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AN AUSTRALIAN MARVEL: ‘MEMORIES & DREAMS’

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FEATURE FILM NOMINATIONS

Best Film
The Piano, Jan Chapman
Map of the Human Heart, Tim Bevan, Vincent Ward, Timothy White
The Heartbreak Kid, Ben Gannon
On My Own, Leo Pescarolo, Will Spencer, Rosa Colosimo, Elisa Resegotti, Lail McCall, Stavros Stravrides

Newvision Film Distributors Award for Best Achievement in Direction
Jane Campion, The Piano
Michael Jenkins, The Heartbreak Kid
Vincent Ward, Map of the Human Heart
James Ricketson, Blackfellas

AGFA Award for Best Performance by an Actress in a Supporting Rôle
Stavros Stravrides
Jane Campion,
Telecom Mobilenet Award for Best Performance by an Actress in a Supporting Rôle
Rosa Colosimo, Elisa Resegotti, Lael McCall, Stavros Stravrides

Best Original Music Score
Francon Piersanti, On My Own
Michael Nyman, The Piano
Gabriel Yared, Map of the Human Heart
Anthony Marinelli, Billy Childs,
My Forgotten Man

Spectrum Films Award for Best Achievement in Editing
John Scott, George Akers,
Map of the Human Heart
Stewart Young, Resistance
Veronica Jenet, The Piano
Michael Honey, The Custodian

Best Achievement in Sound
John Dennison, Tony Vaccher, John Patterson,
Ross Linton, Nick Holmes, Shotgun Wedding
Lee Smith, Tony Johnson, Gethin Creagh, Peter Townsend,
Annabelle Sheehan, The Piano
Andrew Plain, Gethin Creagh, Map of the Human Heart
Penn Robinson, Jeanine Chialvo, Paul Brincat,
Broken Highway

Best Achievement in Production Design
MacGregor Knox, Resistance
Andrew McAlpine, The Piano
Lesley Crawford, Broken Highway
Chris Kennedy, Say a Little Prayer

AGFA Award for Best Performance by an Actress in a Leading Rôle
Holly Hunter, The Piano
Fiona Ruitte, Say a Little Prayer
Jacqueline McKenzie, This Won't Hurt a Bit!
Claudia Karvan, Broken Highway

Best Achievement in Costume Design
Fiona Spence, Frauds
Aphrodite Kondos, Gross Misconduct
Janet Patterson, The Piano
Lynn-Maree Milburn, Jacquie Everitt,
Say a Little Prayer
Roger Ford, The Nostradamus Kid

AGFA Award for Best Performance by an Actress in a Leading Rôle
Bob Ellis, The Nostradamus Kid
Gill Dennis, Antonio Tibaldi, John Frizzell,
On My Own
Chris Kennedy, This Won't Hurt a Bit!
Jane Campion, The Piano

Best Achievement in Cinematography
in a Non-Feature Film
Kangaroo - Faces in the Mob, Glen Carruthers
The Journey, Dion Beebe
Spring Ball, Peter Coleman
Heart of Pearl, Susan Thwaites

Best Achievement in Sound in a Non-Feature Film
The Resting Place, Anne McKinotly
Opportunity Knock, Phil Winters
Exile and the Kingdom, Noeline Harrison, Lawrie Silverstrin, Kim Lord
The Sleep of Reason, Gareth Vanderhope, Ralph Ortner

Best Achievement in Editing in a Non-Feature Film
Range of Experience, Anne Pratten
The Good Son, Sean Cousins, David Rowe
Gumshoe, Suresh Ayyar
Everest - Sea to Summit, Michael Balson

First and Second 1993 FFC Film Fund selections announced

The FFC's Chief Executive Mr John Morris has announced that Spider and Rose and Country Life have been selected for the 1993 Film Fund.

Spider and Rose will be directed by Bill Bennett, who also wrote the script. The producers are Lyn McCarthy and Graeme Tubbenhauer. It will star Ruth Cracknell and Simon Bossell in a bitter-sweet comedy about an elderly woman and a young man who embark on a series of adventures which help them shake off the past and find freedom.

Country Life is about a young Englishwoman who comes to live at an Australian country property. Michael Blakemore wrote the screenplay and will direct the film. Sydney-born Blakemore is an internationally acclaimed director and a novelist. In addition to staging numerous hit plays and musicals in the UK, U.S. and Europe over the past three decades (winning four Tony nominations for Noises Off, A Day in the Death of Joe Egg, Lettice & Lovage and Country Life), he has written and directed a number of films. His film work includes Privates On Parade and A Personal History of the Australian Surf: Being the Confessions of a Straight Pooper, which he wrote and directed.

Robin Dalton, the producer of Country Life, produced Madame Sousatzkoo, 1984 and Emma's
Call for entries

The St Kilda Film Festival is an annual cultural event showcasing recent Australian short films. Entries are now being accepted for the 11th St Kilda Film Festival to be held in April 1994.

Audition tapes must be submitted on VHS and promotional stills should be included with entries. Other publicity material can be submitted when notified of pre-selection.

Audition tape deadlines: For films completed prior to 30 November: 17 December 1993 For films completed after 30 November: 25 February 1994 All entry forms must be received by 17 December 1993. Entries received in previous years will be considered provided they have been entered only once before. There are no entry fees.

For entry forms and further information call Michelle Truckenbrodt on (03) 536 1397.

Letter

Andrée-Anne Jackel's "Why the French had to love The Lover" (Cinema Papers, no. 92, pp. 14-19) prompted a letter from Adrian Martin (no. 93, p. 2), in which he wrote:

Andrée-Anne Jackel ends her article [...] with the implication that the late Serge Daney, surveying the rotten state of French cinema, chose to publish his last "English-language article" on the film in Sight and Sound. Daney never wrote an English-language article to my knowledge. The translator's introduction to the Daney piece on The Lover clearly states that it first appeared in Libération, which somewhat obviates Jackel's point.

Jackel has since replied:

The late French critic Serge Daney did first publish his damning article on The Lover in Libération, the Left-wing daily to which he contributed quite regularly. However, it was Daney's personal decision to propose his article to Sight and Sound for publication in English, almost as if to alert the English-speaking cinéphile world that the state of film criticism was not what it was used to be in France and that to-day's new promotion techniques, combined with the self-enhancing visual style of certain filmmakers, could strike a fatal blow to cinema (as he saw it, essentially an art form).

Far from "obviating the point" I was making, Daney's determination that his opinion be known outside the small French readership he first addressed seems to me to reinforce it.

As French journalists put it: "Pan sur le bec!"

Yours sincerely, Anne Jackel
Senior Lecturer and Researcher
University of the West of England, Bristol
Memories

Writer-Director Lynn-Maree Milburn, Producer Julie Stone and Director of Photography Andrew de Groot interviewed by Scott Murray and Alissa Tanskaya
“Beautiful”, “moving” and “haunting” are the words that one’s feelings are likely to form after a viewing of Lynn-Maree Milburn’s *Memories & Dreams*. And appropriately so, as the process of emotion forming words and images is one of the main aspects of this film and the process by which it was made.

There is a level on which this film invites comparison with the prose works of Proust and Nabokov (*A Recher du temps perdu and Ada Or Ardour: A Family Chronicle*, for example) and with the cinemas of Robbe-Grillet and Resnais. But, on another level, Milburn’s film is outside such comparison: it is, in the modern sense, “other”, its very difference manifested in every frame. Defined only by itself, *Memories & Dreams* is a brave and entrancing foray into new cinematic language.

Paradoxically, the story is one already oft told: a person’s life in a war-torn central Europe, loves found and lost, a flight to another country. Here, the heroic survivor is Johanna Kilma Ocenaskova (Jo), born in Prague and now a resident of Melbourne. In the film, she recalls her beloved mother and special childhood, her various lovers, and the ultimate escape from a Nazified and then Communized Czechoslovakia.

These recollections are represented in various ways and on several levels, using a multitude of cinema and animation techniques. The film begins with a Czech fairy tale spoken by a little girl. Behind it is a collage of tumbling autumn leaves and stars, of rainbows and clocks. Jo is then revealed as a little girl (Alexandra Chapman) wandering through a sewing factory and watching her mother put out the washing in the landing of their flat. In voice-over, the Jo of today recounts snippets of her life, sometimes matching the images, sometimes only obliquely making a connection.

Later, the film also introduces Jo as a young woman (Joanna Weir), in one of the film’s major set-pieces, riding in a darkened train carriage, recalling moments from her life. The Jo of today recalls an earlier Jo recalling an even younger one. The layers interweave and reverberate, accumulating through fragmentation and parallelization a powerful evocation of a life fully and dramatically lived.

Most obviously, *Memories & Dreams* is a film about memory and it stands as one of cinema’s more perceptive explorations. In its meticulous understanding of the process and functions of memory, it is not bound by the strictures of literature and avoids the common cinematic fault of showing too much. For example, if one remembers a room from childhood, does one visualize it in 360 degrees, or just a corner, a chair, a curtain billowing in the cool summer breeze? *Memories & Dreams* sees memory in fragments linked mostly by the ‘free’ associations of the mind. Images are not structured by linear notions and chronology, but by the indefinable and intuitive sense of rightness, both Jo’s and the director’s.

In some ways, *Memories & Dreams* is very much a collaborationist work. Milburn wrote the screenplay with producer Julie Stone, continuing to work with both Stone and director of photography Andrew de Groot throughout the entire pre- and post-productions. De Groot also spent a year helping design and construct an animation stand that achieved the exact results Milburn required. The film’s laboratory, VFL (now Digital Film Services), too, became a key partner as test after test went through its portals.

Equally, the Australian Film Commission saw its financial commitment stretch and increase over the six years of production. But the wait has been already rewarding, the film having been selected by the Venezia, Toronto and London Film Festivals, and winning the Erwin Rado Award for best Australian film at the Melbourne Film Festival.

Given the collaborative approach behind much of the film, the following interview is with *Memories & Dreams*’ three principal filmmakers.

What was the genesis of *Memories & Dreams*? Was it meeting Jo?

MILBURN (shyly): I don’t think I can answer that.

DE GROOT: Lynn thought of the film and then met Jo, just at the time she was looking for someone to make a film around.
MILBURN: Yes ... in a way.

DE GROOT: Lynn was wanting to make a film portrait of someone through their memories. She had been thinking about the language of the film before actually meeting the person—not so much the images but ideas about interwoven memories. She wanted to use some of the techniques she had already worked with for other filmmakers: animation sequences; turning movie footage into stills and then working with those stills before refilming them.

MILBURN: I don't think initially the ideas were just concerned with memories, but when I met Jo, given the stage of life that she was at, the film became about memories.

STONE: We met Jo when she was doing a little bit of acting work around town, in clips and so on. She was amazing to witness on set. The film evolved when Lynn and I decided to go over to Jo's place with a tape-recorder and talk to her. A lot more came out of that than we'd ever imagined. We could see she had a great depth and a positivity about her.

It was a slow process and we had to keep going back. Jo was very reticent to talk about the difficult parts of her life. She felt a little paranoid that her life might even still be in danger, decades after moving to Australia. What she had experienced in Europe had never really left her.

Initially, of course, there were hundreds of stories and from those Lynn chose the memories that inspired her and that she could imagine achieving—like the little white boots walking through the forest. Lynn then worked all those stories and images into a script. At this stage, it was going to be about a ten-minute film with thirty-six scenes.

Did you always intend interweaving an interview with Jo with reconstructed and animation sequences?

STONE: It was always going to be a collage from the first treatment we took to the AFC. We talked about the film as if it were similar to an Impressionists retrospective. We wanted people to come away with a feeling of the time, from the images that they'd seen, but without anything being absolutely specific.

Once the script was finished, what did you film first?

STONE: The thirty-six memories. Each scene was quite small and precisely shotlisted. We had to do it within a proper shooting structure because we had a crew and equipment. That part of the filmmaking happened very quickly—three weeks.

Soon after that, we photographed the interview with Jo.

How much was shot in Melbourne and how much overseas?

STONE: All the re-enacted scenes were shot in Melbourne. There was a lot of photography done in Prague, but all the re-enactments of events with Jo were done here in Melbourne. It was difficult portraying a person's life in Europe and in period. I imagine most Australian period films are set here.

We had to find locations that were pretty raw and could be art directed. We did have art directors for the larger sets, but soon we got into small, contained places with Lynn, Jacqui Everitt and myself enjoying doing it ourselves. Jacqui also did the costumes.

When did you shoot the Prague material?

MILBURN: In 1987, at the end of the same year as the Melbourne shoot.

What were you doing in Prague?

MILBURN: Mmm ... Now you want to know? ... We have to mention INXS?

DE GROOT: We were fortunate to have work on an INXS clip in Prague ... [Pause.] Well, maybe it was not a complete coincidence. Apparently, Michael Hutchence wanted to go to Venice.

[Laughter.]

DE GROOT: No, INXS were happy about it, and Lynn had done great work with them before.

Prague is a beautiful place to photograph for any reason. We took various rolls of black and white film over, which we always had with us on set. We could crane out over a bridge between set-ups on the INXS clip. The way most Czechs were dressed was neither garish nor obviously modern looking, so we could film some quite wide shots. Later, Lynn helped the illusion with more work on the image.
Because Prague is so visually evocative, it was really quite simple filmmaking.

Where was the wrought-iron sculpture that is in the fairy story?

MILBURN: That's in Prague, in a little square. It looks a bit like a fountain, but it's actually a one-person gaol. There's a myth about a prince who put his wife in it for adultery or something.

When Jo was interviewed, was she asked questions relating to only those specific memories you were interested in?

MILBURN: Yes. The questions were directly related to the script I had written and to some of the re-enacted scenes we had already shot.

STONE: By the time we came to do the interview on film, Lynn and I had twenty-three hours of interview on audio-tape. Lynn was very focused on which memories were hitting something deeply personal, like when Jo goes back to the war-time memory of her mother's being forced by hunger to exchange silver slippers for eggs. We knew from moments like that which memories to ask about.

Within the memories, there is often a concentration on specific details. Were they things you took from Jo's memories or were they things that she always highlighted? Obviously when she talks about the little white boots in the forest, the detail is clear in her memory. But what of the sewing-machines and the typewriter: did she highlight them as much as you do?

MILBURN: We did come out of those [audio-tape] interviews feeling as if she had highlighted these things herself, but I think sometimes it was me highlighting them. When we did subsequent interviews, what seemed highlighted the first time was no longer highlighted. It was quite subjective.

So those images are what you saw as Jo spoke?

MILBURN: It is a combination. Jo mentioned the little white boots to me and they struck an image that seemed to evoke the whole event. But that was not always the case. She did not necessarily describe things visually; sometimes she spoke more about feelings and atmospheres.

STONE: Jo wouldn't go into great detail about some of the events, particularly those with Richard [one of Jo's lovers]. But being with Jo was like going on a magical ride with someone. You could be with her in a room for ten hours and wonder where the time had gone.

Sometimes it was like watching a fantastic movie, because the way she spoke would weave such a strong spell.

When you get flashbacks in Hollywood films, memories are often re-created in 360 degrees. In this film, they are carefully fragmented. Is that something you concentrated on?

MILBURN: I think it evolved that way, but it also has something to do with my own experience of memories. Besides, it was a view into another person's life, rather than me being there myself.

You also have Jo viewing her own life. For example, she remembers herself on the train remembering how she watched her mother hang up the washing. Was that structure something you brought to the film?

MILBURN: I think so, because apart from them both being particular memories, Jo on the train shows a part of herself that is eternal and can look forward in time as well as backwards. That's what I feel those scenes represent as well as their particular memories -- a part of Jo perceiving herself.

STONE: Also, the medium started to open up and lead us places. The further we went with the medium, the more we explored.

MILBURN: When you're in that dark room with the animation stand, you can become very immersed in the processes. Just working in the dark helps one be reflective and contemplative.

STONE: With that, the filmmaking process became organic and the film grew from twelve minutes to an hour.

Did the structure remain essentially the same?

MILBURN: I felt that in essence it did during the animation, though it didn't really come into its own until the editing.

STONE: Every time we saw Jo, something more would open up.

Obviously, there wasn't any sense of urgency and we let it grow among our lives, in Lynn's imagination and in her animation room. But what it started out to be is still very much there. The feeling that Lynn and I wanted to express in the film was to tell something of the essence of a human life.

How much of Jo's narration is structured? After the scene where she is escaping through the forest, for instance, Jo talks in voice-over about going somewhere. She doesn't say "Australia" and it is only when she is on the train and she mentions Maitland that one realizes
But when Jo is talking about her feelings in Australia, we see her again as a child. MILBURN: That particular image relates to her sense of inheriting some of her mother’s courage. DE GROOT: Sometimes the imagery will be in the realm of the impressionistic narrative, though, at other times, it is more in the realm of portraiture. It combines the differences between those images which are directly telling a story and those of Jo where there is an attempt to portray a stage that Jo is in emotionally, or the path of her life, or how events are acting upon her. The images of Jo outside the wrought-iron gate are, of course, all the same setting and factually the same age, but the portrait has various reflections that communicate different stages of her life. So it has been reiterated throughout many years of her life, though it’s essentially the same moment in time — a universal image.

When Jo leaves from Czechoslovakia to go to Australia, the stars turn upside. It is as if she is going from the Northern Hemisphere to the Southern. MILBURN: That idea came during the animation. All those images of the stars and the dandelions are images I was working with to tell some of the story on the animation stand.

What about the falling stars, the leaves and the playing cards? MILBURN: They were things that I was working with and contemplating in the animation room. They were to do with childhood and childhood games. They were images that I was working on that don’t have actors in them. In one way, you are limited, but in another you discover a personal symbolism. The leaves are hard to explain, but in one way they represent Jo — her spirit.

And the falling cloths and waving colour that sometimes floats down?

TOP OF FACING PAGE: JO, DURING HER ACTING DAYS IN PRAGUE.
IMMEDIATELY BELOW: JO AT THE GATES.
BOTTOM ROW: THE YOUNG JO (ALEXANDRA CHAPMAN) WATCHES HER MOTHER THROUGH THE SLATS OF THE STAIRS AS SHE PUTS OUT WASHING ON THE LANDING. MEMORIES & DREAMS.

MILBURN: I think those moments which are less narrative are more reflective times. I felt those scenes were the most representative ones of her life. One is when Jo is leaving Prague and the images are like highlights of her life.

So, if a memory was a strong memory, you highlight it — for instance, the wedding — but where Jo is more commentative or self-examining, you put less descriptive images.

MILBURN: On those occasions there is usually a contemporary dialogue. They are to represent the story and the events that are happening at the time she is talking about. But then it does go into times where it is reflective and those images represent feelings. You might see Jo as a little girl at the sewing machine and also Jo as a young woman at the gate. They are symbolic images of Jo at those times of her life.

But when Jo is talking about her feelings in Australia, we see her again as a child. MILBURN: That particular image relates to her sense of inheriting some of her mother’s courage.

De Groot: Sometimes the imagery will be in the realm of the impressionistic narrative, though, at other times, it is more in the realm of portraiture. It combines the differences between those images which are directly telling a story and those of Jo where there is an attempt to portray a stage that Jo is in emotionally, or the path of her life, or how events are acting upon her. The images of Jo outside the wrought-iron gate are, of course, all the same setting and factually the same age, but the portrait has various reflections that communicate different stages of her life. So it has been reiterated throughout many years of her life, though it’s essentially the same moment in time — a universal image.

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BOTTOM ROW: THE YOUNG JO (ALEXANDRA CHAPMAN) WATCHES HER MOTHER THROUGH THE SLATS OF THE STAIRS AS SHE PUTS OUT WASHING ON THE LANDING. MEMORIES & DREAMS.
MILBURN: They really come so much from feelings that it is hard to explain.

STONE: They are definitely parts of Lynn's symbolic world that have developed with her emotional and personal connection with the film. She has developed one language — the hand painting of the images for Jo's memories — and to that has added her own emotional interpretations.

Then again, these other images — of the falling stars, swirling cloths, rainbows, leaves or stars arcing through the sky — are more part of Lynn's own language that, even in a completely different film of Lynn's, would probably still be there in some form.

MILBURN: It is the alchemy of so many stages and processes: the script, out there in the world filming with professional actors, in the dark animating and then more time in the dark editing.

Was there editing done on the animation stand as well?

MILBURN: Yes. The washing scene, which is about three minutes and ten shots long, with ripple wipes and dissolves, is in the film just as it came off the animation camera. There are many other such scenes.

Did you do everything on the animation stand before you started editing on the Steenbeck, or did you go from one to another?

MILBURN: We probably did half the animation shooting before we went onto the Steenbeck, and then ended up doing as much shooting again after the editing began.

Mothers, Sisters and Men

Why is there such an absence of male characters in the film, particularly fathers? You don't discuss or show Jo's father, or the fathers of her two children. As well, Jo talks so much about Jaroslav being the great love of her life, yet you don't choose to show him.

MILBURN: It comes out of knowing Jo. Most husbands came and went in her life, and she didn't meet her father until she was eighteen. He came back, stayed for three days and disappeared again.

The main men important to her were Jaroslav and Richard. Richard was the romantic lover of her life, while Jaroslav was more like an early father figure and lover. I could symbolize Richard as a romantic, unrequited love, an unfinished love that still exists to this day, but Jaroslav was more all-pervasive. He's shown more in words, as in the poem Jo speaks, which she wrote to him and is said again in Czech after Jaroslav dies. I felt that spoke more than showing his image. I couldn't really place him in any particular image.

STONE: I find the absence of males in the film very interesting. I became especially aware of it at the last screening. Even without the images being there, the dominance of the male aspects of the world — the war, the German and Russian armies — shape Jo's life. It seems all-pervasive to me now, though I don't think I was so aware of it while working on the film.

That generalized male aspect comes across in the sea of faces, of an army moving through a street.

STONE: Yes. There is a male canopy over the shape of her life, and yet her heart has stayed with her mother and with her own feminine self-possessedness. She is still proud of her femininity, her strength and her independence.

The most powerful moments in the film are those connected with women, and especially her mother. This is either directly, as when Jo talks about her mother, or imaginistically. For instance, when towards the end of the film Jo hangs clothes on the clothes-line, one immediately and powerfully recalls her mother. Another scene is when Jo talks about the support she received on arriving in Australia. She says, “Not even a sister could have done as much for me.” The most emotional, powerful and strongest forces are within the women.

STONE: Definitely Jo's essence is connected to the mother, to the female connections when she arrived here. Even her relationship with Lynn and myself is very strong and emotional.

There's a lot of writing now about women filmmakers inventing their own female language in cinema. Do you feel there is an element of that in your own work? Is there something about your filmic language which is particular to women and their sensibilities and sensitivities?... [Thoughtful silence.]...

We feared you weren’t going to like this question.

MILBURN: Umm ... I don’t think I can answer that.

STONE: Most film language is male, simply because most films are made by men and only a tiny speck by women. It is only recently that a lot of films are being made by women and some of these directors are saying, “I totally reject anything that I have been taught about the language of cinema and I will speak honestly the way I, as a female, want to.” Did you ever say something like that to yourself?

MILBURN: Oh no, I wouldn't say that. I probably felt more like one of those “little specks”, because it was the first thing I had attempted on that scale.

You are not saying that it wasn't possible, more that it wasn't conscious?

STONE: Yes. But the way you are expressing this isn't in a language Lynn would speak in herself or outwardly.
On a more subconscious level, Lynn was definitely making a film that expressed inner feelings and therefore came from the inner world of the female. Also, the fact that two women set about to make this film with another woman gave it a feminine spirit and empathy. But it was never a conscious thing of defying the cinema language of men.

