of a group of laboratories that all received a share of the work from ABC Television. With tape production of news and current affairs, the situation today is much different and the move of the ABC to new facilities in South Melbourne will not affect the lab. In fact, as I began the conversation with Manager Grant Millar and Technical Manager Chris Sturgeon, they pointed out the Natural History unit (by far the major user of film at the ABC) was moving into buildings even closer to the lab.

Grant was not as positive about the industry improving for at least another twelve months, suggesting that the research they have done indicates even a slight decline. He is confident about their position in the market and cites the wide customer base of the Melbourne lab as being the reason that they have not been as affected by the fall off in advertising commercial work. Series, features and release printing, plus

the continuing work from the ABC, have compensated, and interstate work is steady.

Grant also believes that the fall in workprinting quoted in Sydney happened some years ago in Melbourne. Melbourne embraced neg-to-tape almost two years before Sydney, which is one of the reasons that Cinevex hastened its involvement with OSC/R. Cinevex is now one of three Beta test sites in the world for the Canadian Adelaide Works software (OSC/R matches film keycode numbers to time-code numbers in an off-line edit decision list). Unlike in Sydney, it is the labs that do most of the neg matching in Melbourne (at Cinevex, it's Paul Cross and Rohan Wilson), and the experience Cinevex has gained with the process has brought it work that, Grant Millar says, has almost compensated for any fall in the volume of workprinting. Chris adds:

As with any piece of technology, there are areas for error. We are not going to hand our lives over to the computer and we have a lot of human checking which has helped give confidence to our clients. We introduced OSC/R gradually,
Green but dirty

Environmental concerns are growing and Cinevex has spent over $50,000 recently to ensure that it can face the day when no chemical can be added to waste water. It is recycling and re-using processing chemicals. Victoria (or Melbourne Water) is leading the other states in these concerns.

One of the environmental issues that will come to a head soon is with the chemicals that are used in film cleaning. Due to be phased out in two years, there are still no practical alternative solutions being offered. Chris Sturgeon feels that they are totally in the hands of the big multinational players like ICI and Kodak in this regard. If not, watch out for dirty prints!

Super-16 but no HDTV yet

The other area of Cinevex expertise is with Super-16, and films such as Romper Stomper (Geoffrey Wright), Stark (Nadia Tass) and, currently going through the lab, Body Melt (Philip Brophy).

Twelve months ago the push for Super-16 was to prepare for HDTV, but, with the technical and standards delays there, customers are still unsure about the format. Of the four or five long-conform 16mm projects going through the lab at the moment, Chris says that none of those customers has decided to go Super-16 for HDTV reasons. That it will be an issue is pointed to by the BBC co-financed Stark, which, like a number of European television productions, was shot in the wide-screen format to give them that future option.

If there are any trumpets to be blown with the quality of Super-16, Chris feels that it should be for Kodak, which has in the past two years improved camera and intermediate stocks so that for the layman the results on-screen are indistinguishable from 35mm.

On the loss of workprint, Grant Millar added a final, sobering coda:

There is no going back, but I wonder what is going to happen in ten year’s time. What will happen to our young cinematographers who are not going to see workprint? Where will they gain their skills, because they won’t get them from seeing their work on a telecine chain. There is no reference point for them for the final film result.

Other labs will tell you that they have had films where the results are all over the place because the cinematographer is not seeing the progress of the work each day and adjusting accordingly. Things like soft shots are not as easy to see on a twenty-inch [50cm] monitor as on a twenty-foot [6m] screen.

Memories and Dreams

In the next issue of Cinema Papers read an exclusive interview with director Lynn-Maree Milburn, producer Julie Stone and director of photography Andrew de Groot about this award-winning film.
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Signature

Offer only available to new subscribers and closes 31 December 1993.
A panel of seven 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); Paul Harris (*Eg* "The Age, 3RRR"); Ivan Hutchinson (Seven Network; Herald-Sun, Melbourne); Stan James (The Adelaide Advertiser); Neil Jillett (The Age); Tom Ryan (3LO; The Sunday Age, Melbourne); and Evan Williams (The Australian, Sydney). Sandra Hall (The Bulletin, Sydney) and David Stratton (Variety; SBS) are on holiday. Adrian Martin and Scott Murray, who are both finishing books, saw too few films.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FILM TITLE</th>
<th>Director</th>
<th>BILL COLLINS</th>
<th>PAUL HARRIS</th>
<th>IVAN HUTCHINSON</th>
<th>STAN JAMES</th>
<th>NEIL JILLETT</th>
<th>TOM RYAN</th>
<th>EVAN WILLIAMS</th>
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<td>John Musket, Ron Clements</td>
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  NOVEMBER

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  JOHN MALKOVICH  
  OCTOBER

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  SEAN CONNERY  
  WESLEY SNIPES  
  NOVEMBER

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  DANIEL DAY-LEWIS  
  MICHELLE PFEIFFER  
  WINONA RYDER  
  NOVEMBER

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