Not even in terms of defining your own language as opposed to theirs?

STONE: Definitely in finding your own self-expression and therefore being feminine ... with a different language behind it.

Lynn set out to make a film that was honest to herself and her heart, and so that is female and feminine. We could both say that we are feminists, but we would probably never use that word, because I don’t actually feel feminist. I feel feminine and express that femininity, as Lynn does hers, rather than join with a feminist view against the male thing. I don’t think either of us felt we were acting out anything; we were just being honest to ourselves.

MILBURN: Because that’s like one little thing as you’re saying ... I’m not sure ... I can’t speak for Julie, but ...

STONE: Why not? I speak for you all the time.

MILBURN: But just on a personal level, when we started to make this film, the world at large was a very foreign concept, anyway. It probably still is.

I didn’t ‘see’ myself in relation to the world at large. It was always, from the beginning, a very inner thing. I never saw the film as having a place in the world.

So, by default, the film ends up having quite a separatist view?

STONE: Yes. Ninety per cent of the film was made in this dark and isolated space. Only a small percentage was done with a film crew and actors. When you are talking of years in the making, only a few months of it were done out in the world, if you like. The rest of it was in the inner world.

Lynn found her own voice almost in isolation; it is not connected to women’s filmmaking voices out there. But, I feel that women being honest with their feelings are going to find their feminine voice and, I would hope, are eventually going to express feminine spirit or soul. Maybe some are going to go about it in a louder or more demonstrative way, and even consciously band together, but there will be others, probably, who will just come through from a more simple place without consciously knowing it or even being part of a collective unconsciousness.

DE GROOT: We didn’t ever think about many people seeing the film.

STONE: Lynn thought we were going to put it in a shoebox and keep it under her bed.

DE GROOT: Possibly if it had started as a bigger film, Lynn would have worried about these other questions. But, at the same time, not thinking about it was impinging on real cinema anyway. We probably didn’t feel so threatened by any criteria of expertise, judgement or measuring up to anything.

MILBURN: We had the actual images. Again, it was an emotional response. It was an emotional response.

MILBURN: And you then hand-tinted those prints?

MILBURN: Most of them.

Did you decide before shooting how you were going to hand-tint or did you wait until after the shooting?

MILBURN: I probably had an idea, but mostly I worked it out once I had the actual images. Again, it was an emotional response.

Once we started animating certain scenes, there were other things we started doing that I felt gave the right effect for particular scenes, when I felt it needed to be left black and white and possibly textured, or seen through a vignette.

Once the stills were hand-tinted, what happened next?

MILBURN: Andrew made the animation stand.

Why was an animation stand built and not another one used?

MILBURN: Um ... Inspiration. I ...

DE GROOT: Well, partly because we knew that we needed fairly unlimited access to one. Lynn photographed on the stand for a year. I felt it would take a long time and should be allowed to take a long time, because a lot of the shooting involved unplanned experiments.

You need to be able to work at home or like in a painter’s studio, where you’re not working to a clock or a weekly rate or even an hourly rate. Because Lynn has worked on various other animation stands, we were quite aware of how gruelling and intimidating it would be working for so long on a rented one. You’d never be able to do the sorts of testing which would need to be processed, workprinted, looked at and assessed about how to reshoot them.

Of course, without Ray Strong’s endless support and generosity with his 35mm Mitchell animation camera on and off for a year, the film would have remained a pipedream.

It’s a different stand compared with most animation stands that you can rent. A lot of them are computer driven and have calibrations in multi-axes, but Memories & Dreams required more working with the textures, the camera shutter control, fading dissolves, multiple exposures, ripples, mattes and multi-coloured filtration – all very traditional techniques. We also needed different frame rates, so that each shot could be reshot at a unique frame rate that did not have to conform to its original 8 frames per second.

With all that sort of work required, it had to be a very user-friendly animation stand. Most of the design and construction was done by a talented friend and filmmaker, McGregor Knox.

Are some of the opticals in the film actually animation stand opticals?

DE GROOT: About half the fades and dissolves are animated, particularly the ripple dissolves and mattes.

Every shot was photographed with an animated optical transition of some sort, but during the editing some of those things had to change, such as its being better to turn a fade out into a dissolve to the next image. That was done beautifully by Kevin Williams at Digital Film Laboratories. He did wonderful work for this film.

DE GROOT: The film was shot on 35mm black-and-white movie film, except for colour in the Australian scenes and the scene in the film studio’s dressing room. Most of the scenes were photographed at 8 frames per second.

And you then printed up each of those frames?

MILBURN: A dedicated friend named Evan Clark worked for many months, blowing up about fifteen thousand 5" x 7" stills. I then registered them on an animation hole-punch and peg-bar, using the original movie film sprocket holes and frame edges that were on the prints as register-points.

And then you hand-tinted those prints?

MILBURN: Yes.

Are you planning to do another film?

MILBURN: I don’t know if that’s a good question to ask me.

DE GROOT: You see, Lynn didn’t really mean to make this one.

1 The white boots are those worn by Jo’s son as they attempt to escape Czechoslovakia through a forest at night.

Declaration: Scott Murray is an actor-cum-extra in one shot of the film (and has worked with Andrew de Groot on other projects). Other than that, he had no involvement with the film.
Pistols and THE "ART" OF FILM VS THE "SCIENCE"
By Richard Franklin

My reaction to the news that the marketing "experts" are moving in on our industry may appear to be one taken wearing only my director's cap. But I wish to say at the outset that my comments about "power politics" relate entirely to my experiences with the Hollywood infra-structure. That having also worked as a producer, my concern, on behalf of all who are creatively involved in our industry (dare I say "art form"), is that it shouldn't happen here.

LEFT: THE CONCLUDING DUEL SEQUENCE FROM ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S TOPAZ (1969) WHICH WAS CUT AFTER AN AUDIENCE TEST PREVIEW.
There’s a saying in Hollywood that, “Every dog has to piss on the
tree to make it its own.”

In 1986, I was there watching my picture Link get “whittled
down” by a succession of owner-distributors — each new one
chipping a little more away, until my wife was moved to liken the
plight of my monkey movie to that of the horse in Black Beauty.

I then had a call from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and
Sciences asking if I would assist in the cataloguing of the private film
collection of my one-time mentor, Sir Alfred Hitchcock. I agreed,
with an ulterior motive. I had been searching for some years for the
only missing Hitchcock set piece of which I’m aware — the original
ending to Topaz (1969) — in which the hero and villain duel with
pistols at dawn in a Paris soccer stadium.

Topaz is generally dismissed as a failed work, but had particular
interest for me as it was the picture on which I watched Hitchcock
at work. I was aware of his exhaustive research, which had
established that clandestine duels still took place in Paris. He had
gone to enormous trouble to show the exact protocol of the ancient
ritual (they don’t take ten paces then fire) and spent more time on
this sequence than any other in the picture, re-shooting portions of
it on three separate occasions. Imagine, therefore, my disappoint­
ment when the film arrived in Australia minus the scene which
should have been (and is) the best thing in the movie.

I made enquiries and discovered that, although Hitchcock hated
previews and normally took the view the audience could accept the
picture (or not) the way he wanted it, he agreed to preview Topaz
in San Francisco. In spite of all his efforts, there was apparently some
scattered laughter during the duel scene and a few people com­
mented they thought duelling in the present day “silly”. In this case,
truth was stranger than fiction, but, as is always the case with
previews, the negative voice of a few spoiled things for the many.

It might have been possible, for example, to stem the laughter by
preparing the audience through advance publicity. Even if Hitchcock
had not done his usual pre-release monologues, he was already at
work on a print ad which featured the duel as the centre­
piece. And an audience going to a Hitchcock picture expecting to see a pistol duel would almost certainly have behaved differently from the unprepared San Francisco
audience.

But back at the studio, Hitchcock was asked what was to be
done about the laughter and he simply ordered the entire scene removed. Such pique might sound extraordi­
nary, but presenting one’s “baby” to the world can be a
touchy thing (John Ford once removed the entire fight from the
end of The Quiet Man, 1952, because Herbert Yates said it was “a little long”). At 70, Hitchcock had gone
through the frustration of two unrealized personal projects (“Maryrose” and the original Frenzy), had accepted Topaz
as an assignment and laboured to elevate it with his own
original climactic set piece (I believe the duel was his raison d’être for doing the picture).

There was laughter at a single screening (someone may have
farted) and the man who had once tricked his producer into letting him make the first European talkie
found himself without the energy to defend his work. A
freeze frame was inserted to suggest the villain had suicided
and the rest is history — but it might not have been ...

After the television version was prepared in 1972,
Universal’s editorial department ordered all additional
material (trims, out-takes, etc.) destroyed and even the
negative of the duel scene was “junked”. The scene was gone
forever, until a can of Technicolor IB release print, which Hitchcock
had secreted in his garage, was opened at the Academy in 1986. And
both endings are now available on the MCA Faser Disc of the
picture.

I was moved by Peter Bogdanovich’s new book to buy the Voyager
Criterion CAV Laser Disc of The Magnificent Ambersons (1942),
which, with Robert Carringer’s audio essay, an entire side of Welles’
uncut screenplay, the complete storyboards and the original Mer­
cury Radio version of Ambersons is film scholarship of the highest
order.

For those who don’t know, one of the greatest tragedies in the
brief history of our art form occurred in Pomona, California, on 17
March 1942, when Orson Welles’ second film, The Magnificent
Ambersons, was previewed. His first, Citizen Kane (1941), is widely regarded as the greatest ever made, but Welles himself believed Ambersons was a better picture.

Before leaving for South America, Welles had finished a director's cut of 132 minutes. Although he described the picture as "epic", he planned further cuts (Kane's length is 119 minutes) and left on the understanding that his editor, Robert Wise, would follow with a print of the film. In his absence, the studio immediately screened his cut, removed two scenes and set up a preview.

It went poorly. There were walkouts and derisive laughter and, of 125 comment cards collected, 72 were negative. The fact that the 53 positive cards included comments like "masterpiece", "best picture I have ever seen" (while the negatives included gems like "people like to laugh", and "as bad if not worse than Citizen Kane") did not deter the studio from cutting a further 17 minutes before organizing a second preview two nights later. At this second screening, only 18 of 85 cards collected were negative, but the executives were in panic, so ordered the picture completely re-cut "with a lawn mower" (to quote Welles). A further 30 or so minutes were removed and Robert Wise made his directing debut in Welles' absence, shooting, among other things, a new (happy) ending.

Rival studio head David O. Selznick suggested to RKO that Welles' version should be copied and deposited at the Museum of Modern Art, but, far from heeding the suggestion, the new head of RKO, presumably eager to "sweep clean" (and cover his tracks), ordered some fifty minutes of Welles' footage immediately "junked".

Ambersons was released at its present 88 minutes, on the second half of a double bill with a Lupe Velez comedy entitled Mexican Spitfire Sees a Ghost (Leslie Goodwins, 1942), and, by the time Welles returned from South America, his reputation for profligacy was well and truly entrenched (the RKO publicity department having been ordered to spread anti-Welles propaganda in his absence). He was unable to get a directing job again for four years.

What remains of Ambersons certainly suggests that it (alone among Welles' films) was technically equal to Kane. I personally prefer the stately understatement evident from the very first shot to Kane's showy deconstructionism. The literally "magnificent" three-story set for the Amberson mansion makes the second-hand Xanadu sets' pale, and Stanley Cortez's rich imagery makes Greg Toland's much lauded deep-focus work look stark and almost functional by comparison.

I'll admit it's hard to believe the soap opera-like story of the "comeuppance" of the highly unlikeable George Amberson Minafer (Tim Holt) could ever have had the complexity of Kane's examination of America and its failed dream. But the novel was a Pulitzer Prize winner and Welles argued that what remains is only the prologue to a dark study of the decline of middle America, with the coming of the machine age (particularly the automobile).

Welles says he had paralleled the fall of the house of Amberson with a series of documentary sequences showing the changes in the town and it's possible these alone might have had an enormous effect. Consider, for example, how Kane's sociological perspective would be diminished with the simple excision of the "News on the March" sequence.

All but a fragment of one of these scenes and fifty minutes of what may well have at least been in "the top ten of all time" are gone - seen by a handful of executives, a few technicians, and condemned forever by 89 out of 210 members of the preview process on two nights in 1942.

One can hope a stash of negative or decayed workprint may one day emerge from a vault or garage as it did on Topaz, but, since Welles himself tried for many years to find the missing material, it seems unlikely Ambersons will ever be restored (to magnificence or otherwise). And the tragedy of a loss which might have changed the history of cinema, and of the director who got his "comeuppance" by being run down by a model train", can never be righted.

This brings me to my own experiences of the preview process and market research as I have experienced them in Hollywood.

Previews are of two basic types: paid and unpaid. Unpaid previews are either by invitation, or the picture is run along with another (two for the price of one). In the latter case, an audience who
has paid to see one movie is then asked to view and assess another, which is unfinished and may suffer by comparison—especially since few people are now used to sitting through double bills. 

But if the audience is invited, then one must question who is invited, and for what purpose? I am not against previews per se. I personally had considerable success in my pre-preview days in Australia, running my own. As a part-time lecturer, I had access to students of film (and related disciplines) who were of the moviegrowing age, but considerably more articulate (and educated in the process) than the “man on the street”. In addition to being able to ask them to fill out forms of greater length than those used by market researchers, I was able to get up in front of the group and field questions and criticisms, using the old teachers’ trick of throwing questions back on the class, so I could instantly see what others thought, and assess the breadth (or otherwise) of the problem. 

Another method I have used (I daresay most filmmakers have) is to show the unfinished picture to friends, acquaintances, business colleagues (and, most important, a broad demarcation of friends of all of the above). In this way, the feedback has a degree of objectivity, but is also able to be followed up with a fair knowledge of the personality and tastes of the person making the comment.

In spite of his dislike of formal previews, Hitchcock always used this method and had a trusted band of constructive critics he took from film to film. Buffs will be amazed to know he screened Vertigo (1958) to this group MINUS the contentious letter-writing scene which let the cat out of the bag prior to the twist ending.

Professional preview organizers, on the other hand, usually try to get a so-called “representative cross section” of total strangers, in order to avoid pre-judging the type of audience they think the picture will appeal to. Combining the shopping malls, multiplexes and their own previous audiences, they assemble the most disparate group imaginable. Not only are people who would never have come in the first place (and may even actively dislike the type of picture they’re being shown) asked to participate, but the response of ALL the minorities is judged by a sample which should never be committed to statistics (e.g., “all the one-legged jockeys felt ...”).

Advertised “sneak” previews, for which admission is charged, are thought to be better as at least they eliminate the influence of those who would never have come in the first place. However, they are considerably more costly as they require advertising. This necessitates the evolution of at least a facsimile of the advertising campaign, which opens another whole can of worms, since inevitably one is told that no one-legged jockeys turned up.

Then an argument ensues about whether the problem was the picture or the ad.

I’m no statistician, but, with previews, I believe it is necessary to try and minimize the advertising variable. However, from experience, movie advertising is a law unto itself and one finds oneself debating the even bigger question of whether advertising should reflect the form and content of the “product”, or whether all that matters is whether or not it “works”. This would be fine except that the effect of preview advertising which is “dishonest” is that you can get an entire audience of the people you wanted to avoid—who would never have come to the picture in the first place.

Further, one can provoke hostility by asking an audience to pay for something which may genuinely still be unfinished AND for the privilege of filling out forms. And those who are motivated by temporary advertising to join the elite group who will be the first to see a new movie may not be in any way representative of the picture’s eventual audience.

But whether the preview is invited, advertised, paid or unpaid, it is obvious that people respond differently when invited to be critical of a work which is represented as being “in progress”—especially when it is so new they do not have the benefit of advance criticism or word of mouth.

“Everyone is a critic” (or, if you prefer, “everyone knows his/her job AND how to make movies”). But the idea of inviting people who do not understand the movie-making process to give their opinion of how a picture might be changed is like asking them off the street to try a little amateur brain surgery.

This is the first major problem I see in the preview process as practised by the “experts” – BEGGING THE QUESTION.

ABOVE: PREVIEW COMMENT CARD FOR ROAD GAMES.
9 JANUARY 1981. RIGHT: TWO TABLES OF DATA SUMMARY—MOVIES REDUCED TO A NUMBER.

MAIN RESULTS

**RATINGS FOR ROAD GAMES WERE NOT OUTSTANDING, BUT WERE FAVORABLE.**

The UA 4 AUDIENCE PROFILE (Table 1) shows that ROAD GAMES was rated below most recent benefit hits, but was compared favorably to comparable fads that last year had considerable boxoffice success in the marketplace. See also the COMPARATIVE HISTORICAL DATA on page 11.

The AUDIENCE PROFILE further shows that the UA 4 crowd was a very typical suburban audience.

**RATINGS WERE STRONGEST AMONG THOSE UNDER 25, BUT HELD UP WELL AMONG THE OLDER GROUP.**

See Table 4 for details.

**THE AUDIENCE WAS DOMINATED BY THOSE WHO SAID THEY CAME ONLY OR MAINLY TO SEE FIRST FAMILY.**

Only 213 (44 people) reported they came “only or mainly to see ROAD GAMES.” (See Table 3.) The ROAD GAMES print ad cannot, therefore, take credit for the turnout. (FIRST FAMILY was still strong at the UA 4. Total Friday gross for Screen #2 was $1046. The Saturday gross the following day for FIRST FAMILY alone was $1300, with the regular 8:30 show sold out.)

Those who came “only or mainly to see ROAD GAMES” did rate the movie somewhat higher than the audience as a whole, but they were too small a proportion of the full audience for this result to be statistically meaningful. (See Table 4.)

**PROBLEMS WITH THE MOVIE. (See Table 5.)**

On the positive side: Great majorities said the beginning grabbed their attention, that the last part was exciting, and that the ending (i.e., the resolution of the story) was satisfying. Almost no one thought the entire movie was boring or too long, and audience confusion (often a problem with murder mysteries) was minor.

On the negative side: The one important criticism was that some parts of the movie moved too slowly. That slow movement was not an advantage, since the film was done in almost one long take. That slowdown was due to an overwhelming problem, however, it was shown by the large majority who disagreed with the statement that “many parts of the movie moved too slowly.”

(COMPARE: Based on our experience, this result means that at least some improvement in audience response—in word-of-mouth—would almost certainly come from cutting unnecessary material from the first part of the movie.)

See page 10 for a full discussion.
In the type of preview I used to run, there were two types of audience member—the good ones came with an open mind, the bad ones with a clipboard, flashlight and supply of pens (on one occasion I removed same from an associate, asking if, on his first exposure to the picture, he wouldn’t mind watching the screen).

But at organized previews, audiences are told ahead of time that we want input. On one occasion, I had to threaten to leave if a pretext disclaimer was not removed from the head of the picture. The card said something like:

We are not sure whether or not the picture is finished, and we want YOUR suggestions for ways in which it could be improved.

This half-assed approach is my second complaint: it pre-supposes (a) the creative process is entirely one of bumbling trial and error; (b) that the only possible outcome of the preview is to change the picture; and (c) that the only worthwhile feedback is NEGATIVE.

People are already insecure enough about their opinions. While decision may be cause for concern, nervous laughter seems to me a pretty natural reaction to the process; at the other extreme, the first preview of the Marx Brothers’ Night at the Opera (Sam Wood, 1935) got none. It is a source of continued wondernment to me that even friends trying to offer a compliment still feel compelled to the obligatory, “The only thing I didn’t like was...”, as if I’ll think they wishfully that the man who walked out of his soliloquy in To Be or Not to Be (1942) may have been dying, I cannot help but think that Ernst Lubitsch was referring to previews. “Walk outs” are the worst, and, since the process deals only in negatives, I have found this most damning of statistics. Most executives are still of the pre·

Worse of all are those who wait till the movie starts to decide to buy pop-corn, need a drink to counteract the salt on it, then cannot make it through to the finale because of poor bladder control. I’ve followed them into the lobby and even made conversation at adjacent urinals in order to counter the fact that their anonymous silent action is given more credence than Pauline Kael (indeed, real critics are actively despised by executives and distributors), but this sort of thoughtless behaviour is allowed to have real impact on the creative process.

Next come the statistics. Audience members are asked to identify their gender, age group, etc., then to rate the picture and the various performances by checking boxes ranging from EXCELLENT to POOR. Number values are assigned to each, converted to percentages and compared (arbitrarily) to every other movie ever tested.

To be ready to respond to the “statisticians”, who sit in the lobby whipping through the cards like tellers counting money, then holding a finger aloft to reduce a year’s work to a “fifty three”, or decimate an actor’s entire career with a “twenty two”, you flip feverishly through the discards and work out that a high percentage rated your picture “good to very good”. But for some inexplicable reason, the “experts” say, “We don’t count good—and only x% rated it excellent.” So you ask why they bother to put “good” on the form, if it’s considered meaningless in a world of advertising hype, and wonder if an audience asked to rate a film about Mary McIllop or Mother Teresa might not use the word “good” out of preference to the adjective in the title of Bill & Ted’s Excellent Adventure (Stephen Herek, 1989).

This is as far as it goes on the night, but as you head for your car or Lear jet, you watch the paranoia set in among the “suits”—the distributors and executives who have their money and/or jobs on the line—and act as if you don’t.

A day or so later, the “experts” have produced a bound document, and everyone is on tenter-hooks waiting for their crystal ball predictions. All the statistics have been analyzed and they start

### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Summary</th>
<th>The UA 4 Cerritos (Screen #1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theater Capacity</td>
<td>317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid Attendance at ROAD GAMES</td>
<td>252*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of (Usable) Comment Cards Returned</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Response</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Respondents Who Came “Only or Mainly to See ROAD GAMES”</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a % of Total Respondents</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROAD GAMES RATING: TOTAL AUDIENCE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% “Excellent” Ratings</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% “Excellent” plus “Very Good” Ratings</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Average Rating</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Under 25</td>
<td>3.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>All 25 or over</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Males</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Females</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROAD GAMES RATING: THOSE WHO CAME “ONLY OR NEARLY THE ROAD GAMES”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% “Excellent” Ratings</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% “Excellent” plus “Very Good” Ratings</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Average Rating</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Thirty-five seats were filled by Avco reservation and we counted 30 vacant seats near the end of the preview (117-15-20 = 255). The management, however, reported 297 tickets sold for Screen #2 between 8:00 and 9:00 p.m., indicating that some people bought tickets but were discouraged when they got there by available seating only at the front.**

### Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Summary</th>
<th>At the UA 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Movie</td>
<td>Number of Responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE JAZZ SINGER</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORDINARY PEOPLE</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE ELEPHANT MAN</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAR WARS</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRIVATE BENJAMIN</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAGING BULL</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLASH GORDON</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EVERY WHICH WAY YOU CAN</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NINE TO FIVE</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROAD GAMES</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STIX CRAZY</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OH GOD BOOK II</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEEMS LIKE OLD TIMES</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAR TREK</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POPEYE</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HONEYSTICK ROSE</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>XANADU</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CADILLAC</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIRPLANE</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE MAZE LAGOON</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GALAXISA</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>A CHANGE OF SEASONS</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIRST FAMILY</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE MIRROR CRACKED</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOTEL HELL</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Based on the 5-point scale where 5 is highest and 1 is lowest. NOTE HERE: Small samples in many cases make this data ILLUSTRATIVE ONLY.**
Talking about the “skew” away from one-legged jockeys, or the fact that the one octogenarian in the audience had his pencil break and the butterfly effect this may have in Poughkeepsie.

Most of the card is multiple choice, easily converted to statistics though it should be observed that objective answers are only as good as the alternatives given. On F/X 2, despite my protests, they were given the choice of two alternatives: “TOO VIOLENT” or “GOOD AND VIOLENT” – a comment on the American psyche perhaps, yet no reference was made to what I felt was the picture’s major strength, its humour.

But the card ends with a half page that cannot be interpreted statistically as the audience is asked to list the scenes they like and dislike, usually prefaced with leading questions about “pace” and “boredom”. Using phone follow-ups – whereby people who answer ads for part-time marketing work (and have generally not even seen the picture) call the more outspoken audience members and discuss ways in which the picture might be changed (the blind leading the blind) – problem areas are supposedly identified. But as with the walk outs, one “don’t like” outweighs three “likes”, so virtually every scene which stands out is under threat.

Last, there are four or five lines headed “comments”. Although filmmakers say they take no notice of critics, I have personally read every card from every preview I’ve ever had. But I’ve never known distributors or executives to go beyond the “expert” analysis and allow supervision of a cut then, according to status, to one or more assistants.23 You would assume this would be comparative: i.e., if there were a number of “play offs”, scores would be compared and the best version would win. But since editing on film is, as already observed, like whittling,24 and since by definition the director hands over the picture at the preview, the attitude seems to be “let the director have his screenings, then we’ll do what we want”. It is a rare executive who like Darryl Zanuck, in the face of bad cards and laughter at the preview, makes a determination, then we’ll do what we want”. It is a rare executive who like Darryl Zanuck, in the face of bad cards and laughter at the preview, makes a determination, then we’ll do what we want”. It is a rare executive who like Darryl Zanuck, in the face of bad cards and laughter at the preview, makes a determination, then we’ll do what we want”. It is a rare executive who like Darryl Zanuck, in the face of bad cards and laughter at the preview, makes a determination, then we’ll do what we want”. It is a rare executive who like Darryl Zanuck, in the face of bad cards and laughter at the preview, makes a determination, then we’ll do what we want”. It is a rare executive who like Darryl Zanuck, in the face of bad cards and laughter at the preview, makes a determination, then we’ll do what we want”. It is a rare executive who like Darryl Zanuck, in the face of bad cards and laughter at the preview, makes a determination, then we’ll do what we want”. It is a rare executive who like Darryl Zanuck, in the face of bad cards and laughter at the preview, makes a determination, then we’ll do what we want”. It is a rare executive who like Darryl Zanuck, in the face of bad cards and laughter at the preview, makes a determination, then we’ll do what we want”. It is a rare executive who like Darryl Zanuck, in the face of bad cards and laughter at the preview, makes a determination, then we’ll do what we want”.

For most directors, however, the Director’s Guild contract allows supervision of a cut then, according to status, to one or more previews.21 You would assume this would be comparative: i.e., if there were a number of “play offs”, scores would be compared and the best version would win. But since editing on film is, as already observed, like whittling,22 and since by definition the director hands over the picture at the preview, the attitude seems to be “let the director have his screenings, then we’ll do what we want”.

There’s a Hollywood story (probably apocryphal) of a director who persuades the studio to give him an extra preview away from Hollywood. He’s so protective of his version he carries it to the airport and books an extra seat so he doesn’t have to let it out of his sight. They take off and he’s momentarily relieved, until the in-flight movie starts and it’s his picture – the studio’s version.

Making a film is an excruciatingly drawn-out process of day-to-day, shot-to-shot, frame-to-frame minutiae. When I visit someone else’s set, Igenerally can’t see the difference between the first and last take. And even on my own set, when the camera’s not rolling, I often have to ask my assistant which of the army of technicians we’re prepared to pay) – can be known by anyone who wants to hire them. But “FINAL CUT” is something no one admits to not having (the double negative is deliberately obtuse).

In spite of The Bridge on the River Kwai (1957), David Lean can’t have had it on Lawrence of Arabia (1962) or they wouldn’t have got all that mileage out of restoring it. In spite of Alien (1979), Ridley Scott can’t have had it on Blade Runner (1982). And in spite of Platoon (1986), if Oliver Stone had it on JFK (1991), there wouldn’t be a laser version of his “Director’s Cut”.18 I would guess Spielberg had it after Jaws (1975), lost it after 1941 (1979), regained it with Raiders of the Lost Ark (1981), lost it with The Color Purple (1985) and almost certainly has it on Schindler’s List (1993).

But even if a director had it, I wonder who would be willing to assert it, especially in the face of the preview process? Terry Gilliam did, when Universal wanted to change Brazil (1985) for the U.S. and ended up making his next picture in Rome.20 Hitchcock was probably the most consistently successful director in history, not only producing his own pictures, but, by the 1950s, all rights in Vertigo and his Paramount pictures reverted to him personally. By the time he made Topaz, he was the third largest stakeholder in MCA, Universal’s parent company. So if he didn’t have clout, I don’t know who did.

"The Beginning Grabbed My Attention" Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Base**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The beginning grabbed my attention</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some parts moved too slowly</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many parts moved too slowly</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some parts were confusing</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many parts were confusing</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The last part was exciting</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ending was satisfying</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The entire movie was boring</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The movie was too long</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I liked the music</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The movie was scary</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Those who did not respond to this question are excluded from the percentage calculation.
director loses his/her voice – in the name of “objectivity”. “You’re too close to it” they say, while studying second-hand accounts of the barely coherent scrplings of total strangers.

I believe that the fact that the director and the editor have been in the trenches with the picture for so long gives them a better idea of its strengths – and weaknesses. And far from being too close, the extreme subjectivity of “creatives” should be harnessed.

Billy Wilder cut the opening of Sunset Boulevard and Frank Capra talks at length in his book about cutting the entire first reel of Lost Horizon as a consequence of the agony he went through at a preview. He argues that those directly involved in the creative process are acutely sensitive to every ripple and movement in the audience and that previews have to be endured and analyzed from one’s intimate knowledge of the material. Following his model, I make a point of never screening even rough-cuts alone, since I’ve found that when I’m anxious to get to the next scene, there’s something wrong with the one we’re watching. For when a scene’s playing well, I want it to go on forever.

I submit the notion of “objectivity” is a furphy – a weapon used in power politics. Objectivity as opposed to what – passion, sensitivity, knowledge of the material? It could be argued that executives, who also sign on at script level (often before the director), are not objective either. But since it is they who pay the market researchers, it’s not surprising the objectivity argument is endorsed by “experts”, who are the very soul of it – being about as far away from the making of the picture as you can get.

David Niven once described critics as “eunuchs in a brothel” – they watch all the time but couldn’t for the life of them do it. As noted, critics are reviled by movie executives and distributors, yet market researchers, who are far more destructive (since they deal with the picture before it is finished, and cannot justify their existence by saying that it should be left alone), are treated as if they know the whereabouts of the holy grail. Directors are treated like they lost it.

The “experts” earn their money by de-mystifying the whole process, turning a complex collaborative art form into a set of numbers (which are then re-mystified by them into a secret formula with which they alone know how to turn dross into gold). They’re objective because they’ve been standing at the back, going in and out of the screening, readying forms, sharpening pencils, counting walk-outs or not even that. And if distance from the creative process is regarded as a good thing, then in the competitive world of market research it’s almost an advantage to ignore the picture, since it’s then easier to act omniscient (or at least blasé). Distributors and executives do it by taking phone calls all through screenings. Market researchers do it by acting like they’ve seen it all; like they do this every night of the week; like they were the ones who did the market research on E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial (Steven Spielberg, 1982) and know the secret of what made Star Wars (George Lucas, 1977) work.

Well, market research may be okay for pet food and soap powder, but not with something as complex as a motion picture. Here are a few stories the “experts” don’t tell:

In 1977, Twentieth Century-Fox acquired an independent “pick-up” made in England. After research, they asked the producer-director to change its title, because market research held there were two words which were absolute poison at the box office: “war” and “star”.

After market research on “Night Skies”, the script for the sequel to Columbia’s top-grossing picture of that year, Close Encounters of the Third Kind (Steven Spielberg, 1977), the “experts” recommended the project be put into “turnaround”27. Spielberg took it to Universal and made E.T.

Coincidentally, in the same year, Columbia held one of the most successful previews ever – for The Wiz (1978). To my knowledge, its scores have only been bettered by one picture since, Richard Brooks’ Wrong is Right (1982). In both cases, they were wrong.

Which brings me to my fourth and final beef with the process: The assumption that to any perceived problem there’s only one solution (always negative) – CUT.

If there really IS a problem, there are several POSITIVE options. Re-writing, -casting and -shooting are all expensive (especially on Australian films, where the producer has been encouraged to auction every prop and costume that’s not nailed down before post-production even starts). But from my experience, even the possibility of the relatively inexpensive option of post-syncing is generally overlooked as the distributors start making proclamations like “the CORRECT length for this type of picture is ...” and the executives round on the director and editor with scissors in their eyes.

Imagine arguing that an abridged novel was always better than the “unabridged”, or that a “condensation” was so superior to the original that the manuscript and all copies should be destroyed. As crazy as it sounds, this is the modern Hollywood credo.

After the preview, the term “less is more” takes on new and horrifying proportions and P. T. Barnum’s maxim “no one ever went broke by underestimating the American public” rules. The “experts” start talking about Saturday morning television and how audiences are either “smarter” or “dumber” (according to their argument) than when any relevant picture, of which you quote the running time, was made.

Any suggestion that adding material that has already been removed may solve a problem is seen as further evidence of creative “indulgence”. And “cutting” in the hands of a committee is a one-way process – “down”.

As the whittling begins, “doesn’t further the plot” is the catchcry, and the shadings, nuances and grace notes start to disappear. And since any writer worth his/her salt usually furthers the plot with at least one plot point per scene, the plot too starts to unravel as the threads of “indulgence” are pulled at. By now the committee knows the picture so well that phrases like “we don’t need that” and “the
audience can make that jump” start to creep in; pretty soon the horse
becoming a very small camel. To quote Welles on Ambersons:
“Using the argument of not central to the plot, what they took out was
the plot.”
With the process at its worst, the committee can only finally pull
out of its downward spiral when the running time has reached some
notional minimum (a running time of under 90 minutes might
suggest to the rest of the industry there were problems). Usually by
then, even directors who have stayed aboard have totally lost their
voice. Many abandon ship, some are seduced to stay with arguments
like “You can either help us, or we’ll do it without you”29, or the lock
on the editing room door is changed.30
The final absurdity of the process is that once the picture has been
“fixed”, even the market researchers (who would otherwise tell you
the more times you paid them the better) do not ever suggest trying
the end result on an audience.
To sum up, let me illustrate the “science” of the preview with an
analogy: If motion pictures were dishes in a restaurant and "experts"
were sent among the diners with the mandate that any
ingredient that anyone was even slightly dubious about would be
removed from the kitchen, the only thing left on the menu would be
“two all-beef patties, special sauce, lettuce, cheese, pickles, onions
– on a sesame seed bun”.
And I’ve yet to meet an Australian who likes the pickles.

In the hands of those who are creatively involved in the filmmaking
process, previews (formal or informal) are an extremely useful tool.
But market research as a pawn (rook, bishop, knight, queen or king)
in a game of power politics can be extraordinarily destructive.
“Creatives” should be given at least an equal voice in the process
as their interpretation of the data is uniquely informed.
If the process breaks down, play the different versions off, letting
mutually acceptable “audiences” decide. But in case history proves
them wrong, keep the elements of the other cuts for posterity.

Editor’s Note: The Australian Film Commission is presenting a seminar on test
screenings on 6,7,8 December in Sydney. For further information contact Sally
Dray on (02) 951 6404.-

1 Made in England for Thorn EMI. With the demise of that company, Link
(along with the rest of its library) passed through the hands of Universal,
Alan Rill, Golas & Globus, and Jerry Weintraub, before coming to rest
(minus some 15 minutes) within which framework the feedback I
would offer to show each new owner my “director’s cut”, but they insisted
on seeing the previous owner’s cut-down – then they’d cut it down further.
My version was shown only once, at the Avoriaz Festival in France, where
it won the Jury Prize.
2 This is Orson Welles, Orson Welles and Peter Bogdanovich, edited by
3 Welles was to direct the omnibus documentary It’s All True for the
Whitney-Rockefeller Committee for Inter-American Affairs, the same
group which sponsored Disney’s Three Caballeros (Norman Ferguson,
1945).
4 With the U.S. entry into World War II, a civilian could not get a plane back
to the U.S. Welles stayed in South America and, against the odds, finished
shot on It’s All True. To its death, he was told this film (much of it in
Technicolor) had been dumped, unprocessed, in the ocean. After his death,
Paramount donated 280,000 feet of uncut negative to the American Film
Institute, where it waits for someone to try and piece it together.
5 The enormous fire-place centrepiece of the jigsaw-puzzle scene, for exam­
ple, was actually from John Ford’s My Scotland of 1936.
6 Even in its present form, The Magnificent Ambersons has been a regular on
Sight and Sound’s once-in-a-decade “10 Best” list. In 1972, it rated equal
ninith; in 1982, eighth (Citizen Kane was the no. 1 film each time).
Ambersons dropped out of the top ten in 1992, but still has a lot of support
and Welles again came out as the most-favoured director of critics. See Sight
7 Welles once called Hollywood the best model train set a kid ever got to play
with. [Ed.: Jean-Luc Godard also said, “May we be accursed if we ever
forget that Welles, along with Griffith, started up the little train that was
the movies. We will always owe him everything.”]
8 The first Magnificent Ambersons preview was with a Dorothy Lamour
musical, The Fleet’s In (Victor Schertzinger, 1942). No wonder there was
“laffter”.
9 I tried this method in Hollywood during the whitling of Link. Borrowing a
USC cinema class, I got an entirely different reading of the picture, but
when this was shown to the “experts”, it was dismissed with, “What d’ya
expect when you talk to f**ing film-buffs?”
10 Hitchcock argues in Truffaut’s book, among others, that this scene was
integral to his concept and he NEVER wavered.
11 The sample is actually NOT representative, but skewed to the demography
of the movie audience of predominantly under 25s. The entirely different
demographic of the two market (now three times world box office) is
therefore in the hands of no more than a handful of people. I’ve been told,
for example, that “women over 50 think such and such”, when I’m aware
only one such person attended.
12 I complained about the execution of temporary artwork for the preview of
Cloak & Dagger (1984), which suggested Dabney Coleman as a pastry chef
molesting Henry Thomas in a public lavatory.
13 AVCO on the other hand spent the money on final artwork for the
Roadgames (1981) preview. Though beautifully executed, it apparently
suggested an S&0 miker movie (the ad actually drew fire in the local paper
when we previewed the picture). And in spite of changes to the film (made
behind my back), once the money had been spent on the ad, this feedback
was never received and the picture went out with the ad unchanged.
14 I recall one card emblazoned with the words “projectionists union #73 are
cock-suckers”. And this disturbed individual’s opinions went into the
statistical pot along with the rest.
15 I commend readers to The Two Ronnies (Barker and Corbett) sketch about
the fellow effusing about a play at intermission and being intimidated into
hating it by a professional critic.
16 The Director’s Guild contract entitied me to two previews. So if I’d left one
of “my” previews, it would have cost them about $10,000 for another (a sort
of mistrail by dismissing the jürors).
17 Such was the confidence of the head of their new studio, Irving Thalberg,
that it went out unchanged. And brought the house down.
18 At Universal, they said they liked to preview with “real people”. Las Vegas
was one of the “real” places within range and we met at a private strip
at six, went by Lear jet and limo to a restaurant overlooking the theatre,
where we were notified when they were ready to start. We were thus able to
eat, slip in and out of the “real world” and be back in Hollywood before
midnight.
19 For those who don’t know, laser is currently a treasure trove of such things
and presents a possible saviour for the director’s vision – or any other for that
matter. With digital editing, we may yet live to see “the exec-producer’s
wife’s cut”.
20 There’s a laser “Director’s Cut” of The Fisher King (Terry Gilliam, 1991),
I would argue this procedure is one of the reasons that previews have become
the battlefront – though it’s possible that without it the front would just
move back to the cutting room.
21 With modern computer editing (tape, laser and digital), all cuts can co-exist.
22 He was vindicated, but in this case may have had his “creativity” on the line,
since John Ford began only two weeks before shooting. A few years later,
Zanuck did the opposite to the Ford-initiated My Darling Clementine
(1946).
23 William Holden, as a corpse in the morgue, sits up and begins the narration
provided that, IF it is produced, those who funded it are reimbursed for out-
24 In the hands of those who are creatively involved in the filmmaking

20 - CINEMA PAPERS 95
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
John Dingwall is a much-lauded figure of the Australian film industry for his script of *Sunday Too Far Away* (Ken Hannam, 1975). It is not only one of the finest films of the 1970s renaissance, but one of the most loving and accurate portrayals of outback mateship. Dingwall's next script, for *Buddies* (Arch Nicholson, 1983), continued the analysis of mateship with the story of sapphire miners in an outback Queensland town, where the modern forces of market capitalism confront some older Australian virtues. In 1990, Dingwall changed tack with the psychological thriller, *Phobia*, which he also directed. It gained some favourable notices but had a troubled release, as did its predecessor. Dingwall's latest production, *The Custodian*, is a return to a study of mateship. Anthony LaPaglia stars as James Quinlan, the one honest cop in a corrupt police force. At an emotional and moral ground zero, he fights back with every trick he can muster.
As I came on set yesterday, it was the second day of the ICAC inquiry into police corruption. Obviously it is a very topical issue right now. Was it as current an issue when you started the script?

The truth is there has been quite a deal of investigation into Australian police forces for some years. I am an ex-police roundsman – newspaper journalist – and that’s been my observation.

We haven’t used any actual incidents in The Custodian, however. We have created our own police force and, indeed, almost our own city. This story is representative of any major city in the world; it is not specific to an Australian city.

The one thing that does make the situation different to any other country’s is that the thing Australians value so highly – mateship – has become perverted. It has been used to protect the guilty cops, even by cops who aren’t corrupt. Because of mateship, they will not say a word.

Is Quinlan, then, the “custodian” of our morals?
Precisely. Quinlan is not corrupt, but has turned a blind eye. In the end, he judges himself as guilty as the corrupt policeman.

As we begin our story, Quinlan’s parents are dead, his marriage is busting up and he’s an extremely isolated man. Like most of us in times of stress, he searches for a philosophy with which he can survive. That’s why he begins to read and why he begins to question for the first time in 15 to 20 years his rôle as a policeman. He realizes he should have been the custodian of the law.

**So the film is a moral tale within the thriller genre?**

I hope it is. I’m very aware that we make films to excite an audience, and that it has to have a really strong story which moves quickly. But, yes, there is a moral tone to it.

**Was there a trigger in the development and writing of the script?**

Oh, yes. It is very clear for me.

I wanted to make a film about individual responsibility because I think, in the end, we as Australians have this habit of blaming the government and everybody else; we never blame ourselves. We are responsible for everything that happens to us. We have had the film industry we’ve deserved. We are responsible for it and everything that happens to it. My film is really about individual responsibility.

Quinlan decides that the responsibility is his. He has taken the job as policeman; he is “the custodian”; he has the responsibility not to be corrupt and to bring down people who are.

Now, over and above wanting to make that story about individual responsibility, there’s the business of the technique of making a film that people want to see. When *Phobia* was shown in competition at the Salsomaggiore Festival in Italy, I realized in the context of this very arts-orientated festival that my way is not the art-house way. My style is actually of the mainstream and I’m stuck with it.

So, what I set out to do was to make *The Custodian* satisfy the mainstream without compromising the story. I had to develop the technique to do it.

**Is *The Custodian* also a vehicle for you to editorialize on a politically hot potato?**

I suppose it is. As a nation, we have to come to terms with a lot of moral issues.

We have to understand that a police force is there to protect the rights of the people. What’s happening in police forces is what happened generally in Australian society over the past decade. We were motivated by greed.

In the 1950s, ’60s and ’70s, we had in Australia a strong moral base. In the 1980s, that went down the gurgler. I think that now, just for disparate reasons of pure survival, we have to look at our own moral values. Our advantage is that we are young and youthful as a country. We can turn around and do that. Things are not entrenched.

I think, for example, that war is becoming increasingly perceived as obscene. If you look at most of the wars in the world at the moment, they are happening within countries. Less and less are countries going to war against one another. That idea has become not only obscene but quite stupid to even consider.

With *The Custodian*, we have also tried to reflect in our casting the ethnic racial mix of Australia. (We had a wonderful casting agent in Alison Barrett.) There is the full spectrum of the ethnic Australian compilation of people. That is one of the things we have to come to terms with in this country. We have to stop judging people by their race and colour.

Almost all Australian television, and many films, portray a very white Australia.

I don’t want to shake a stick at anybody, and I don’t really care what other people do. But what I do think, purely as a filmmaker, is that to cast an ethnic race makes for an exciting film.

I have Gosia Dobrowolska as Josie, the chief of staff. She’s a great actress, and she’s there for that reason.

**With no explanation as to why she’s there?**

Well, when Michael Caine plays in an American film, we don’t question his cockney accent. Why do we have to do it here? Why do we have a character say, “Yes, I have an American father and an Australian mother.” That’s all silly and part of our past.

**Is there a rôle for a filmmaker to play in society?**

Very much so. We are aware of how important film is. We go and see film, we read about it, it’s with us all the time. It continually amazes me how important the business of telling stories has been through all the ages. Film is just the modern form of storytelling.

When telling what I regard to be a true story, my personal responsibility is to use the devices that relate to truth. When I’m telling a fantasy, I must define what that fantasy is. In the past, people have got into a lot of trouble by being fooled by filmmakers, by thinking the fantasy they are watching is actually true — such as the usage of guns and the romanticized business of killing.

I am trying to define what I’m doing and keep to the truth of that. I will pull back rather than go into something that happens in an exaggerated way. I will remind myself that my frame has to be within the boundaries of truth and reality.

When you do a drama, you can’t recreate life. You are creating a story and it’s not exactly what has happened anywhere. We have not based *The Custodian* on any particular cops or situation; we have created our own story. But there is truth in it.

**What are some of the other key elements of your approach to this film?**

When I go to the movies, I’m waiting for the filmmaker to make a mistake in terms of plot or character. I think to myself the character wouldn’t do that, he wouldn’t know that, he wouldn’t have that relationship. I’m aware of those things all the time.

We had a scene last night where Quinlan is going through a lot
of hard times; he's emotionally in a very poor way. He arrives home by himself, takes off his shoes and then his gun, and puts it on the table. As he's on the sofa watching television, he looks down at the gun. Now the thought is: "If I were dead, who would care?"

When I was setting this scene up, I could have gone for a situation where he had the gun in his hand. In fact, someone suggested that would be a better shot. But it's too strong. Quinlan is not about the kill himself. So it's a cheap trick, an easy shot, and in this story you have to avoid the cheap trick.

You sound as though there are a lot of disciplined, reasoned and rational foundations for your filmmaking. How do you actually work with such discipline?

I play games with myself to get work done. Fortunately, I'm fairly fast. I wrote Phobia in a week.

Usually, I put down a draft in a week. I try to write 10-12 pages a day and, when I'm really into my characters, I can write 20-30 a day. I'll lock myself away and take no telephone calls. Sometimes I'll sleep three times during the day, and then just get up and keep going.

At the end of the week, if I've written a screenplay, I'll sit there and tell myself how wonderful I am to have written it in a week. I sit there and say "You are wonderful! I don't give a damn whether it's good or not, you have done this!"

One of things I've also learnt in recent years is to give each draft to people whose intelligence or opinion I respect. I tell them I'm not interested in what they like about it, just what bores them. I don't look for solutions; I just want to know.

Actually, there is a wonderful consistency in the responses. We have basically the same reaction to a film, whether it's good or bad.

I then think about everybody's comments and do another draft.

Apparently, you also took a draft to New York and workshopped it with some writers.

You think from the perspective of Australia that we're at the edge of the planet, a long way away from the centre of things. When you get to New York, you say to yourself, "My god, I don't want to live like this. But what's the point of making a film that isn't relevant to the people here?"

So, while I was in New York, I arranged a workshop of a dozen American writers. I asked them to read the script and then had this script conference in the hotel room. I told them I was well down the path and I wanted them to talk about whether this story was relevant to them. Now, it's very difficult to say to another writer I don't like your script - though that doesn't worry me - I just wanted them to talk about it.

The main comment was: "Why would somebody like Quinlan put himself at risk to do this?" It really amazed me, because in this genre of American films guys are always doing these individual acts. What those writers were really saying to me was, "We accept that what you've written is true. And if it is true, why would he put himself at risk?"

I then gave the example of Donald McKay, the guy in Griffith, as to why people put themselves at risk. McKay was warned of what he was doing and then he payed the ultimate price. Why did he do that?

Now, when I put this to the American writers, they looked at me a little bemused, because I was relating my script to actuality and to truth. They said, "Yes, but why would your character do it?" I thought, "Hah, here's a solution" and said, "You've just had a war in the Middle East. Not many Americans died, but they were prepared to." And the guys said, "Ah! To start with, the soldiers are better fed and there's money and they are off the street by being in the army and going over there. Secondly, if they didn't, they'd have gone to gaol. That's their motivation." I went, "Oh ... okay!"

They were right. So I did another draft of the script in New York. I made the motivation for the Quinlan character much stronger.

I then met with my lead actor, Anthony LaPaglia, and had two 14-hour work sessions in the hotel. He actually turned to me at one stage and said, "This is why you become a star in this country - to have an opportunity to work like this with a director."

On what basis did you get the writers together?

I just asked them!

Did you know them?

No, just through some writer contacts in New York. I worked through that process, very informally.

Would you do that again?

Oh, yes. It was the most wonderful night. When we got into it, we began to talk about writing and whatever. The first ones had already left, but, while I was standing at the door talking to others, they came back and we kept talking for half an hour or more. It was really fascinating.

The language of filmmaking is international, and they loved the script, which was really nice.

You speak of wanting Australian films to have relevance internationally. Can you define what you mean by that?

What we have done in the past in Australia is try and create a transatlantic accent, and import overseas stars and scripts. I don't think that works. If you are true to your craft, and true to the business of making good films, it will be relevant.

In Australia, we have been untrue to our craft. You have to make a film for the audience, whereas we were making films for 10 years for the tax business. That's when we became not relevant.

Basically what happens to us as people is the same the world over, whether it's my own experience or someone's in a primitive society. And the business of storytelling is to observe, have an opinion and then tell that story.
But you also said you wanted to take the opportunity of talking to writers in New York so you could make it relevant to people there.

When you rewrite a script, you try to make your story better. The more opinion you get about that, the better.

It's easy to misinterpret what I was doing there. I didn't ask them how to make the film a box-office success in New York. I was asking how the detail, the meat of the story, was relevant to their lives.

Because they are writers, they were able to have a sophisticated conversation with me in those terms. They were able to talk as I would about their scripts. I can see an American film and talk about the relevance of it.

In Australia, we are not paying enough attention to our craft, as though we are selling out. American and English writers work very much like actors and directors. It's a continual process; if they are not making films, they are working. We don't do that, because of the "she'll be right on the day, mate" attitude. The reason I did 17 drafts of The Custodian is because draft 16 wasn't good enough.

Four years ago I deliberately set out to solve my problems as a scriptwriter. I wanted to come up with the most stunning story. I wanted to be sure that when I went to New York whomever I gave the script to would say it was a very strong.

I'm in the business of raising money, so that was one of my key elements. They might not have given me the money, but they would have actually had the regret, at least, because it was a strong story.

One of the things about Australian filmmaking is that our stories haven't been strong enough. We've asked the audience to bring a lot to the cinema, and that happened with Sunday Too Far Away. I actually remember showing the film to a group of international writers who were here for a conference, and they said at the end, "We think it was a great story, but we didn't understand very much of it." That was because I was using such terms as "go an' get stuffed, mate!" And as they were trying to figure that one out, I was hitting them with another colloquialism of the Australian language.

So my process all the time today is to think about the audience, to think about what I'm doing in terms of telling my story.

The top-grossing Australian films of recent times are Geoffrey Wright's Romper Stomper and Baz Luhrmann's Strictly Ballroom. Both are vibrantly told, strong, contemporary stories with clear moral elements: the individual against conformity in Strictly Ballroom, and the alienation of suburban youth and neo-Nazi gangs in suburban Melbourne in Romper Stomper.

Do you think these films signal a new watershed in Australian filmmaking?

A watershed not only in Australian filmmaking, but in world filmmaking.

I have been saying to whomever would listen for the past two years that our best five years as filmmakers are ahead of us. Almost to my own surprise, when I saw Strictly Ballroom I thought, "This is the first." (I haven't seen Romper Stomper yet.)

We are at a point in time where we have incredible energy. We are going to be one of the leading filmmakers in the western world for the next decade or so.

When I was writing television in the 1970s — Homicide, Division 4, Matlock Police — we were all so hungry to make feature films that there was this incredible energy. We didn't know how to, and there was this big problem of American domination, but we did it — almost out of naivety. I certainly did Sunday Too Far Away from a sense of naivety.

In the 1980s, we lost the plot. I was one of the people who was highly critical of the tax films and felt that all they did was train our technicians. While that's fine in itself, it is not what our country's film industry is really about.

What has happened now, as we go into the 1990s, is that we have wonderful technicians and actors, we once again realize that box office is important and we are putting a lot more work into the screenplays. Add to that the energy which relates to our youth as a country, and we stand in good stead.

I am really excited about the next five years and intend to make quite a lot of films. I think a lot of people will be making a lot of very good films.

1 Interview recorded before the release of The Piano (Jane Campion, 1993) and The Heartbreak Kid (Michael Jenkins, 1993).

**Titles**

Sunday Too Far Away was written about my brother in law, who is a gun shearer. I went out and did my research, but the question was: "How do I title the film?" I then heard this song, "The Shearer's Wife's Lament", and I took out some of the lyrics and made that the title. I did it instinctively, and it worked — it's a great title.

With Buddies, a film I shot in 1982, I did the same instinctive thing. The reason I called it Buddies was that when these guys are really angry at each other they call each other "buddy". I was too subtle by half.

As it turns out, there was also a film made at the same time in American about homosexuality and AIDS called Buddies. But Buddies was the wrong title, anyway.

Good film, though ...

It was a good film, but an undefined one. It was a seat-of-the-pants film.

Its problem was that it was a grunt film. You couldn't extract any shots of our leading characters that didn't have them with blue singlets on and hairy armpits showing. But the people who like those films instinctively knew it wasn't for them — that we didn't kill anybody and that it was a comedy. But the people that would've liked the film were turned off by the very same images.

I actually took Buddies on the road in Queensland for about three months, showing it night after night in various halls. That helped me realize that I had made a film nobody wanted to see, but when they saw it they actually loved it.

I gave the CWA ladies the tea concession each time and they would drag along their tired farmer husbands. I knew they were only there because they were pushed into it. But they loved the film, and almost invariably they would surround me and shake my hand and say it was one of the best films they'd ever seen.

Now, when you show the same film night after night for three months, you actually begin to have extraordinary thoughts. One night, I thought about the road toll. In NSW, approximately 1,000 people are killed each year. Now, if there were such a thing as chance, there would be 1,000 killed one year and 5,000 the next. But it essentially stays at the same level. So, there are elements that contribute to what we think of as chance.

I then began to play around with reasons why people go to see a film, trying to reduce the odds. With The Custodian, I spent three months researching and testing the title. What I discovered, and this is criticism levelled at Australian writers, is that not enough work goes into what the hell we're doing. What I discovered, when I actually got my title, was that I had defined the story.
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"We’ll never get enough..."

MAN BITES DOG,
DOCUMENTARY THEORY AND
OTHER ANDALSIAN ETHICS

C’est Arrivé Près de Chez Vous (Man Bites Dog) is a hybrid of two relatively new genres: the serial killer film and the ‘mocumentary’. The Belgian creators, Rémy Belvaux, André Bonzel and Benoit Poelvoorde, made the film for a mere $100,000 on the verge of being expelled from film school. The resulting product is the sort of film that moral conservatives and documentary traditionalists love to hate—a fake cinéma vérité profiling the day-to-day life of a psychopathic murderer. In fact, it is the kind of production that top BBC executives claim, as they did with Peter Watkins’ The War Game (1967), "would cause old women to jump in front of moving buses". The generally-received idea behind this attitude is that any deliberate or provocative manipulation of the truth under the realist mode is nothing less than cultural heresy. Realism equals veracity.

The real controversy behind Man Bites Dog is not so much its ethical and graphic discourse on violence, but rather its sublime challenge to that established documentary tenet regarding formalism: "If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it." Man Bites Dog rephrases the critical question as "If it ain’t working, why use it?"

As would be expected, Man Bites Dog has received the same sort of criticism regarding its portrayal of serial killing as did Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer (John McNaughton, 1990) and The Silence of the Lambs (Jonathan Demme, 1991). All these films automatically evoked Nile’s Law and were immediately criticized by myopic puritans for their explicit and amoral depictions of violence. Yet, ironically, this continual refusal by the moral majority to enter into any intellectual discourse on the topic of screen violence, outside hysteria, is strangely identical in tone and manner to the very criticism they themselves level at such films. All is quiet in the western mind, intellectually speaking.

What is definitely frightening about all these films is not the explicitness of their expression (the moral MacGuffin, if you like), but rather the implicit context in which it is placed for our analysis. The provocative manner in which Man Bites Dog aggressively challenges the complicity of both the media in general and its audience in particular is, to my mind, far more disturbing than any gratuitous display of prosthetic foam and fake blood.

Man Bites Dog’s use of the ‘mocumentary’ form is in itself nothing new. Gillo Pontecorvo, Peter Watkins, Woody Allen and Peter Greenaway, among others, have flirted with, undermined and confused narrative authority and veracity while working within the strict documentary mode, creating this new rhetorical form. Even in fiction films, playing with objectivity in the expected place of subjectivity is the oldest emotional trick in the book and has been used by every filmmaker since Hitchcock was knee-high to Griffith. Brian De Palma in particular has based a whole career on putting his 'objective' tracking camera in the hip pocket of psychopaths from...
Hi, Mom! (1970) all the way to The Untouchables (1987).

The employment of this voyeuristic tracking camera is only one ideological step removed in terms of its generic context from the reactionary menace that is located in the bowels of the horror genre: the 'stalk-and-slasher' film. Simply replace young teenage girls in their underwear next to open bedroom windows as 'victim' with the economically and socially oppressed as documentary spectacle and you can see the atavistic line of this particular genealogy. Witness the voyeuristic economy of those minute tragedies of life that television news and current affair programmes are so wonderfully adept at condensing into two-minute bites: Noam Chomsky goes raving ape bonkers with a chainsaw.

In the light of recent media coverage of stand-offs and sieges in NSW, Man Bites Dog can easily be read from an Australian perspective as a caustic, self-reflexive litany of intrusive post-vérité documentary technique – the Hinch/Willesee/Wendt-asthmatic-cameraperson-bashing-down-the-door-of-the-shonky-used-car-salesman school of documentary realism. Such perverted daily acts of 'media cannibalism' are not strictly restricted to aspects of overdetermination in content, but bastardize form and technique as well. Even on the ABC, that bastion of journalistic integrity, the dramatized re-creation has become just another rhetorical trope, the standard narrative device signifying historical accuracy and authority. "Ce n'est pas arrivé près de chez vous?" Well, just flick on any television channel after the news any weekday for proof.

Ever since Robert Flaherty cut the igloo in half in order to get more light in the shot, there has always been something fishy about 'classical' documentary form and its 'inherent' relationship to veracity. As Brian Winston warned us when he attacked the Griersonian theorists' positioning of Flaherty as progenitor of what is essentially a false history of documentary theory, "I Think We're in Trouble ... " And do these three Belgians know it!

Perhaps the film's most unsettling effect is the audacity with which it blatantly indicts the media in the very act of constructing its own veracity. In scene after scene, Man Bites Dog’s mise-en-scène denounces the passive voyeurism of the audience as easily as the fake documentary crew allow themselves to become willing accomplices to the serial killer's heinous crimes. In the process of 'objectively' documenting Ben (Benoit Poelvoorde), the crew identify approaching threats with their zoom lens; help him dispose of his heavier bodies; pursue, hold down and suffocate a fleeing child; use their 'respectability' to allow Ben access to the homes of potential victims; and, in the uncensored version, participate in a gang rape of one of Ben's victims. This befits what B. Ruby Rich identifies as "the ultimate film-school revenge film: you thought I was bad, well, take this." Consequently, in Man Bites Dog, subtlety is deliberately conspicuous by its absence.
Like Delicatessen (Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Marc Caro, 1991), the film’s mixture of Gallic guignol and deadpan frankness should be placed in the context of contemporary French popular culture and its often startling grossness to an Anglophile. Consider it the cinematic equivalent of stumbling across a book of [Jean-Marc] Reiser or Wolinski cartoons in a FNAC bookshop for the first time. However, what the film lacks in tact and sensitivity is more than compensated for by its raw, discursive rigour. Man Bites Dog almost approaches a meta-analysis of the cinematic apparatus itself. The very act of filmmaking becomes a microcosmic metaphor of the entire capitalistic enterprise, a form which feeds both off and on itself. Hannibal Lector now runs the projector.

This comparison is made explicit in Man Bites Dog by the fact that the crew profits quite clearly and directly from Ben’s criminal acts, both in terms of spectacle and capital. When the crew runs out of money, it transpires that Ben himself is actually subsidizing this documentation of his life and crimes. Film financing, and documentary filmmaking in particular, are directly linked here to the contradictions of capitalist art and the accommodation of an ego. The placement of Ben as the offspring of an apparently decent and normal shop-owning family is deceptively cunning. Politically, Man Bites Dog saves its most pointed criticism for the petit-bourgeois pétainistes shopkeepers themselves – those very people who, despite the veneer of education and the trappings of western culture, are, in fact, in thrall to an unrelenting economic fascism. Natural moral reaction though it may be, it would be hypocritical of us to particularly over-emphasize Ben’s status as psycho-sociopath without acknowledging the genesis of the problem: that is, an aspiring middle-class family structure based on the profit motive, race and gender difference, and the acceptance of violence. The horrors that Ben enacts upon society are indeed all too close to home.

It is logical, therefore, that Man Bites Dog might more easily be defined as a horror film rather than a documentary satire. In accordance with Robin Wood’s thesis concerning the “return of the repressed” in the horror film, the monster that is the serial killer can be seen here as the natural expression of the surplus sexual and political tension that bourgeois society strives so desperately to conceal. Ben, the serial killer, is simultaneously fils loyal and passionate son of the bourgeoisie, the logical product of a social system in crisis and the manifestation of excess in a society brimming with contradictory tensions.

These contradictions are no better personified than in Poelvoorde’s performance as Ben. He is at once the quintessence of the European renaissance man and the embodiment of Visigoth and Vandal. Little by little, parenthesized only by the shockingly explicit murders, the brilliantly-structured (yet apparently random) dialogue, reveals the multitudinous contradictions of his personality. Namely, how can an intellectual aesthete with a strong religious morality and a yearning for poetics, music and ornithology be simultaneously a racist and homophobic cold-blooded assassin? Considering the rigorous ideological agenda underlying Man Bites Dog, this proposition is very easy to contextualize and understand.

If Ben seems to be acting as if he were starring in a movie based on his life, it is not entirely unintentional. He is, Man Bites Dog, of necessity, performs some amazing theoretical contortions in order to substantiate its self-reflexive position. Like Frankenstein’s monster, Ben’s psychopathic behaviour, an image initially created and celebrated by the media, inevitably turns against its creator. Not only does Ben perpetually hint that his actions may have been influenced in some way by certain films, but Poelvoorde’s continual exhibitionism and deliberately mannered performance cunningly exposes how the subject’s behaviour, in even the most ‘realistic’ documentary, will always be modified by the presence of a camera and the accommodation of an ego.

To misappropriate B.A.D. on Nicolas Roeg in its song, “E = mc²”: “… at the centre of the documentary universe, sometimes notions get reversed. Subject/object relations are inverted.” One of the unavoidable implications of Man Bites Dog is that Ben, more so than the crew, demonstrates an acute understanding of the ethics behind the tenuous subject/object relationship in documentary theory. Ben is often heard to complain about the lack of teamwork. In fact, what he is indicating is that both sides of the camera are working towards the same end: capital profit off other people’s misfortunes – misfortunes the crew have caused, if not deliberately, as in the case of Ben, then certainly exacerbated by their complicity and false sense of objectivity. Literally acting as both cast and crew, Belvaux, Bonzel and Poelvoorde ruthlessly expose the mendacity of the media and its persistent tendency to obliterate, then manipulate, ‘truth’ in order to make it conform respectively to the ideological and economic agendas of bias and sensationalism.

The film abounds with a number of economical and brilliantly-realized metaphors which exemplify this consumptive process of ‘media cannibalism’: the desire to seek the weak and feed the need for sensationalism. Two items in particular remain indelibly lodged in the mind. After documenting Ben’s snuff murder of a granny, the crew is invited by him to dinner. There then follows a tense and embarrassing scene where the crew delicately tries to refuse his
invitation. Indeed, part of the overall tension of *Man Bites Dog* derives from the fact that the audience is waiting for Ben to eventually turn on the film crew. This is the central metaphor and ethical dilemma of the film: to accept Ben as subject is to condone his actions as object. The ambivalent echo of the 1960s mantra, “If you’re not part of the solution, you’re part of the problem”, reverberates onto the post-realist ‘90s.

The other telling sequence involves a running gag, perhaps inspired by Spinal Tap’s spontaneously combusting drummers, which concerns the mortality rate of sound recordists working on the crew. As the director offers a direct camera elegy lamenting the accidental death of one of his soundmen during a shoot-out, he says, “Right before he died I told him, ‘Come on, I’ve got enough footage.’ And he said, ‘We’ll never have enough ...’ ” To say this attitude is understated in the film would be a gross understatement. Never was there a neater analogy for the media’s insatiable and unrelenting desire for news at any cost.

*Man Bites Dog* concludes with a devastatingly clear and simple metaphor: killing is the same as documentary filmmaking. In pursuit of ‘truth’ – the holy grail of documentary theory – the end will always justify the means. Anything can be justified. And you can get away with murder, either literally in the case of Ben or figuratively regarding the crew’s respect for ‘truth’. Even Eisenstein and Vertov, during Stalin’s aesthetic pogrom, sensed too late (to their chagrin) that the ethics of realist veracity are inevitably as in thrall to the political agendas of the dominant culture as Narcissus was to his reflection.

*Man Bites Dog*’s persistent exploitation of ‘cannibalism’ as a formal metaphor is not, however, solely restricted to the ‘other’ as voyeuristic object. By inverting Vertov, Bonzel’s camera acts as a metonymy for the sadistic gaze which eventually turns its destructive *kino-glaz* back on itself. At a particularly tense moment in the film, the crew of *Man Bites Dog* enters into a shoot-out with a television video crew that is simultaneously documenting another serial killer trying to kill Ben. In a very black and literal pun on the purists’ position regarding the superiority of film to video, our film crew, inspired by Ben’s killing of his rival, proceeds in turn to slaughter the surprised video crew. The expression “shooting a doco” takes on an entirely new resonance in this film.

Jean Renoir, in sympathetic defence of the compassion he felt for his characters, once claimed that “disasters occur because everyone has their own reasons”. Ironically, Belvaux, Bonzel and Poelvoorde are not so far removed from Renoir’s philosophy of relative humanism themselves. For instance, witness the following exchange between the crew and the killer’s childhood friend, Valerie:

Crew: Do you know Ben’s trade?
Valerie: Some trade!
Crew: Doesn’t it bother you?
Valerie: I don’t pry into his work. Everyone’s got to eat.

As would be expected in a ‘mocumentary’ essentially structured around a single self-reflexive conceit, *Man Bites Dog* deliberately allows itself to be hoisted by its own petard, and finishes in the only way it knows how. By the end of the film, a long anticipated Old Testament morality comes into play: those who live by the sword, die by the sword.

The moral majority’s conditioned panic is, once again ironically, not without some justification. They should quite rightly finger this film for censorship, but not because unbalanced individuals may become sociopathic after seeing it, but because they might want to become documentarists.

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1 The comprehension of any given R-rated film is inversely proportional to the amount of time actually spent viewing it. This is an antipodean derivation of Whitehouse’s Axiom: Those who do not see know the most.
Zubrycki uses the cinematic device of having Carlos talk in voice-over about Maria’s adaptation, while Maria describes Carlos’ difficulties to dramatize their problems not only as refugees, but also as a couple. Maria is a community-development officer in a centre for South Americans, teaching them how to survive in Australia. In El Salvador, it was Carlos who worked as a teacher and guerilla warfare instructor. In Australia, he can only get work as a cleaner. The contrasting images of Maria’s and Carlos’ workplaces are poignant and revealing.

Zubrycki introduces us to their family at a party for the eldest daughter’s coming-of-age, where a complex ritual ensues that delights Maria and embarrasses Carlos. Around the walls of the hall the ‘multi-cultural’ crowd look on, trying to give encouragement. But Carlos is uncomfortable, preparing for his journey back to El Salvador, which he feels compelled to undertake.

Carlos’ departure allows Maria to tell her own story, and to use the camera as a form of therapy. She talks about her memories of El Salvador, the rape and the violence she experienced as a prisoner, and about her own fear of domestic violence in her relationship with Carlos in Melbourne. But unlike Dennis O’Rourke’s *The Good Woman of Bangkok* (1992), Zubrycki does not sensationalize his material, which makes it poignant and extremely sensitive.

The film makes a major turning point when Carlos does not return after six months in El Salvador. Maria impulsively decides to set out to see him and she invites the film crew along. Here again Zubrycki must decide how much to intrude as a filmmaker into their reunion, how much to be a *voyageur*.

It soon becomes obvious that, though Carlos had been uncomfortable with the film crew’s presence, Maria is using them for her own home movie. But when they reach the region where Carlos is now conducting education and survival programmes for ex-guerrillas, he also uses the camera to bear witness to his new life and sense of purpose.

Zubrycki’s own voice-over adds a further dimension, and the layers build to an extremely intimate and sensitive documentary, which has all the power and nuance we have come to expect from fictional feature films. *Homelands* even has a subplot in its depiction of an older South American couple, and their willingness to play for the camera introduces a new, lighter tone. Their placement in the barren landscape on the fringes of Melbourne becomes almost lyrical through the eyes of this film.

*Homelands* was voted the second most popular documentary at the Sydney Film Festival and is having a theatrical release through the Valhalla in October. It deserves to be seen on the big screen, because of its compelling images, empathetic characters, multi-layered storyline and sheer force of its narrative. In this year’s AFI Awards, *Homelands* is competing with *Exile and the Kingdom* and *Kangaroos - Faces in the Mob*, which makes the best documentary for 1993 a difficult choice.

**Interview with Tom Zubrycki**

In *Homelands*, you are mainly dealing with the subterranean world of people’s emotions. Why did you make that decision?

I really felt I had reached a point in my work where I wanted to explore the complexities of social life, including the psychological, as opposed to the political, layers. I’ve been drawn more towards individuals. I’ve always had individuals epitomizing the kinds of issues that my films are about. But *Homelands* depended so much on building a relationship with a family, and one individual in particular.

I wanted to unravel all the complexities of a basic issue: that of being pulled between two different homelands. It’s an issue that is so fundamental to the migration process. I thought the way to explore it was not doing a whole range of interviews, but to take one’s time and try to explore the issues through one family and the events the family is drawn into.

**How did you set about constructing the narrative?**

I could plot the storyline almost from the beginning. I knew there was a significant point when Carlos left. What I didn’t anticipate was Maria actually making the decision to go back to El Salvador. We’d actually constructed the rough-cut when she decided to go. The fact that we went with her somehow brought the whole process of a psychodrama happening. The camera, I believe, helped Maria and Carlos to actually work out their relationship. Their marital conflict seemed to be played out in front of the ‘camera-as-witness’.

**Did you consciously seek out dramatic images?**

Yes. I consciously wanted the images to work emotionally and poetically to heighten the main narrative. Early on, I began to see the film as a classic narrative with main characters, a subplot and two turning points. I also quite liked the use of images in *The Good Woman of Bangkok*, although there were other elements of the film that I found problematic. I liked the fact that the key subject was able to talk for long periods of time, uninterrupted and uncut. Similarly in *Homelands*, Maria’s monologue about her experience of being tortured, and later about her husband’s infidelity, are also very compelling because they’re long. It’s also an implicit statement against the grotesque, packaged voyeurism you usually get in the cover-
age of similar issues on commercial television. There is no way that a story like Maria’s could be contained in a magazine report, or even a standard-length documentary for that matter.

How did your relationship with Maria and Carlos develop?

My relationship with them wasn’t fantastic to begin with. There was a lot of tension and friction in their relationship and I needed to tread carefully. When Carlos left for El Salvador, my relationship with Maria developed quite quickly. We needed each other, I suppose. With a film like this, your role as a filmmaker becomes complicated and confused, because you’re not just a filmmaker, you’re a counsellor and a friend. When that happens you lose a level of detachment, and your social and ethical responsibility as a filmmaker increases.

During the filming, I sent them the rushes so they could see what we had shot. That meant they were getting something and we were getting something.

At the end, they saw the fine-cut because I felt the material was so private, personal and revealing that Maria and Carlos had to see it to make sure they were comfortable with what we had done, that there wasn’t any misrepresentation or distortion. I was extremely nervous, but they were fine. It was my ethical and social responsibility as a filmmaker. Making these kinds of films is a two-way, reciprocal process.

Did you always intend to have a counterpoint to the main storyline?

Yes, I always did. The counterpoint of the two older people makes the film more universal. It implies that, while some relationships disintegrate when you move to another country, others form.

There were other reasons: to emotionally lighten the film, engender some humour. Plus, there’s no rule against having a subplot in a documentary. It can only add complexity and depth to the film. Finally, it allowed me to use the barren, outer-suburban landscapes, which contrast so much with El Salvador and say so much about the migrant experience. It’s these stark images of the fringe area of an Australian city that partly inspired me to make this film. It accentuated and dramatized for me the psychological adjustments that had to be made by people who’d just arrived from the harrowing experience of being in a war zone.

Ray Thomas has an associate producer credit. Is that because you like to work with your editors in a collaborative way?

He’s someone I can bounce ideas off at the very start. I don’t have a producer. I’m a producer-director. Ray helped me early to make the decision between three different families. Barbara Mariotti, SBS’s executive producer, was also fantastic, both at the rushes and rough-cut stages.

Would the film have been made without an SBS pre-sale?

SBS is willing to tackle the tougher, more difficult documentaries, and take risks with filmmakers with a track record like myself. The ABC is very ratings-driven at the moment. Also, taking the film from 50 minutes to 79 minutes was not a problem for SBS. They also gave me a theatrical window, which is harder to negotiate with the ABC.

Has Homelands opened up filmmaking for you?

Yes, a lot, because I inserted myself into the film, and I had never done that before. Setting up a relationship with someone in your film and not acknowledging that worries me now.

In the beginning of Homelands, I reveal my own background. My parents were refugees, but from a different time and a different place. It freed me up incredibly, stylistically. There was certain information I could also impart, and it made the links work better.

My next film will, I’m sure, revolve around the product of a strong relationship with whomever the character or subject is, because I think it creates the best documentaries.

And this thinking, fed by the present, works with the ‘thought fragments’ it can wrest from the past and gather about itself. Like a pearl diver who descends to the bottom of the sea, not to excavate the bottom and bring it to light but to pry loose the rich and the strange, the pearls and the coral in the depths, and to carry them to the surface, this thinking delves into the depths of the past – but not in order to resuscitate it the way it was and to contribute to the renewal of extinct ages. What guides this thinking is the conviction that although the living is subject to the ruin of the time, the process of decay is at the same time a process of crystallization, that in the depths of the sea, into which sinks and is dissolved what once was alive, some things ‘suffer a sea-change’ and survive in new crystallized forms and shapes that remain immune to the elements, as though they waited only for the pearl diver who one day will come down to them and bring them up into the world of the living – as ‘thought fragments’, as something ‘rich and strange’ ...

– Hannah Arendt

Writer-producer-director John Hughes’ One Way Street: Fragments for Walter Benjamin is a loving evocation of the work and life of Walter Benjamin. Hughes began working on One Way Street in 1989. It was funded for development by the Australian Film Commission, with an ABC TV pre-sale agreement. The television release was 1992 – the centenary year of Walter Benjamin’s birth – but is now having a cinema release as well.
One Way Street begins and ends with a dramatization of Benjamin’s suicide, in 1940 in Portbou, on the Franco-Spanish border. This functions as a framing device in a non-linear biography which discloses itself through fragments of cinema, interviews, theatrical reconstructions and voices speaking as if recounting memories, montaged with documentary sequences of events, streets, train stations and marketplaces.

Hughes has taken it upon himself to journey to New York, Portbou, Paris, Russia and Berlin, partly to retrace the steps of Benjamin, partly to find resonance in the present. Meanings and significances multiply, reflect and act as counterpoint to each other. Different encounters deflect Hughes onto other journeys. Susan Buck-Morss, author of Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project, leads him through St. Marks bookshop, tracing a history of Benjamin’s reception in the U.S. in the different displays, shelves and categories. Gary Smith, author and collector, searches amongst the pillars, paintings and glass cabinets of the “Jewish Life” exhibition in the Martin Gropius Bau gallery. The camera follows, and together we discover Paul Klee’s “Angelus Novus”, an oil painting coloured with aquarelle, which had originally been acquired by Benjamin in 1921. According to testimony, this painting was a kind of spiritual talisman and focus of meditation for Benjamin. References to Klee’s angel also repeatedly occur in Benjamin’s correspondence and is a pivotal metaphor in his “Theses on the Philosophy of History”.

Such conversations that Hughes has with Benjamin scholars, publishers and cultural producers give some sense of the range of contemporary work motivated by Benjamin. They also provide a testament to the enthusiasm and fascination there is with Benjamin in the present. In part, there is the enigma, the mystery, what is not known and what is not knowable. Michael Jennings, author of Dialectical Images, suggests there are as many Benjamins as there are thinkers. The environmental sculptor, Dani Karavan, describes Benjamin’s life and death as a mystery, pointing in particular to the fact that no one knows where he is buried. Lindsay Waters, publisher for Harvard University Press, speaks of the sense that there is an iceberg out there of untranslated Benjamin writing of which in English we have only accessed the very tip. Susan Buck-Morss discusses the issue, as dramatized at the beginning of the documentary, of whether or not there really was a completed magnum opus (Das Passagen Werk) which was lost as Benjamin fled to his suicide. Buck-Morss argues that there couldn’t have been any such manuscript, that the very notion would have been quite contrary to the spirit and method of Benjamin. However, nothing can be resolved, and the questions and mysteries remain.

Anson Rabinbach, editor of The New German Critique, describes a world that is dispersed into fragments, and in these fragments reside divine presences which can be revealed. Rabinbach describes Benjamin’s method as one which juxtaposes these fragments, things which don’t always go together, in order to reveal the emanation. Motivating this method is the belief that you cannot go directly at the task because the disclosure will be blocked.

What these conversations also offer, in a revealing poetic sense, are everyone’s favourite Benjamin quotations. As we collect these fragments and pieces, as they are told, they begin to form the texture and fabric of the film itself. This is very Benjamin, and quite successful as an artistic strategy to reveal Benjamin’s methodology.

Hughes’ work is openly informed by Benjamin’s method and practice, and while this adds another layer to the biographical, it also questions, even interrogates, the act of telling the story of someone who is no longer living to tell their own tale.

One Way Street fills you with moments from Benjamin’s life: the photograph with his brother, another of his wife and child, his B-average report card, the Klee painting he would have looked at, his collection of books and toys, the difficulties of his Jewishness, his script, his writings, the key relationships of his life, his conversations with Brecht, Adorno and Scholem, the Germany, Russia, Italy and France of his travels. Curiously, though, watching One Way Street over and over again does not serve to further illuminate Benjamin. What the viewer begins to appreciate, what is illuminated, is the complex construction of the telling of his life.

I try to wrest myself away from the amorous Image-repertoire: but the Image-repertoire burns underneath, like an incompletely extinguished peat fire; it catches again; what was renounced reappears; from the hasty grave suddenly a long cry. - Roland Barthes
It is not simply that Hughes tells a story of Benjamin through fragments. What is interesting is that most images and sequences are repeated, recontextualized. “In the fields with which we are concerned, knowledge is like lightning flashes. The text is the thunder rolling long afterwards.” (Walter Benjamin) In a opening sequence, Anson Rabinbach appears as a sub-frame within a frame. As he speaks, his image suddenly freezes, before peeling off as yet another sub-frame within the frame, and so on and so on, the dialogue uninterrupted. Within the larger frame, even more sub-frames appear and disappear. Manuscript pages, maybe from Das Passagen Werk, are blown across a mountainous landscape. A razor blade removes from yet another (picture) frame the Klee painting, its significance still to be appreciated. Resonances within resonances: they are things foreseen, a destiny only later to be fully revealed and understood. Layers within layers; fragments gradually becoming a whole.

Benjamin (played by Nico Lathouris) looks at and photographs us, twice, with the flash of illumination (magnesium powder) momentarily blinding us, “like thunder rolling long afterwards”. The desolate snowscape on the road to Connecticut provides an image for a reading from A Berlin Childhood. It also lines the road to the author Elizabeth Young-Bruehl’s house, and functions as a visual metaphor for her description that the German intellectuals of Benjamin’s circle felt as if they were living on a cultural and political moonscape.

This layering and recontextualizing of images creates a kind of frisson where pieces come together to form a new whole and in their juxtaposition, in the new relationships that are formed, provide an entry into the past as well as a formation of the present.

In Portbou, at the site of the cemetery where Benjamin is thought to be buried in an unmarked grave, the environmental sculptor Dani Karavan has cut a path into the surrounding cliffs. The initial climb is fraught with difficulty, and the final descent towards the ocean is halted at the last moment by a sheet of glass. On the glass is written some words from Benjamin: “Quotation in my works are like robbers by the roadside who make an armed attack and relieve an idler of his convictions.” Beyond the glass, Karavan describes a vista – sighted but untouched – of birds, wind, freedom and a swirling sea whose waves rise and fall, enveloping the rocks repeatedly, like an open heart. For Karavan, the tortuous path to these ‘images in the world’ is a most powerful evocation of Benjamin’s life and philosophy.

Karavan’s descriptions of his work parallel something of what it is like to experience One Way Street. Maneuvering through the densely metaphorical, allusive text, whose surface is layered with Benjamin quotations, is at times a difficult experience. But there are moments of illumination.

Probably the greatest achievement of One Way Street is to represent Benjamin in the here and now. In “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” Benjamin says:

By making many productions it substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder or listener in his own particular situation, it reactivates the object reproduced.1

Hughes has reactivated this mystic, this poet, this allegorist, this philosopher, this series and mad romantic figure. Like Hannah Arendt’s pearl diver, he has brought ‘thought fragments’ into the world of the living and offered them as something ‘rich and strange’.

Why a film today on Walter Benjamin, given he was much more accessible during the 1960s and ’70s cultural studies?

In each generation or decade since his death, there has been new formulations of Benjamin, new divisions and arguments, new culture wars around his works. There is a 1990s ‘version’ associated with The New German Critique group or tendency which is clearly articulated in the presence of Susan Buck-Morss’ book, The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project, which has been out since 1989. It is an academic work but has already gone through several reprints in paperback.

On the other hand, there is another mobilization of Benjamin, which has a certain power in the present, and is that of [Jacques] Derrida and [Paul] De Man. In America in particular, some people say that there are new audiences who are learning about Benjamin through De Man, and certainly Derrida’s use of Benjamin is a very important example.

There is a third strand in a way, which has its origins in the kind of Benjamin given to us by Gersham Scholem, who is fascinated by Benjamin and a Judaic tradition. To my knowledge, the best example of this particular school of thought in the struggle for the soul of Benjamin is in the work of Susan Handelman, whose most recent book, Fragments of Redemption, is mainly interested in the theological dimension of Benjamin’s work. This is an orientation I must say that interests me a lot, but which corresponds with the other approaches or emphases I’ve mentioned.

Given this 1990s perspective, what relevance would Benjamin have in this country? One could say there are things happening in this country, this place, particular political thought on local social issues, things happening in one’s own street. Where does Benjamin...
slot in? It’s not a position about maintaining a pure culture or a purity of ideas which would ask what relevance Derrida, De Man, whoever, have here, because they’re foreign.

The cultural debates that use the figure of Benjamin are a way of focusing certain arguments in intellectual life. There is no reason why an “Australian” articulation of these debates cannot or ought not be made.

A lot of people ask that: “What are you doing making a film about a dead German-Jewish philosopher in Australia? Why not a local, immediate, social or political issue?” Well, why not? But the kind of immediacy and politics that the works of Benjamin are involved with are not a kind of politics that operate in the realm of current affairs; it’s a politics that follows a much deeper strata. It doesn’t have to do with the kind of politics that can be equated with people shouting slogans at each other in pubs, but it is a politics which, in some ways, is much more powerful. Finally, it is a politics that questions the legitimacy of what we call politics but which is still deeply ‘political’.

It is a major political achievement for someone to take to pieces one of the many central ideologies of our epoch, as Benjamin’s critique of ‘progress’ does. To deconstruct the dominant ideology of affirmative progress is not an apolitical achievement.

Somewhere along the line, I read somebody say that it has to do with a perception of history that operates at the kind of pace where icebergs melt. Benjamin’s work still has that kind of huge scale.

Does Benjamin become an object which becomes ambiguous, as in All that is Solid (John Hughes, 1988), where a cherub in a snowball object is passed from hand to hand. One never has a firm position about the object.

Is Benjamin in One Way Street an entirely ambiguous figure who is available to any number of readings? Yes and no. Nobody knows. It is “yes” insofar as the formal structures and methods that inform the film are always referring to quotation. It’s almost as though the work is constructed from, explicitly, a whole series of quotations. There is never a quote where an editorial line is put as an argument on the surface of the film. Of course, there is an editorial process going on, but one of the things that is foregrounded in the formal elements of the film is quotation, so the idea is that we don’t have access to a ‘real’ Walter Benjamin. What we have access to is a series of discourses around the figure of Benjamin, which takes different forms in different decades. To that extent it’s a “yes” in response to your question. But I don’t think to work in that way is to refuse to take a position, or to simply celebrate diversity. It doesn’t do that because it creates quite particular montages by means of the placement of the quotations.

Is that a question which raised itself as you were shooting? Because, certainly, you are dealing with two things: someone who existed, was real; and someone you have to recreate, or (re)discover.

It’s a problem common to any kind of biographical work. The bigger question really, if you want to deal with this type of material, is whether it is correct to do it through a biographical method, or whether we should be working with or applying the insights or works of Walter Benjamin to another historical or cultural object in the present. That is a much more legitimate way of dealing with this material, rather than making a film about the work and life of Benjamin.

What relevance does Benjamin’s work hold for documentary filmmaking?

A lot, because his philosophical concerns go from problems of representation in his work on the theory of language to problems of historiography in “The Thesis on the Philosophy of History” and his Arcades project, which has particular relevance for documentary. Also, his work is, in a way, into the whole central problematic of documentary: realism.

That’s a rather generalized answer, and it could be reduced to a series of more specific, programmatic things.

To what does the title, One Way Street, refer?

In the first place, to a book Benjamin published called Einbahnstraffe (One Way Street), which is a collection of short texts that were influenced by surrealism and Benjamin’s particular brand of Marxism. The book is about dealing with observations of contemporary life, reflections on writing and philosophical reflections in a very concrete form. Each of the little texts in One Way Street is an extraordinarily rich piece of work with marvellous poetic power. Ernst Bloch described the book as being about all the latest fashions of metaphysics and philosophy on display in a shop window.

There is a number of ways of interpreting the title, but the first one is simply to take this sign which is everywhere, to take it from the street, and transform it into a kind of surreal allegory for a variety of philosophical themes.

When you consider that “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” is probably the most widely read English translation of Benjamin’s work in Australia, one assumes Benjamin has been much more accessible with another, a more informed, audience.

I don’t know; it is possible. Certainly one of the ways we in Australia have received the work of Benjamin, as you said, is through the essay, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”, which was something central to the whole Birmingham school of cultural criticism of the 1980s, which we got. But I’m also convinced that the ongoing relevance of the work is something that’s going to continue to expand. In some ways, it’s surprising how many people are at least familiar with the fact there’s this body of work called The Works of Walter Benjamin but have not had the chance to study it or get into it. Usually, the people who do get into it are very solidly affected by it. And I think there’s more and more of those people, from many different disciplines and backgrounds.

Harvard University Press is in the process of compiling a kind of selected works of the material that we have never had before in English. That is a big project people have been waiting years for. It’s available in Italian, Portuguese, French, and of course in German. Also, the German-language collected works has only relatively recently been completed – I think it was in 1989, but it may have been 1990. In fact, the last volume of Walter Benjamin’s collected works was only recently released in Germany, and it was only in 1982 when the Arcades project, which was a major part of the work,
was released in Germany. This is one of the reasons why the material keeps coming back. It's been appearing over two or three decades in the German language and the material which is new to various languages continues to appear.

In some ways, the English-language material is behind, whereas there is continuing interest in the work all over the world. Recently there has been material published in Russia, and there's a very interesting perception of Benjamin in Russia today. I think that there is also an audience, a readership, of Benjamin in Japan, which is also relatively recent.

As more and more material comes out there will probably be a huge effect on cultural studies, almost as a fashion.

Well, yes, there is a problem of fashion, I suppose, but this work is very resistant to containment of fashion. Benjamin has a nice formulation of it which is that “in every era the attempt must be made anew to wrest tradition from a conformism that is about to overpower it”, which is something he wrote in 1940 and is an idea taken up by Marcuse and which we now call “repressive tolerance”.

So, there is a way in which Benjamin’s work is available in different waves precisely because the ideas in Benjamin’s work can be taken up and applied. They’re very powerful, they’re tools. There is a lot of Benjamin around, but it’s not necessarily recognized or accredited as such.

Is there any particular work of Benjamin’s that you deeply admire?

I’ve always liked Benjamin’s “Theses on the Philosophy of History”. In 1980, I made a film called Filmwork, about the Waterside Workers’ Federation Film Unit and the Cold War. It is about a group of people who, by aligning their cultural work with the rest of the industrial labour movement, were able to survive and make work during the Cold War, when everybody else who was trying to make film work on the Left was blacklisted in Australia. They managed to get a few things out, but basically work coming from the Left during the Cold War in Australia was effectively suppressed. They worked for Left-wing trade unions; they produced thirteen films.

How did you get One Way Street funded?

It is fully funded by the Australian Film Commission and it had an ABC pre-sale. There were long negotiations with the AFC. As I said, I started the project in 1989 with the idea that the film ought to be released at the beginning of 1992, but the administrative processes that are required in this kind of funding structure are very lengthy, to say the least.

How did they react to film about Walter Benjamin?

The bureaucracy goes through its own transformations, and at any particular moment there’s different régimes in play, so it’s always quite an intricate matter getting work made. Responses were positive. It just took a long time because it wasn’t necessarily a high priority. They had other priorities. It took sometime to explain to them that this was a priority.

And the ABC?

The ABC reacted quite warmly, quite quickly. I was very pleased. Maybe they liked All that is Solid. In some ways, it’s quite mysterious.

Notes

1 Illuminations, p. 51.
3 Illuminations, p. 223.
With Australia’s cinema centenary approaching, Chris Long continues his exploration into the myths and fictions surrounding the introduction of the moving picture to Australia.

Early films survive entirely by chance. The remnants have created false historical assumptions. Everybody knows about Millard Johnson and William Gibson’s *The Story of the Kelly Gang* (1906), produced by the Tait brothers, because parts of it survive. But was it the first important Australian storytelling film? What about the earlier Kelly Gang film shown by Dan Barry and Robert Hollyford in Hobart in 1906? What about the bushranging drama shot by the Salvation Army Limelight Department in 1904? What about *Highlights of the Musical Comedy ‘Florodora’* shot by Clement Mason in Melbourne in 1901, or the Salvation Army’s *Rescue of a Suicide* (1898)? Films of this age bear no printed titles, and most are not mentioned in our film books. If they survived, would anyone recognize them?

As archives go through unidentified holdings to “de-select” non-Australian material, do they have the research necessary to recognize Australian films? Comprehensive data on early production is currently only obtainable from old newspapers and documents. Until that data is compiled and published, attempts to identify or “de-select” early films will fail. Acquisition officers will be unable to recognize important films offered to them. More films will be lost through incorrect identification.

Pat Laughren at Griffith University (Brisbane) organized funding for this series’ assemblage of production data from collections and libraries all over the world. The first volume of *A Complete Australian Filmography* will follow, listing all known productions to indicate possible survivals. Some survivals are surprising. Other films are lost where their survival might be expected.

For example, one might assume that Sydney’s early film output would have been prolific, with abundant survivals. In fact, our early film industry was based in Melbourne. Only one continuously active producer operated in Sydney during the 1890s, and his output is lost. The earliest surviving Sydney film, covering federation festivities in 1901, was shot by Melbourne’s Salvation Army Limelight Department.

Many early Melbourne movies survive, though not always in film form. Some are printed as sample strips in books, or as sections filed for copyright registration. Thwaites and Harvie’s 1897 films were distributed as flip-card novelties. Others survive only as “mutoscope” flip-card reels in fairground peepshows. More than half of Queensland’s surprisingly prolific 1890s film output survives. It will be covered in *Cinema Papers*’ forthcoming Queensland issue. Meanwhile, this article continues to assemble the record of Australian production in Melbourne and Sydney.

**Thwaites and Harvie: First Indigenous Producers**

Before 1897, all of the known Australian films were shot by the visiting French cameraman Marius Sestier. Our first indigenous producer was Ernest Jardine Thwaites (1873–1933), a gifted but shy inventor whose mechanical skill matched his fascination with new technology. At the age of nineteen he constructed one of the earliest Australian-made phonographs at the Melbourne Working
Above: Ernest Jardine Thwaites, c.1897, who made the first Australian-built movie camera at the age of 24. He teamed with the photographer Robert Harvie to produce a series of short sporting and actuality films in 1897-98. Right: Herbert Thomson’s Automobile of 1898, one of the first in Australia, now preserved at the Museum of Victoria, was a project in which E. J. Thwaites collaborated. The photo, from the collection of Thwaites’ daughter, Mrs Doreen Maxwell (deceased), is labelled “St Kilda Cricket Ground, 1898”.

Men’s College (now Melbourne University of Technology). As a professional consulting engineer during the 1890s, he was a pioneer of automotive design, assisting with the construction of the Thomson car now preserved in the Museum of Victoria. After 1903, he manufactured the first Australian piano player rolls and mechanisms, including his “Pian-auto” and “Aeriola” around 1905. His activities and patents cover a dozen fields of endeavour, but his shyness and avoidance of publicity have consigned his work to historical obscurity. The surviving documentation of his film work is patchy and difficult to find.

Based in a small workshop at 325 Collins Street, Melbourne, adjoining the Block Arcade, Thwaites constructed a movie camera at the start of 1897. A photographer friend, Robert William Harvie, aided by A. O. Segerberg (later a cameraman for Longford and Beau Smith), designed and operated processing facilities for Thwaites’ films. These darkroom operators appear to have been associated with the Melbourne branch of Walter Barnett’s “Falk” studio at that time, so that some of the processing outfit may have been previously used to produce the Sestier-Barnett coverage of the 1896 Melbourne Cup.

The Thwaites-Harvie production activity was relatively brief, chiefly stimulated by the technical curiosity of those involved. As their films were not produced for exhibition in any specific venue, reviews are difficult to locate and only an incomplete filmography can be assembled. Shooting began around the start of March 1897, the first three items being initially exhibited by a provincial theatrical troupe led by a “Colonel Lumare”11, then touring Tasmania:

(1) Landing passengers from the S.S. Gem at Port Melbourne
(2) March past of the Victorian Mounted Rifles
(3) The Block, Collins Street

The expected arrival of these for Lumare’s touring troupe was announced in the Launceston papers on 17 March 1897, stating that they were “taken in Melbourne last week”12. Although the producer isn’t named, the inclusion of “The Block” where Thwaites had his shop strongly suggests his authorship. Further proof of Thwaites’ involvement is provided by an article in The Australasian of 27 March 1897, reproducing strips of movie film from a Melbourne street scene, and stating:

The instrument with which the accompanying pictures were taken was made by Mr. Thwaites, of 325 Collins Street. His system, by spacing each view exactly and evenly, does away with all ‘jumping’ of the photographs on the screen so noticeable in other machines.13

The film strips were recently animated and shown in the NFSA video, Federation Films, showing a distant building on the left which appears to be the Melbourne Town Hall as seen from Elizabeth Street. It is probably the film of “The Block”, as shown by Lumare.

On 27 April 1897, Thwaites applied for Provisional Patent protection on a “mutoscope” type of flip-card movie-viewing device.14 No complete specification followed as it would have contravened the earlier patents of the American Mutoscope and
Biograph Company. Nevertheless, Thwaites published several “flip-card books” printed from his films, including one of the end of the 1897 Melbourne Cup, a copy of which is held by the National Film & Sound Archive.

Further films appear to have been produced by Thwaites’ team in June 1897, when Colonel Lumare’s cinématographe show reached Ballarat (Victoria). The cameraman was summoned there to shoot two films of Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee celebrations on 22 June 1897. They were exhibited only four days later, prior to the close of Lumare’s Ballarat season, and were the first Australian films taken in a provincial city. Films of the Melbourne and Sydney Diamond Jubilee festivities were taken in the same week, and shown by exhibitors Lamond and Sewell in Albury and Euroa during September 1897. The Melbourne coverage may have been shot by Thwaites or an associate.

Thwaites and Harvie finally obtained a Melbourne outlet when their film, Traffic on the corner of Swanston and Bourke streets Melbourne, was exhibited at Harry Rickards’ Melbourne Opera House from 15 September 1897. The experiment was a success, Argus reporting that “the appearance of a certain popular and rotund legislator crossing the scene was received with loud applause.” Rickards then set the experimenters a tougher task, challenging them to film the finish of a Melbourne horse race and showing it in his theatre on the same evening.

Their first experiment in same-day presentation was applied to the Caulfield Cup Race on 16 October 1897, and was hailed as a major cinematic achievement, “throwing completely into the shade the Caulfield Cup. Mark Blow and A. J. Perier from Sydney were present with their cameras, but only Thwaites managed to present his coverage on the same night. He also sold a copy at a handsome profit to the conjuror Carl Hertz, who presented it a few days later at Ballarat’s Academy of Music.

The surviving flip-card booklet of Thwaites’ 1897 Melbourne Cup film provides a tentative confirmation of the authorship of a film held by the NFSA and purporting to be of that race. It covers the race finish in extreme wide-shot from a high point-of-view, possibly a grandstand. The images are painfully unsteady (perhaps indicating that the negative was still moist when printing was attempted) and there are blots throughout suggesting imperfect fixation. Artistically and technically, it compares very poorly with Sestier’s Cup film of 1896, but its hurried production cannot be taken as a representative sample of Thwaites’ work in more casual circumstances. A fragment of a second shot is spliced onto the print, which appears to be of the horses returning from the course through crowds near the Flemington bandstand.

One of the most interesting aspects of 1897 Melbourne Cup is that it is the first Australian film featuring a camera pan. As the horses near the finish line, it seems that Thwaites kicked one of his tripod legs to turn the camera and keep the field in view. The resultant jerk in the image invariably draws laughter from a modern audience.

Through into 1898, Thwaites continued to shoot sporting events: racing, cricket and, in July 1898, the earliest known film of Australian Rules football, the match of Essendon versus Geelong. In these latter efforts, the films are sometimes credited as being shot by, or for, “Falk” studios, and they were often presented by the pioneer projectionist, Stephen Bond. Bond may have had some part in their production, as he later (1899) shot several films of Boer War troop departures, and built some of the first Australian-made projectors (c.1904).

Another pioneering projectionist, Alexander Gunn, appears to have been a regular customer for Thwaites’ films, and his 1898 catalogue lists many of the inventor’s titles as well as Burning Weeds at Auburn, shot at a locale very close to the Thwaites family home in Liddiard Street, Hawthorn. These domestic scenes are confirmed by an unidentified clipping in the possession of his family which states:

Mr. Thwaites for some years [after 1897] produced pictures in a small way — some were photographed in his own garden and these were exhibited long before the first picture theatre was erected in Melbourne.
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NUMBER 20 (MARCH-APRIL 1979):
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NUMBER 22 (JULY/AUG 1979):
Bruce Petry, Luciana Arrighi, Albie Thoms, Stux, Alison's Birthday.

NUMBER 24 (DEC/JAN 1980):
Brian Trenchard-Smith, Ian Holmes, Arthur Hiller, Jerry Toepbliz, Brazilian cinema, Harlequin.

NUMBER 25 (FEB/MARCH 1980):
David Puttnam, Janet Strickland, Everet de Roche, Peter Faiman, Chain Reaction, Stir.

NUMBER 26 (APRIL/MAY 1980):

NUMBER 27 (JUNE-JULY 1980):
Randal Kleiser, Peter Yeldham, Donald Richie, obituary of Hitchcock, NZ film industry, Grendel Grendel Grendel.

NUMBER 28 (AUG/SEPTEMBER 1980):
Bob Godfrey, Diane Kuryw, Tim Burns, John O'Shea, Bruce Beresford, Bad Timing, Roadgames.

NUMBER 29 (OCT/NOV 1980):

NUMBER 36 (FEBRUARY 1982):

NUMBER 37 (MAY/JUNE 1982):
Stephen MacLean, Jacki Weaver, Carlos Saura, Peter Ustinov, women in drama, Monkey Grip.

NUMBER 38 (JUNE 1982):
Geoff Burrowes, George Miller, James Ivory, Phil Noyce, Joan Fontaine, Tony Williams, law and insurance, Far East.

NUMBER 39 (AUGUST 1982):
Helen Morse, Richard Mason, Anja Breien, David Milikkan, Derek Granger, Norwegian cinema, National Film Archive, We Of The Never Never.

NUMBER 40 (OCTOBER 1982):

NUMBER 41 (DECEMBER 1982):

NUMBER 42 (MARCH 1983):
Mel Gibson, John Waters, Ian Pringle, Agnes Varda, copyright, Strikebound, The Man From Snowy River.

NUMBER 43 (MAY/JUNE 1983):
Sydney Pollack, Denny Lawrence, Graeme Clifford, The Dismissal, Careful He Might Hear You.

NUMBER 44 (APRIL 1984):
David Stevens, Simon Wincer, Susan Lambert, a personal history of Cinema Papers, Street Kids.

NUMBER 46 (JULY 1984):

NUMBER 47 (AUGUST 1984):
Richard Lowenstein, Win Wenders, David Bradbury, Sophia Turkiewicz, Hugh Hudson, Robbery Under Arms.

NUMBER 48 (SEPTEMBER 1984):
Kate Cameron, Michael Pattinson, Jan Sardi, Yoram Gross, Bodyline, The Slim Dusty Movie.

NUMBER 49 (DECEMBER 1984):
Alain Resnais, Brian McKenzie, Angela Punch McGregor, Ennio Morricone, Jane Campion, horror films, Niel Lyne.

NUMBER 50 (FEB/MARCH 1985):
Stephen Wallace, Ian Pringle, Walserian Borowczyk, Peter Schreck, Bill Conti, Brian May, The Last Bastion, Blizz.

NUMBER 51 (MAY 1985):

NUMBER 52 (JULY 1985):
John Schlesinger, Gillian Armstrong, Alan Parker, soap operas, TV News, film advertising, Don't Call Me Girle, For Love Alone, Double Sculls.

NUMBER 53 (SEPTEMBER 1985):
Angela Carter, Wim Wenders, Jean-Pierre Gorin, Derek Jarman, Gerald L'Ecyer, Guust Hasford, AFI Awards, Poor Man's Orange.

NUMBER 54 (JULY 1986):

NUMBER 64 (JULY 1987):
Nostalgia, Dennis Hopper, Mel Gibson, Vladimir Oshnerov, Brian Trenchard-Smith, Chartistburs, Insatiable.

NUMBER 65 (SEPTEMBER 1987):
Angela Carter, Wim Wenders, Jean-Pierre Gorin, Derek Jarman, Gerald L'Ecyer, Guust Hasford, AFI Awards, Poor Man's Orange.

NUMBER 66 (NOVEMBER 1986):

NUMBER 67 (JANUARY 1988):
John Duigan, George Miller, Jim Jarmusch, Soviet cinema, Part I, women in film, shooting in 70mm, filmmaking in Ghana, The Year My Voice Broke, Send A Gorilla.
NUMBER 68 (MARCH 1988)
Martha Ansara, Channel 4, Soviet Cinema, Jim McBride, Glamour, Photos Of The Civil Dead, Feathers, Ocean, Ocean.

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Cannes '89, film composers, sex, death and family films, Vincent Ward, David Parker, Ian Bradley, Pleasure Domes.

NUMBER 72 (MARCH 1989)
Cannes '89, Dead Calm, Franco Nero, Jane Campion, Ian Pringle's Last Temptation, Susan Dermdy: Breathing Under Water, Cannes report, FFC.

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NUMBER 89 (AUGUST 1992)
Full report Cannes '92 including Australian films, David Lynch Press Conference, Vitali Kanievski interview, Gianni Amelio interview, Christopher Lambert in Fortress, Film-Literature Connections, Teen Movies.

NUMBER 90 (OCTOBER 1992)

NUMBER 91 (JANUARY 1993)
Clint Eastwood and Unforgiven; Raul Ruiz; George Miller and Gross Misconduct; David Elfick's Love in Limbo, On The Beach, Australia's First Films.

NUMBER 92 (APRIL 1993)
Yahoo Serious and Rockley Kelly; George Miller and Lorenzo's Oil; Megan Simpson and Alex; Jean-Jacques's The Lover, Women in film and television, Australia's First Films Part 2.

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Most of the following films would have been one or two minutes in length:

(1) **The Block Collins Street Melbourne** (shot in early March 1897).

Shows the corner of Collins and Elizabeth Streets, Melbourne, with passing traffic.


(2) **Victorian Mounted Rifles’ March Past** (shot in early March 1897).

Victoria’s colonial cavalry marches in review at the Melbourne Exhibition Building, prior to its departure for England to take part in Queen Victoria’s London Diamond Jubilee procession.

Premiere c. 20 March 1897 in Tasmania, shown by “Colonel Lumare” in Hobart. Refer *Mercury*, 28 April 1897, p. 3. No print is known to survive.

(3) **Landing Passengers from S.S. Gem at Port Melbourne** (shot early March 1897).

Sometimes given as “Landing passengers at Williamstown”. The Gem was a Port Phillip ferry linking Port Melbourne with Williamstown across the mouth of the Yarra River in Melbourne.

Premiere c. 20 March 1897 in Tasmania, shown by “Colonel Lumare” in Hobart. Refer *Mercury*, 28 April 1897, p. 3. No print is known to survive.

(4) **Ballarat: Street Scene on Jubilee Day** (shot 22 June 1897).

Shot for “Colonel Lumare”’s travelling show in Ballarat.

Premiere 26 June 1897 at Ballarat Mechanic’s Institute. Refer *Ballarat Star*, 22 June 1897, p. 2; 26 June 1897, p. 3. No print is known to survive.

(5) **Ballarat: Chinese Parade, Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee Procession** (shot 22 June 1897).

Shot for “Colonel Lumare”’s travelling show in Ballarat.

Premiere 26 June 1897 at Ballarat Mechanic’s Institute. Refer *Ballarat Star*, 22 June 1897, p. 2; 26 June 1897, p. 3. No print is known to survive.

(6) **Melbourne: Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee Celebrations** (June 1897). Thwaites’ authorship of this film is doubtful.

Shows a street parade. Earliest known screening by exhibitors Lamond and Sewell at Euroa (Victoria) on 23 September 1897. Refer *Euroa Advertiser*, 17 September 1897, p. 3; *Albury Daily News*, 18 September 1897, p. 3. No print is known to survive.

(7) **Melbourne: Traffic at Corner of Swanston and Bourke Streets** (before 15 September 1897). Shows passing trams and a well-known parliamentarian *en passant*.

Premiere 15 September 1897. Refer *Argus*, 15 September 1897, p. 8; 20 September 1897, p. 7. No print is known to survive.

(8) **Caulfield Cup Race** (16 October 1897).

Shown on the night of its running at Melbourne Opera House. Three segments: the field passing the Grandstand on the first lap; the finish of the race; and the field returning to the scales. Subsequent presentations may also have included a scene mentioned in *The West Australian* (Perth), 1 November 1897, p. 1: arrival of race train at Caulfield station. The four segments were probably on separate one-minute films, totalling four minutes of screen time. No surviving print.

Premiere 16 October 1897. Refer *Leader* (Melbourne), 23 October 1897, p. 22.

(9) **Victorian Racing Club Derby Race, Flemington** (shot 30 October 1897).

Shown on the night of its running at Flemington (shot 30 October 1897).

Below: Motion picture flip-card novelties, sometimes advertised as “pocket cinématographe”, had a brief vogue in the late 1890s. Printed from movie film frames, these relics are in many cases the only surviving artefacts of the films they represent.

Right: 1897 Melbourne Cup “flip book” produced by E. J. Thwaites and R. W. Harvie. A flip-card sequence of the conclusion of the race, it was the first novelty of its type to be made in Australia. Presently held by the NFSA, Canberra.

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**THWAITES AND HARVIE FILMOGRAPHY**

An oral account passed from E. J. Thwaites’ mother to her granddaughter, Beth Clark, supports this. Films purport to have been shown in a Hawthorn shop window in Glenferrie Road, including one of Thwaites’ mother hosing out a cockatoo’s cage!

Without any cinemas to provide a market for his films, the tensions and meagre profitability of rushed sports coverage soon took their toll on Thwaites. He ceased production in mid-1898, forming a partnership with Frank C. Freemantle to open Melbourne’s Edison Phonograph Company on 1 June 1898, importing and selling a product rapidly gaining adherents as a domestic entertainment.

After a full and interesting life working on projects as diverse as “Aerogen” gas lighting plants and a gramophone record library at London Stores, E. J. Thwaites died at his home in Sunnyside Avenue, Camberwell, on 12 June 1933.

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_Earliest known film of a Melbourne street scene: probably _The Block, Collins Street_, shot near the corner of Elizabeth Street, which was the approximate locale of E. J. Thwaites’ city engineering shop. The film was taken by Thwaites at the start of March 1897. From _The Australasian_, 27 March 1897, p. 619. Courtesy of Meg Labrum, NFSA, Canberra._
Melbourne Opera House. Shows finish of race; other segments (if any) unknown.
Premiere 30 October 1897. Refer Argus, 30 October 1897; South Australian Register, 1 November 1897, p. 3. No print is known to survive.

(10) 1897 Melbourne Cup, Flemington (shot 2 November 1897).
Shown on the night of its running at Melbourne Opera House. Probably two segments, as listed in Alex Gunn’s 1898 Catalogue and Supplement of Apparatus, Dissolving Views etc.: the lawn on Cup Day 1897; and the finish of 1897 Melbourne Cup (available in a hand-coloured print). Further one-minute films may have been taken.
Premiere 2 November 1897. Refer Argus, 2 November 1897, p. 8; The Age, 2 November 1897. Print may survive in part at NFSA. The NFSA print could also be the same race covered by A. J. Perier or Mark Blow. Flip-book of part of finish of race survives at NFSA.

Shot preparatory to taking the field in the match of England vs. Victoria.
Earliest known screening by Alex Gunn at Melbourne Exhibition Building, 25 December 1897. Refer Argus, 23 December 1897, p. 8. No print is known to survive.

(12) 1897 Cricket Tests: Harry Trott Batting, with Johns Behind the Wickets, MCC (shot prior to 1 January 1898).
Earliest known screening by Alex Gunn at Melbourne Exhibition Building, 1 January 1898. Refer Argus, 1 January 1898. No print is known to survive.

(13) Grand National Hurdle Race, Flemington (shot 9 July 1898).
Shown on the night of its running at Gaiety Theatre, Melbourne. Argus, 11 July 1898, p. 8. states: “See Brewer on Pat and Kennedy on Reindeer fighting out the finish of the G.N. of ‘98. See Hirundo leading the field rideless over the hurdle in the straight. A triumph of artistic excellence. The picture taken by Messrs. R. Harvie and E. J. Thwaites at 3 pm. and produced in the Biographe [sic] at 10:20 pm.” Horse Pat won the race.
Earliest known screening in association with Cogill’s Minstrels at Gaiety Theatre, Melbourne, 9 July 1898. Refer Argus, 9 July 1898, p. 16. No print is known to survive.

(14) Grand National Steeplechase, Flemington (shot prior to 19 July 1898). Race won by horse Floster.
Earliest known screening in association with Cogill’s Minstrels at Gaiety Theatre, Melbourne, 19 July 1898. Refer Argus, 19 July 1898, p. 8. No print is known to survive.

(15) Australian Rules Football: Essendon versus Geelong (shot prior to 30 July 1898).
Earliest known movie record of Australian Rules. May have been shot by Stephen Bond, but more likely by Thwaites and Harvie. Advertised as “taken by Messrs. Falk and Company” and “exhibited by Messrs. Falk and Co., operator Mr. S. Bond”. Refer Argus, 30 July 1898, p. 16 (which incorrectly gives subject as Essendon vs. Melbourne); 20 August 1898, p. 16. No print is known to survive.

(16) Burning Weeds at Auburn (shot prior to July 1898).
Listed in Alex Gunn’s 1898 catalogue. Possibly Lumière’s 1895 production Burning Weeds in the Wood, but more likely a Thwaites-Harvie film. No newspaper reference traced. No print is known to survive.

(17) Naughty Boy and Cockatoo (shot prior to July 1898).
Listed in Alex Gunn’s 1898 catalogue. This is possibly the film recalled by Thwaites family members as being shot at Thwaites’ Hawthorn home. No newspaper reference traced. No print is known to survive.

**Sydney’s Earliest Film Fragments: 1897**

Above we described the early film clips lodged for copyright registration at the British Public Records Office. The earliest Australian examples were Walter Barnett’s four films of the December 1897 cricket tests at the Sydney Cricket Ground. Copies received from England and reproduced here have the Lumière sprocket configuration, proving that Barnett used these French cameras after Marius Sestier’s return to France. The clip of Ranjitsinhji Practising Batting suggests that the British Film Institute item held under this title is probably not this Sydney item, but is the later British film shot on 19 June 1901 (Warwick Cat. No. 6915).

Copyright identification strips from other Australian films may survive in the British Public Records Office, particularly if the films were sold in Britain. We will publish these as they come to hand.

**Mark Blow**

**Sydney’s Forgotten Film Pioneer**

Most of Australia’s earliest film producers were professional photographers who had the resources to process and print their films. The Sydney portrait photographer Walter Barnett produced films in association with the Lumière operator Marius Sestier for only a few months. Another Sydney photographer produced films for over five years. Jack Cato’s Story of the Camera in Australia (1955) doesn’t mention him, and, as most subsequent writers based their research on Cato, he has not been mentioned since. A. J. Perier’s unpublished critical essay on Cato’s book corrects this oversight:

Now what about Mark Blow? He certainly played a most important part in the photographic world of Sydney. He made his own papers and plates, and was very early in the field with the cine show business. The Polytechnic site in King Street was an important show place; he had both ‘Van’ [Willem Van Der Velden] and Mr. Jenkins as operators. He introduced the Joly process of Colour Photography and also exhibited the early X-ray machines [...] He and ‘Falk’ [Walter Barnett] had the largest Galleries in the city [...] Blow’s premises were situated in George Street, where Farmers now stands. At the back he had a large store and work rooms, where his papers and plates were manufactured.
Born in Portsmouth, England, Mark Blow came to Australia via Canada and the U.S., establishing a Sydney photographic studio with one assistant in 1888.46 He waged a ruthless price war on the other Sydney studios through the 1890s37, by 1900 expanding to manage four outlets with an aggregate staff of 82.38

Following the lead of MacMahon, Barnett and Oldershaw, he converted a part of his “Crown Studio” at 382 George Street into a public display space for exhibitions of film projection, kinetoscope peepshows, X-rays and other novelties. This “Crown Studio Cinematographe and Röntgen Ray Exhibition” opened on 2 March 1897.39

Blow’s first projector was a Baker & Rouse import40, probably the Wrench Cinematograph, a British machine offered for £36 since mid-1896.41 It was very popular with Australian exhibitors during 1897, including J. B. Wakely of Newcastle, J. Yeoman of Melbourne and Melbourne’s Salvation Army Limelight Department.42 Only one of the fifteen films shown on Blow’s opening day was advertised as a local subject, Bondi Bathers, and that was probably a fancifully re-titled import.43 However, by August 1897 Blow imported a movie camera and commenced a prolific programme of local film production.

**Mark Blow’s “Polytechnic”**

Within three months of its opening, the popularity of Blow’s “Crown Studio Cinematographe” was sufficient to outgrow his George Street premises. He moved the show to a hall at 82 King Street which he fitted with a stage to add ‘live’ acts and an orchestra in support of his movies. It opened on 7 June 1897 as the Sydney “Polytechnic”44, a name borrowed from an earlier London venue renowned for its scientific displays.45

Managed by W. E. Wallace, the “Polytechnic” was Sydney’s equivalent of an American nickelodeon:

The films are now run on a new [Edison] machine which reduces the flicker of the pictures to a minimum, and adds largely to their realism and to the pleasure of looking at them. Mr. Wallace is an enthusiast on X-rays, and gives lucid explanations as well as practical exhibitions of their startling revelations. Phonographs, Kinetoscopes, strength and lung testers, with all sorts of odds and ends of scientific marvels are in the charge of a courteous young lady who dispenses them without favouritism. A piano and violin furnish pleasant music, and the whole entertainment costs but one shilling.46

There were very few permanent Australian film venues at this time. No film exchanges or libraries yet existed, so that exhibitors had to purchase their films. This was an expensive proposition, inducing most exhibitors to lead a nomadic existence, showing their limited stock of film to different audiences in constantly-changing locales. Blow’s photographic facilities allowed him to make his own films cheaply, giving his fixed venue a constantly changing programme with local appeal.

The first definite report of Blow producing local films concerned his difficulties with Randwick officials in shooting races during late August or early September 1897.47 It is possible to assemble a fairly complete list of Blow’s output from The Sydney Morning Herald advertisements which form the basis of our filmography. He was the first Australian film exhibitor to recognize the “drawing power” of indigenous film, including it with imported material at the Polytechnic on an irregular basis from September 1897 to the start of 1899. The local production effort came to an abrupt halt on 1 March 1899, when a fire caused by the inflammability of nitrate film destroyed the Polytechnic’s projection room and a significant proportion of its film equipment.48 Fortunately, the fire occurred during a poorly attended session, and only the Polytechnic manager, Wallace, was slightly burned.

**CONTINUES ON PAGE 59**
GREENKEEPING

KARL QUINN

Remarkably, for a film which was nominated for an AFI Best Screenplay Award, and referred to in Cinema Papers (no. 86) as "brilliantly-written", Greenkeeping seems to be typical of so many recent Australian films in that it suffers from having apparently been rushed into production before its script was completely up to scratch.

The story is a quintessentially Australian one. Lenny (Mark Little) has a history of being on the wrong side of the law, but is determined to go straight. To get the job of greenkeeper at a lawn bowls club, Lenny stretches the truth a little, claiming to have completed a course in horticulture when in fact he barely even started it. Still, he figures people get jobs mostly on bluff, then learn the ropes from the inside, and that's the approach he plans to take. (In this respect, it is reminiscent of Christopher Morahan's British thriller Paper Mask, 1991, though nowhere near as black.) For a while, things seem to be going well enough, but then the grass starts to turn yellow, a major disaster with a tournament only a short time away.

To complicate matters further, Lenny's private life is no bed of roses either. Married to the perpetually-stoned Sue (Lisa Hensley) and burdened with a $3,000 debt, Lenny is reluctant to go home and is seriously enticed by the buxom form of Gina (Gia Carides), a barmaid at the bowls club. But Lenny's resolve to follow the straight and narrow extends to making his marriage work, and Gina's upfront charms are resisted in favour of the more subtle attractions that presumably lie somewhere beneath the marijuana-induced lethargy that surrounds Sue.

Writer-director David Caesar has expended considerable energy in making the world inhabited by Lenny seem real, and this is where the film works best. From the bowls club to the bedroom, there is a tackiness, a slightly rundown feeling, about the spaces that Lenny moves through. Unlike the green, though, it's not his fault that they're like that: they are symptomatic of a general malaise, an inertia, an unwillingness to move away from the comfortable certainties of the immediate post-war era, or the drugged euphoria of the 1970s. The spaces are, like Ball's shoe factory in Mark Joffe's Spotswood (1992), emblematic of Australia as a whole.

Set in stark contrast against this collective inertia is the Japanese schoolboy, Rikyu (Kazuhiro Muroyama), who comes to the club to practise every day, dressed in pristine whites and exhibiting a fanatical devotion to technique. Clearly, his presence in the stoically pro-British, anti-Asian club is ruffling a few feathers; just as clearly, he too has an emblematic function within Caesar's schema.

While Rikyu is obviously and heavily symbolic (and thus indicative both of how the film is structured and what is wrong with it), he does provide the film with a much-needed narrative thrust - well, more a nudge than a thrust really. The tournament causing Lenny so much trouble, and for which Rikyu is so eagerly preparing, serves as the climax of the film, a metaphorical showdown between the Australian and the Japanese ways of doing things - and it's pretty obvious that a film with a bowls tournament as its
dramatic highpoint is going to have to pull some very fancy tricks out of the bag to maintain interest. *Greenkeeping*, however, does not.

What it does do is aim for the self-consciousness of "whimsical" or "quirky" comedy, surely two of the most over-used words to describe Australian films of the past few years. Caesar apparently likes to think of the film as treading similar ground to the work of Bill Forsyth (*Gregory's Girl*, 1981; *Local Hero*, 1983; *Comfort and Joy*, 1984) and Barry Levinson's Baltimore films (*Diner*, 1982; *Tin Men*, 1987), and there is certainly that attention to detail in common. But what makes a film like *Local Hero* or *Tin Men* so enjoyable is the complexity of the characters, the sense that, while we know perfectly well what they will probably do at any given moment, they might just as easily do something completely unexpected, though no less believable. So intent on representing types are David Caesar's characters, by contrast, that there is little chance of the audience being surprised.

Nor does the plot take any turns that are anything other than predictable. Apart from Lenny's struggle with the green, green grass of the bowls club, the major source of tension in the film involves the attempts of drug dealer Dave (Leigh Russell) to extract the $3,000 Sue owes him by any means necessary — including beating up Lenny's car. But this sub-plot hardly goes anywhere, providing mere nuisance value rather than a real sense of urgency, in part because Caesar has made his villains seem even more inept than his heroes.

I don't usually take the line of criticism which attacks a film for things which it does not contain rather than those which it does, but in the case of *Greenkeeping* I feel an irresistible urge to posit an alternative line that the film might have taken to greater comic advantage. Lenny, having landed the job at the bowls club but facing serious trouble from Dave if he can't repay the money quickly, and finding that the club is in dire financial straits (which is another of the barely-utilized plot points), unhappily and with a sense of inevitability returns to what he knows best: growing dope. The comic potential of Lenny as reluctant drug baron resuscitating the fortunes of the staid bowls club, while carving out an entrepreneurial niche for himself, is surely greater than what Caesar has actually given us: the enthralling spectacle of watching Lenny watching grass grow.

**GROSS MISCONDUCT**

**GREG KERR**

*Gross Misconduct* is a film with all the right materials for popularist, non-cerebral cinema. It has lust, a foreign ring-in, a *noir* edge, brutality and characters troubled by dark obsessions. The end product, however, fails so dismally to mix its ingredients it would be charitable to describe it as a slick potboiler.

Directed by George Miller (*The Man From Snowy River*), this internationally-tailored picture is devoid of substance, style and identity. It is a self-conscious study of tense individuals lost on a Gothic stage bereft of spontaneity and meaning.

It tells the story of an American professor, Justin Thorne (Jimmy Smits), who has taken up residency in Melbourne with his family, to teach philosophy to a throng of admiring university students. Among them is Jennifer Carter (Naomi Watts), a moody girl who happens to baby-sit the professor's children, and who also happens to be madly in love with him.

Some major complications emerge. Thorne is happily married, and is a long-time friend of Jennifer's father (Adrian Wright). And as much as Thorne is flamboyant, he errs on the side of caution (the family car is a Volvo).

Even so, the film courses its way toward the carnal transgression between Thorne and Jennifer with an over-emphasis that is indicative of the entire production. Within the first five minutes, the camera has already framed at least three of Jennifer's longing stares in Professor Thorne's direction, and, not long after, Jennifer is thrusting her tongue down his throat. What hope does the poor Professor have?

The coupling of the two ends up being quite a messy affair, and, next thing, Jennifer is in hospital suffering from amnesia, while Thorne has the police at his door. Rather than delve into the sensitive minefield of sexual politics on the university campus, the writers tear into thrill-mode. There is a court trial (in Melbourne's state parliament chambers, of all places), some juicy revelations and a bloody climax that may, if nothing else, change the way one thinks about manual orange juice squeezers.

While the director and the scriptwriters have tried to spice up the story, a heavy air of pre-emptiveness signals any real plot developments, and, when they do occur, it is often in front of a prominent Melbourne landmark. The film has a phoney sense of pacing with characters continually darting up in the right place just at the right or wrong time, while the acting tends to be constrained by a script that offers nothing new from the well-documented territory it covers.

The film's biggest liability is its lack of credibility, and this is largely due to its being structured to appeal to a broad, international audience. One can well ask why the need for the American Jimmy Smits as the leading man when a local actor could have filled the brief quite as effectively. While it would be unfair to take anything away from Smits, the film botches up in making such an issue of Professor Thorne's "Americaneness" when it is of no relevance to the story. Thorne's wife (local actress Sarah Chadwick) continually lapses in and out of her American accent, while several minor characters — written in as a cultural counterpoint to the leading man — speak with such an "ocker" twang one would think they were recruited from an outback two-up ring.

**GREENKEEPING**

It is indeed cringeable to think the average Australian male (as depicted by Brendan Suhr) is a beer-swilling larrikin whose repartee includes dubious colloquialisms like "colder than a witch's tit" and "sillier than a wheel".

Jimmy Smits puts in a typical, broodingly methodical performance of a man grappling with the forces of retribution set in motion by a carnal indiscretion. His character is certainly interesting enough: in lectures, he quotes the likes of Plato and shows slides of ancient love-making techniques; at night, he goes home to his happy family or blasts off a bit of steam on the saxophone at a club when it suits him. Again, the only problem here is the gelling of all the parts into a believable whole.

Naomi Watts has come a long way since she knocked back Tom Cruise's offer of a date in the lamb roast commercial, and her rôle of the deeply-knocked back Tom Cruise's offer of a date in the driving rain, while fires and candles burn incessantly in almost every room. The music of Bruce Rowland helps build the tension in one or two scenes but never reaches a distinct note of its own, which is arguably a strength in a film so acutely aware of the mise-en-scène.

At best, Gross Misconduct is a glossy-looking morality tale about the recoil of fate and redemption. On the whole, though, it goes down as an uninspiring, shallow filmmaking excursion that does little more than instil the viewer with a cheap sense of voyeurism.


Mario Martone's low-budget feature debut, Morte di un Matematico Napoletano (Death of a Neapolitan Mathematician), is a loosely-based account of the last days of Renato Caccioppoli (played to perfection by Carlo Cecchi), a genial, world-weary mathematical genius who was the grandson of the Russian anarchist Mikhail Bakunin. From the opening credits of this finely-directed and immensely-atmospheric movie, we are told that what follows is not a biographical portrait (based on real facts and characters), but rather a sensuous and gripping imaginative tale of the last week spent by Caccioppoli as he drifts through the lives of his remaining friends before committing suicide.

Caccioppoli's languid melancholia is captured by his unmistakably individualistic and dishevelled persona: a dirty trenchcoat, a scarf wrapped around his neck, a cigarette in his mouth and a whisky bottle close by. His chronic
alcoholism and suicidal proclivities express an ethical stance of integrity and existential cynicism towards the petty-minded "Marx Brothers" rituals of the academy, the failure of the Communist politics and the hollowness of late-capitalist consumerism. In one extraordinary scene, we see him at the end of a long table isolated from his academic peers (it is apparent he has been on one of his drinking binges) who are busily engaged in academic administration issues and politics. Bored and indifferent to the charade that is taking place in front of him, he proceeds to crawl over the table to reach for a book to read. In the next scene, only he is to be seen sleeping off his drinking stupor. It is an acute image of Caccioppoli's social decline and general refusal to play the game—anybody's game.

This includes his affectionate but condescending bourgeois brother, Luigi (Renato Carpentieri), his upwardly mobile, ambitious pupil, Pietro (Tony Servillo), his separated wife, Anna (Anna Bonauto), who longs to be with him, and his empathetic, academic cleric friend and colleague, Don Simplicio (Antonio Neilwiler).

Caccioppoli's integrity and sardonic wit is informed by an intelligence that has to speak the truth regardless of social and/or personal reward. In one memorable instance of the protagonist's formidable lucidity, we see him stretch out his hand to demonstrate to Don Simplicio the futile gap that exists between religion and life. He shows the Bach-playing priest-mathematician his hand, telling him that it represents Logos or The Bible, and, when he tries to move his hand to touch his pulse in his wrist (representing life), the two don't meet. It's a graphic, witty instance of Caccioppoli's uncommon intelligence and tragic sense of life.

And yet, Caccioppoli's nihilistic world-view is not a completely dark one: there is also a profound, non-judgemental attitude to people's aspirations, foibles and limitations. In a noteworthy dinner sequence, we see Caccioppoli express a preference for comedy over tragedy, citing Buster Keaton's glorious cinema, and later on inform his Marxist and mathematical friends that suicide by shooting (he actually foreshadows the exact way he kills himself later on) may be a noble act of existential freedom.

One of the film's more appealing features is its modest directorial style and non-moralizing spirit towards its self-destructive protagonist. All the performers (many coming from avant-garde theatre, literary and musical backgrounds) have contributed significantly to the overall dramatic and stylistic success of the movie. Cecchi, as the disillusioned mathematician, is unbelievably captivating to watch. He moves through the golden pastel surroundings of a sensuous and vanished Napoli (a city whose enchanting "documentary" streetscapes and classical buildings seem to have been painted by Watteau or worthy of Gide's pen—a writer who was, incidentally, a friend of Caccioppoli's family) like a doomed but wise opera hero.

However, the scene that stands out from amongst a number of equally unforgettable scenes is the one where we see Caccioppoli drinking on a rooftop, looking at a golden ball of a sun descending over the roofs of Napoli. It's a hauntingly atmospheric scene that corresponds so vividly to Caccioppoli's fatalistic disenchantment. Cecchi's performance is so unobtrusively believable and seductive. He is able to convey so consummately—through the right kind of bodily nuances and mannerisms—the existential torments and erudite irony that were central to Caccioppoli's life.

In fact, Caccioppoli comes across to be a very complex and compelling character: though he has cut off his ties with the Communist party, he still has time for his old comrades; equally, he does not moralize to his friends or to his colleagues and students. His wisdom resides in the Renoirian precept that human motivation is a multifaceted thing and that everybody has his reasons for doing what they do at a particular moment in their lives. Caccioppoli's compassion for human life appears to be limitless.

The classroom scenes where Caccioppoli is holding exams are scenes that operate as a microcosm of how the world looks at the mathematician. The students are engrossed by their professor's erratic behaviour: they see only external surfaces of the mathematician's tormented life. They may raise their eyebrows when Caccioppoli dances during an examination, and little do they empathize (unlike Don Simplicio) with his eccentricities or intolerance for intellectual and social conformity, but Martone does not condemn nor satirize society for its inability to accommodate someone like Caccioppoli. Throughout Napoli, as we shadow Caccioppoli's last few days, he is gently greeted by shopkeepers, acquaintances and the like as "Professor". He is held in high esteem and tolerated by many.

Death of a Neapolitan Mathematician is a powerful, delicate and engrossing movie of many exquisite visual pleasures. This film is not so much a matter of looking at life through a glass darkly, but through a prismatic jewel of smoky golden hues. Luca Bigazzi's highly-refined photography shines through time and again with its painterly lighting style.

This is not a flashy, mannered work; instead, it is an impressively understated movie that elliptically conveys the shifting cultural, intellectual and social beliefs of modern Italy since the beginning of this century, full of perceptions about the enigmatic complexities and ambiguities of human behaviour, creativity and integrity.


THE NUN AND THE BANDIT

Peter Malone

Any film with a nun as a central character is a risky project. Yet, Paul Cox's latest film not only focuses on a nun, but a European nun visiting Australia in the 1940s or '50s, abducted and threatened violently and sexually in the Australian bush. It is also burdened with the 'penny dreadful' title of The Nun and the Bandit. Clint Eastwood and Shirley MacLaine were more fortunate with Two Mules for Sister Sarah (1970).

Cox has adapted a novel, published in the 1930s, by Scottish author E.L. Grant Watson. (Cox's subsequent production is Exile, based on Watson's Priest Island.)

Besides the title, The Nun and the Bandit is also burdened with almost a century of films about nuns. The cinematic (including critics) has been exposed to hundreds of celluloid nuns, a great many of whom bear little resemblance to the real thing. Hollywood, especially, has made them carry a load of sentiment and religious fervour (often of the ultra-pious variety) and clothed them in habits that may or may not have been realistic—from Ingrid Bergman (twice) to Stella Stevens and Joan Collins. These images of the movie nun—her appearance, her demeanour, her speech—are so embedded in the audience consciousness that serious attempts to portray a credible nun of the past or the present are almost impossible.

Nuns are still made to parade in habits that went out of use twenty years ago, and are trotted out as a religious cliché in the background or a spiritual device for plot development, not as characters worth exploring in themselves. In the past, there have been some significant films looking at women as nuns, their commitment, their struggles, and their counter-cultural rôle in society, critiquing its values. Deborah Kerr had two opportunities: as an Anglican in Black Narcissus (Michael Powell, 1946) and as a Catholic in a film that will come to mind with echo-themes for audiences of The Nun and the Bandit, Heaven Knows Mr. Allison (John Huston, 1957). Other arresting examples include Audrey Hepburn in The Nun's Story (Fred Zinnemann, 1959) and Vanessa Redgrave in a 17th-Century French convent in The Devils (Ken Russell, 1971).

The 1990s' audience has now been influenced by the good-natured high-jinks of Whoopie Goldberg in Sister Act (1992) which, despite attempts at decorum (even in a Reno casino) by the Mother Superior (Maggie Smith), bear as little resemblance to reality as the Police Academy series does to the actual police. The ABC mini-series, The Brides of Christ, has been the most authentic treatment of nuns in Australia up till now.

In The Nun and the Bandit, Cox takes his audience back almost half a century, to a time when Australian society lived with more good manners, restraint and propriety, and where the Catholic Church and its institutions were looked on with some reverence and respect, even by non-believers or those hostile to the Church. Cox's film dramatizes this history.
In this context, Gosia Dobrowolska’s performance as the nun, Sister Lucy, seems authentic. She looks right; she sounds right. And the screenplay device of having her pray in voice-over is effective in communicating just how a nun in her situation at that time would have prayed — the language, addressing God, addressing Christ, the expression of her moral dilemma — when confronted with the brutal threats and advances of the rough miner, Michael Shanley (Chris Haywood).

Neil Jillett has remarked, in his The Age review, after the film’s screening at the Melbourne Film Festival, that the “theology is dubious”. Theology is not a usual criterion for the assessment of a film. The relevant theological issue here is that the nun has made a vow to God, according to the spirituality of her religious order, of chastity. This is not merely the disciplinary vow of celibacy, not marrying, that is required of priests. It is a specific vow of committing oneself to a personally chaste life.

The miner makes advances to the nun. He then promises to release his teenage niece, whom he has also abducted, if the nun will consent to have sex with him. What is she to do? She has committed herself by vow, but does the safety of the child supersede that vow? Should she consent? Should she kill herself? Is this morally and physically a fate worse than death? If she gives her word and the child is released, is she still bound to keep her word to the miner?

It is not easy to answer these questions in the comfort of an armchair in a theological college, let alone in a personally threatening situation. The screenplay handles the dilemmas well (and, for the nun, psychologically soundly), giving them a religious dimension, relying on the nun’s trust in God and the growing sense of God’s absence, and her having to make the decision in the strength of her own integrity.

The film does not romanticize the situation. Chris Haywood plays the abductor as a rough, often gross, man from the mountains who bears family grudges as well as savage memories of his own growing up. He is no beast who will turn into a prince if kissed.

Some of the audience at the Festival disliked the film, stating that it is chauvinist, anti-women and contains the “ultimate male fantasy”: the rape of a nun. Were the audience invited to empathize with Chris Haywood’s character, were he presented as having some charm, the point might have some validity. But the film is not asking for audience identification with him.

Rather, the focus is on the nun and her being a woman, and her commitment by her vow of chastity when faced with this sexual and power dilemma in the context of a more proper era. The authenticity of Gosia Dobrowolska’s performance, the historical credibility of the nun’s actions, words and prayer, lift this screen treatment of a nun from the frequently trivial portrayals of vowed women.

THE NUN AND THE BANDIT


ON MY OWN

PAT GILLESPIE

Isolation, betrayal and grief are the key issues in this delicate study of the frail human psyche. On My Own director and co-writer Antonio Tibaldi explores the bitter-sweet relationship between a young man and his mother — one suffering from a debilitating mind disorder, the other whose agile mind is coming of age.

Mostly, the film deals with taking and relinquishing control, looking at the power plays between Simon (Matthew Ferguson) and his father (David Mcllwraith), Simon and his mother (Judy Davis), and Simon and his colleagues. The film contrasts the tensions between father and son against the growing bond between mother and son in a symmetrically structured series of two-character vignettes — private tête-à-têtes which take place at school, in bedrooms and at stations.

Betrayal is introduced at the start during a confrontation between father and son. The father’s surface calm is rankled by Simon’s questioning and suspicion. Rather than dealing with it in a constructive manner, the father asserts his authority by controlling the amount of information he reveals to him. It is obvious the father is threatened by the bond which flourishes between mother and son, and tries to destroy it by limiting the communication between them. It is a classic case of what you don’t know won’t hurt you; however, the father learns too late that it only serves to further estrange him from his son.

The father is uncomfortable with weakness and illness. He sees his wife’s illness as a slight against him. Simon is the silent witness to this, the anchor in this highly-dysfunctional family.

Simon and his mother are rebels and loners, despite coming from opposite ends of the “institutional” spectrum — an elite private school versus a mental institution.

The more Simon is drawn into his mother’s world, the more closely the institutions align and more difficult it is for him to break away. Banned under the guise of preparing one for the “outside world”, each place “trains” minds to conform to societal norms. Rebellion or deviance is not tolerated. Beneath each institution’s tranquil, manicured façade lies a plethora of frustrations and anxieties, which surface during the film’s dénouement — a D. H. Lawrence-style, clandestine meeting in a hotel room between mother and son.

The hotel scene has an oedipal, sensual quality. Mother and son play truant from their institutions for one night, snatching up like love birds in a tiny room, sharing intimate secrets, Simon reading love poetry to his naked mother lying in bed, then curling up against her starved body, reminiscing about the past and making plans for the future.

Their doomed future is sealed when his mother breaks down and rejects their intimacy. Simon cannot deal with the rejection and reacts like a jealous lover, taunting her with cruel comments, and later sulking in the bathroom while she pleads for forgiveness. One wonders who has more strength: the mother for realizing that their romantic reunion is doomed and that the past must be cut away, or Simon, like Gatsby, healing old wounds by trying to recreate past happiness.

Simon and his mother swap roles: she gives rein to the child within her, while he struggles with his adulthood. His need to prove his love to his mother by breaking down her barriers is as overwhelming as his mother’s need to be loved.
Resigned to rejection, the mother headbutts the window, injuring herself. This act of self-mutilation makes Simon realize how dependent and desperate his mother is for love. The Oscar Wilde line, "Yet each man kills the things he loves", aptly sums up her frame of mind, creating dis-ease and a sense of inevitable doom.

The film looks at the nature of love, and how betrayal, isolation and guilt can waste a person’s psyche. The mother’s illness, her distorted way Judy Davis interprets the role of the mother: half waif, half madwoman, alternating between lover and mother, seducing her son with her poetry and madness.

In the meantime, Simon is caught between desiring his first love—his mother—and the need to explore sex with other women. He feels powerless to pursue the opposite sex while still trapped under his mother’s spell. He is freed from his emotional dilemma after her death. Struggling with his grief, he dons a tuxedo and attends the school ball, in celebration of his newfound manhood.


**PETE'S FRIENDS**

**BRIAN MCFARLANE**

A virtually every reviewer has noted, Kenneth Branagh's new film, Peter's Friends, shares a format with Lawrence Kasdan's The Big Chill (1983) and John Sayles' The Return of the Secaucus 7 (1980). They are all films centred on the idea of a group of old friends brought together years later by an occasion which leads to some soul-searching and which provokes a testing of the quality of the former friendship. It also has affiliations with any number of films which unite groups of people in a confined setting and watches how they behave. Think of all those films set on ocean liners, in country houses or on Orient Expresses; it is an endlessly fascinating narrative strategy, one which novelists and filmmakers have been exploiting successfully for decades.

What gives Branagh's film, along with Kasdan's and Sayles' (not to forget Bruce Beresford's Don's Party, 1976), an added resonance is that the assembled guests have not only been brought together and given something to react to but have a shared past to recall and/or suppress. In their more recent pasts, they have a range of personal tragedies, successes and disappointments, which the reunion will gradually, or sometimes abruptly, expose for the consideration of the others. Personally, I find it an irresistible formula and Peter's Friends an irresistible exemplar of the sub-genre.

A prologue set on New Year's Eve 1982 establishes the group of six, the eponymous friends who have just presented their undergraduate review before an unappreciative upper-class audience. This prologue, in which they appear in sexually-ambiguous costume and make-up, makes clear that they are bound together by the camaraderie of those who perform together. Making them students in a university revue is one of the many felicities of the screen-play by Rita Rudner (also co-starring) and Martin Bergman: it legitimates the steady flow of one-liners that peppers the dialogue and response to which differentiates the friends from the film's two outsiders, and it provides a very tight group-within-a-group, bound together by the shared recollection of esoteric rituals and language.

A montage of cultural/political/national/international references and events follows the prologue. This segment consists of black-and-white newsreel-type shots of a spectrum of famous 1980s faces, headlines and images: Boy George (carrying on the gender-blurring images of the prologue's revue team), Reagan and Nancy, Gorbachev and Raisa, Mrs Thatcher, the infamous "Gotcha!" response to the sinking of the Belgrano, the death of Rock Hudson (foreshadowing Peter's own likely fate a decade later), Satanic Verses and Saddam Hussein, and others. Clearly, Branagh means us to construct from this kaleidoscopic view of a decade the world into which their soon-to-be graduates are about to move and to be changed by.

For all their sharp-wittedness and alertness to the world and its follies, they are revealed ten years later, when the rest of the film takes place, not to have been much marked by the tumultuous times they have lived through or to have made any serious mark on those times. Salman Rushdie may have lived in terror as a result of his writing, but the writers among Peter's friends have aspired to nothing higher than television commercial jingles (the married Mary and Roger) and a long-running American sitcom (alcoholic Andrew). The montage segment functions ironically. It's not a matter of setting up a background of public events and then inviting us to see how the private lives interact with these. Rather, it is a case of private lives' being all-consuming, for these more or less engaging eccentrics are all intensely self-absorbed. The major events of the preceding decade have had no effect on them at all, as far as we can see.

The 1992 section of the film begins with Peter (Stephen Fry) still grieving for the death of his aristocratic father and with no clear plan for the rest of his life except to give a weekend party for his old university chums. The plot — slender enough but also sturdy enough — is thus set in motion, as the film cuts to a round-up of the invitees, briefly sketching in their lives. Andrew (Branagh, self-cast as the least attractive of the group) and his sitcom star wife, the wildly egotistic Carol (played with malicious relish by Rudner herself) are dealing with her fans at the airport; the sexy Sarah (Alphonsia Emmanuel) and her new boyfriend, Brian (Tony Slattery), engage in frantic coitus at every likely time and place — and some unlikely ones; dowdy Maggie (Emma Thompson) frets about leaving her utterly indifferent cat; and Mary (Imelda Staunton) can scarcely bring herself to leave Roger's (Hugh Laurie) and his son with a sitter. All this is done briskly and, like the film as a whole, wittily. ("Play with the train that cost £40, not the box it came in", Roger encourages his baby son.)
Their modes of arrival (train or chauffeured limousine), of reaction to the rooms Peter has ransacks cupboards for a concealed television, and of dress (e.g., Maggie's billowing brown hold-all, Roger's blazer and tie, Carol's sequined glitter) are deftly used as signifiers of their differences. Enough has been suggested about these to prepare the viewer – and listener, because listening is crucial to a film in which dialogue is paramount – for the first night's dinner in which cracks begin to appear in their amity. Structurally, Branagh has achieved a very seductive rhythm through which the film's movements and our narrative expectations are kept nicely attuned.

The rancours and emotional outbursts that surface during and after the dinner, and the next day's sexual couplings (and non-couplings) work structurally towards eliminating the two outsiders. These are the American Carol, who rebels at being "stuck down here with the cast of Masterpiece Theatre," and packs her cases and neuroses and leaves, and the boorish Brian whose wife comes to bear him away from the formerly voracious Sarah. Once these extraneous two are out of the way, the film can move towards its 1992 New Year's Eve climax, in which after a good deal of childish, maudlin, acrimonious talk and behaviour the solidarity of the remaining cast also perform immaculately, both individually and as an ensemble.

Branagh, producer and director as well as actor, orchestrates the film's tonal shifts with discretion, knowing when and how to anchor the wit (itself a rare enough commodity) in the reality of often painful experience. It is a shame that Branagh tackled the LA private eye in the absurd, though not unentertaining, Dead Again (1991), otherwise one might have wondered if he could do no wrong. As a man of the theatre, he is well on his way to becoming a major force in British cinema and a vital link between the two media.


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**THE PIANO**

RAYMOND YOUNIS

"It is moorish and wild and knotty as a root of heath!"

So wrote Charlotte Brontë in her preface to the second edition of *Wuthering Heights*. These words would not be inappropriate as an epigraph to *The Piano*, though this film is not so much an example of Antipodean Gothic – the capitalization is intended to evoke not only the atmosphere but also the grandeur which clearly figured in the film's conception – as an example of a late, very, very late, Romanticism. The Gothic is not easy to characterize, though inflamed emotions and scarcely-contained passions, a sense of awe and mystery, as well as the idea of a supernatural presence, might be included in a description. Romanticism would cover the time period in the film: the emphasis on sensitive, emotional figures, the exotic rather than the mundane and the familiar; the questioning, often in a hysterial fashion, of the existing order, especially in a moral sense; the desire to affirm eccentricity or a fierce independence, usually on the part of an individual; a scorn for the intellect and reason, and a privileging of the Promethean transgressor who steals fire from the heavens and confers it upon men and women; the love of sensation; and a profound longing, an *etwas mehr*... These are some of the things that one might include in the meaning of Romanti­cism. In a number of senses, the film might be called an example of this. Such works have much that is appealing and imaginative, but there are problems too in many, usually struc­tural in nature.

The film clearly draws on this recognizable *Weltanschauung*. Three examples should suf­fice to demonstrate this point: Campion's use of landscape and melodrama; the fascination with death and "sleep"; and the idea of an individual who attempts to break the manacles that a restrictive society and upbringing have applied.

It is clear in the film that the landscape has been chosen very carefully. At the outset, in the home of Ada (Holly Hunter), one gets a strong impression of enclosure and hence of sharply-restricted boundaries on literal and symbolic levels. When Ada is transported to the island, there is a greater sense of expansiveness, of wider horizons. The positioning of the piano itself on the beach is one of the crucial images in this respect. It not only suggests the intrusion of human artifice upon a pristine and wild environ­ment, the presence of a mechanical instrument in a world where form is stranger, wilder and more mutable, but it also reminds the viewer of the link between the flights of the imagination embodied in the sonatas that Ada plays and the restless surging of the waves around the shores.

In this context, Ada's clothes are important. She constantly walks through this wilderness covered in layer upon layer – itself an interesting strategy on a symbolic level – with corset, petti­coat, chemise, skirt, pantaloons, etc., and not surprisingly does experience some difficulty. (The film deals not just with her quest for freedom, but also with the symbolic removal of the
layers which hinder this — a point that is reinforced when Baines (Harvey Keitel) becomes her lover and asks her to remove one layer after another.)

The framing of a creeping plant, the supplejack, also adds much to the iconography of the film. This plant is dark, whorled and wild, and it suggests the tangled destinies which are unfolding, lives which are interconnected and which can barely be contained within imposed limitations because of the desires and yearning which course beneath the surfaces.

Attitudes towards the land are also revealing. The husband and colonizer (of sorts), Stewart (Sam Neill), seeks to increase his ownership of it, even at the expense of Ada’s joy. He attempts to shape it and control it, as he will attempt to control Ada and shape her life. Baines, his friend and aide, sees it as a means by which he can reach Ada and by which he can tempt Stewart. The Maoris seem to be quite at ease with and in it. It is so vividly captured that it becomes, almost, a character in the film, and its wild beauty and its desolate aspects add immeasurably to the sense of a melodrama of repression, suppression, dark passion and consequent violence unfolding on the screen.

The fascination with the sleep/death metaphor which is one of the principal tropes of the romantic œuvre is suggested in the quotation from Hood’s sonnet, “There is a silence where hath been no sound.” Here, silence connotes the suppressed voice, the stilled syllables — Ada has not spoken a word since the age of six (Jane Campion makes a number of points about the rather patronizing or suspicious attitude towards muteness in contemporary society and on the part of those who are products of it). In this context, the piano becomes the instrument of Ada’s thoughts and emotions, and Michael Nyman’s writing for the instrument in the film creates a wide range of moods, at times troubled and restless, at other times recalling the expansive, impassioned sonatas of Schubert’s late sonatas. That sleep of death which Hamlet had alluded to, and which romantic writers had been half in love with, is in fact a catalyst for Ada’s final transformation and release. Through an affirmation of the will, she surrounds both silence and death — or at least has begun to do so. Once freed from the imperious ethic which determines whom she will marry and where, she may, the film suggests, learn to speak again, though in a language, one assumes, that is more an expression of her own innermost being and not so much a reflection of stifling social conventions and codes. And with this rediscovered language, it seems, the boundaries of her world will be quite different.

The use of the camera also deserves mention. At times, it seems to be suspended in the heavens above the sea and the island as if to highlight a fate that is indifferent to the lives of these flawed but passionate and tormented characters; at other times its stillness emphasizes the ideas of imprisonment and stasis. At times, it enters the piano itself as if to remind the viewer of the barriers that delineate Ada’s world, at least temporarily, or it penetrates the undergrowth to signal a determination to proceed and not to be frustrated. Natural light is used often: the interplay of light and shadow in itself complements and highlights many of the thematic concerns.

It is not at all difficult to see why this film appealed so much to the learned panel of judges at Cannes. Like many notable romantic works — though there are times, too, when the film seems to question certain romantic conventions — there is much to affect and move the viewer/reader. But there are structural and other faults, too. The decision — one assumes that this is what it was — to exclude many motivations from the explicit content of the film might, in one sense, be seen to add something to the arguments. But, in another sense, it can and does detract from the cogency of the whole, for the ambiguities that arise dilute the sense of control and self-affirmation which the film otherwise attempts to emphasize, and leave quite a deal, much of it crucial, inadequately explained or even articulated. Befuddlement, rather than insight, is likely to be the result in these cases.

There are other problems, too: the Maoris, as a group, are too homogenous in the film, which would suggest that the writer had some problems in the writing of the parts; and there is some variation in the quality (the opening sequences and closing sequences are quite memorable; some of the sections in the central parts are less satisfying; some scenes are overdrawn). But it would be churlish to dwell on such things. This is deserving of praise for its visual qualities, for the grandeur of its conception and for its attempts to resurrect and transform an idiom that is memorably, even exultantly, cinematic.


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MERCHANT OF DREAMS: LOUIS B. MAYER, M.G.M. AND THE SECRET HOLLYWOOD

R.J. THOMPSON

I read every word of this book, albeit in short spurts: every two or three pages I cursed and slammed the book shut. That's how often it irritates. In between it bores. For most readers, it will not be time or money well-spent. The standard Louis B. Mayer hagiography, Bosley Crowther's Hollywood Rajah, is at least as good and more readable. Serious students of the structure and operation of Hollywood studios should go straight to Thomas Schatz's The Genius of the System. Connoisseurs of insiderism will find Samuel Marx's memoir, Mayer and Thalberg: The Make Believe Saints, more efficient and digestible than Merchant of Dreams.

But I did read it and have earned a bit of a whinge. First, the author: Charles Higham. In his biography of Errol Flynn, Higham revealed his subject not only as a bisexual but a Nazi spy as well; into the bargain, he tossed in a prologue in which he invites us to believe that he was (actually!) visited by Flynn's ghost, who's blessed admirers. In between it bores. For most readers, it will not be time or money well-spent. The greatest of these is its time-machine incarnation of a camp movie-buff style and culture - a mixture of idolatry and bitchiness - which existed between Kenneth Anger's first Hollywood Babylon and the onset of large-scale seriousness (about films, about sexuality) from the 1970s to the present. The book is a reminder that this world is neither dead nor in remission. It is here in plain old-fashioned name-dropping: "He managed to hire the celebrated Montreal surgeon Dr. Pierre Gareau who had operated recently on the Duchess of Connaught" (p. 22), the single mention not only of the Duchess but of Connaught in the entire book. A further reminder is Higham's constant practice of referring to himself as "the present author" throughout. The style, too, is Homeric and the onset of large-scale seriousness. Sometimes the words perform magic tricks: "The Selig Polyscope complex was 700 by 600 feet in diameter, shaped like a wedge." (p. 40). They may also deflate the apparent seriousness of the discussion at hand, as when the murder or suicide of Paul Bern depends on ideas about "pressing the nozzle [sic] of a gun to the right of that person's head" (p. 184). Far too often, the tactics would attract the attention of an AFL umpire: "Her marriage to John Farrow is rocky; he is a bully, a sadist, a fascist" (p. 274); neither evidence nor sources are given.

So much for the good news. An army of librarians, archivists, scholars and experts have searched libraries, archives, personal papers and interviews (it takes five pages of close type just to list them all) to provide Higham with a mountain of information and some major problems, the first of which is organization. He opts for a chronological structure. He chooses, probably unwisely, to have the book cover many different large topics: Mayer's professional life; Mayer's private life; studio and inter-studio politics; production operations; some of the films themselves; stars and personalities; and industry history - all bound up in a novelistic, unfolding narrative. The book is unable to do justice to any of them, let alone all of them.

The chronological sense of the book is undercut by the incessant shifting from one area or type of information to another. This grates when persons who died or were fired pages or chapters ago turn up happy as Larry and still on the payroll. Too often, the book is sketchy or elusive: when Mayer buys his first studio, we are told that he got it "for a very reasonable price" (p. 38). That's all? What was the price? Who said it was reasonable? At that time, what were the criteria for evaluating the price of a studio? The book is not interested in these questions, let alone the answers.

The system of sourcing and citation is chancy at best and frustrating to use. Bizarre factoids are occasionally thrown away without comment, such as the news that Duncan (the Cisco Kid) Renaldo "has been Robert Flaherty's assistant on the classics Nanook of the North and Moana" (p. 137); sometimes it's flat wrong: "an all-black movie, the first in history, to be entitled Hallelujah" (p. 134). The book says that M.G.M. had seven "sound stages" in 1923, and adds two or three updates to that number in following pages (p. 67 and on), all listed as "sound stages", all prior to the studio's shift to sound technology in 1928. Such things undermine confidence in an author who describes himself as "historian" and "scholar".

Because of the bitsiness of its continuity, the book underplays potentially strong material, particularly in the areas of Mayer/M.G.M.'s significant investments in other studios and pro-
Mayer is accused of bribing people, a charge
married in 1904, a father in 1905 and again in
the table, and so it misses virtually every chance
to one level of importance, and is then not willing
enough to query or to think about what it puts on
Case in point:
just sad after several repetitions). The present
unself-conscious form of gossip at that. The
Goetz, we get this:
daughter Edie regarding her husband William
rated family feud in which Mayer has certainly
been difficult and manipulative (at best) to his
people, a charge
highly rejects as unlikely. Higham's
failure to immediately convince because
the preceding 150 pages are a crowded inven-
tory of contract breaking, skimming kickbacks
off his stars' salaries, selling more than 100% of
a stock issue — à la Mel Brooks' The Producers
—and then, à la Alan Bond, organizing a financial
bail-out rescue for which he was later found to
be in violation of usury laws, so high was the
"fee" he charged for the favour; blackmail; coer-
cion; participation in manslaughter cover-ups;
dishonesty (you name it: with fearsome
regularity, every 75 pages or so, Mayer — while
still married — offers yet another stakeout
$1,000,000 or a multiple thereof to marry him;
this may be titillating the first time around but it's
just sad after several repetitions). The present
author one-eyed? After describing a compli-
cated family feud in which Mayer has certainly
been difficult and manipulative (at best) to his
dughter Edie regarding her husband William
Goetz, we get this:
They never spoke to each other again. Edie's
defection shamed him. She had the effron-
yety to say to the present author, "All he had to do was
call up and apologize to my husband." The only
person who should have apologized was William
Goetz. [p. 414]

Finally, for all its airs about scholarship and
research and history, the informing sensibility of
the book is that of gossip — and an unconsidered,
unself-conscious form of gossip at that. The
book too easily reduces all strata of information
to one level of importance, and is then not willing
even to query or to think about what it puts on
the table, and so it misses virtually every chance
to lift itself into interesting or useful positions.
Case in point:
"[Mayer] had a big thrill: his childhood idol, the
great cowboy star William S. Hart, arrived, car-
yring Billy the Kid's original revolver" [...] which
he presented to Mayer. [p. 163]

The book tells us Mayer was born in 1885,
moved in 1904, a father in 1905 and again in
1907. What it does NOT tell us is that Hart,
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SAFETY IN LIVE PERFORMANCE
A GUIDE TO THE PITFALLS OF
A PRODUCTION HANDBOOK:
[...] we are well aware that the dates we propose to mark the passage from one period to another are accommodations that we have allowed ourselves; that more rigorous, or different, criteria would result in a different breakdown; and that the very identity of the periods, their unity and coherence, is an invention after the fact. (p. 23)
The same is true in attempting to allocate for two or more of the essays useful categories or labels under which to characterize them. So
detailed, variable and somewhat fragmentary are each of the contributions that it is near impossible to section off parts of the book: some group together, in the next instant break apart, and then re-group with other essays only to break apart again.
This is a lively and charming publication, theoretical though largely undogmatic, and at times obsessively philosophical. The importance of Jean-Luc Godard: Son - Image lies in this mix of discontinuous, fragmentary voices, but voices that are continuously modifying, displacing, co-mingling with one another. Understandably, this is characterized to be the hallmark of a Godardian style. To take a small example, talk has it that publicity for Godard's latest film with Gérard Depardieu, Hélas, pour moi (Alas, for me), announces: Godard Depardieu — modifying, displacing, co-mingling.
These essays cross each other's borders as well as crossing borders between critique and auto-critique, History and (personal) history, life and fiction, film and literature, and painting and photography and video, and so forth. To provide an inventory of just such border-hopping is another near impossible task, yet each demonstrate intense interpretative skills as they shuttle between the 1960s and '80s and the periods in between. (On this last point, see especially
Leutrat and Alain Bergaia's beautiful essay, "The Other Side of the Bouchet").

BOOKS RECEIVED

COMPILRED BY RAFFAELE CAPUTO AND R. J. THOMPSON

FILM AND TELEVISION ACTING
Film and Television Acting takes a close look at the essential differences between theatre, film and television acting. While it is assumed the same principles would apply for each medium, subtle variations in technique can make an enormous difference in performances, especially between live and recorded mediums. The book provides theatre-trained students solid guidelines for developing believable performances for film and television. It contains a Foreword by Jack Lemmon and calls on the experiences of directors Norman Jewison and Glenn Jordan, and actors Louise Latham and Don Murray.

A PRODUCTION HANDBOOK: A GUIDE TO THE PITFALLS OF PROGRAMME MAKING
Peter Jarvis, Focal Press, Great Britain, 1993, 139 pp., pb, rrp $54.95
This book centres on location shooting and the problems that can arise if the programme-maker is unaware of particular procedures to be followed in the management of a production. This is a very useful A-to-Z of dicey organizational and legal matters likely to be encountered in location shooting.

SAFETY IN LIVE PERFORMANCE
Edited by George Thompson, Focal Press, Great Britain, 1993, 240 pp., pb, rrp $54
Even though this book is directly related to live performances such as concerts, there are still

cross-overs for film production, especially in the areas of safety principles and legislation. It is aimed at workers already in the industry and new entrants who need to know about the dangers inherent in their work. Like other Focal Press publications, its coverage of the field is comprehensive.

VIDEO TAPE EDITING: A POSTPRODUCTION PRIMER
Steven E. Browne, Focal Press, Boston-London, 1993, 300 pp., pb, rrp $69
Video technology is continually changing, yet none of the technological advances have altered the overall concepts of video editing. The key to understanding different types of equipment and technology is the ability to understand the basic concepts and how they relate to each other.

This an updated and expanded second edition provides the novice and professional alike with a basic understanding of the video post-production process.

VIDEO PRODUCTION HANDBOOK
Gerald Millerson, Focal Press, Great Britain, 1992, 245 pp., pb, rrp $79
A clear and comprehensive addition to books which outline basic video-making techniques. It is full of information about camera and audio equipment, lighting principles, shooting techniques and editing procedures. A highly-technical book but still useful for film-production courses, let alone the professional.

The following titles in the Cambridge Film Classics series are coming up for review in subsequent issues of Cinema Papers.

AVANT-GARDE FILM: MOTION STUDIES
Scott McDonald, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1993, 199 pp., rrp $29.95 (pb), $95 (hb)
THE FILMS OF ALFRED HITCHCOCK
THE FILMS OF ROBERTO ROSELLINI
Peter Bondanella, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1993, 183 pp., rrp $29.95 (pb), $95 (hb)
THE FILMS OF WOODY ALLEN
Sam B. Girgus, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1993, 146 pp., rrp $25 (pb), $80 (hb)

The series of Cambridge University Film Classics seeks to provide a forum for revisionist studies of what are considered to be classic works of cinema. Each volume provides an original introduction to the life and work of a particular director or, in some cases a genre, followed by critical essays on several of the director's most important films. Includes filmographies.

The series seems to have a long range plan with further titles coming up for release in October. These include: The Films of D. W. Griffith by Scott Simon; The Films of Joseph Losey by James Palmer and Michael Riley; The Films of Paul Morrissey by Maurice Yacowar; and finally

CINEMA PAPERS 95 - 55
The Films of Vincente Minnelli by James Naremore; Also released by Cambridge University Press are new and reprinted editions which are part of The Cambridge Studies in Film series. The following titles are up for review as well:

**ART & ARTISTS ON SCREEN**

**CONSTRUCTIVISM IN FILM: THE MAN WITH A MOVIE CAMERA, A CINEMATIC ANALYSIS**

**HAMMER AND BEYOND: THE BRITISH HORROR FILM**
Peter Hutchings, Manchester University Press, Manchester-New York, 193 pp., pb rrp $39.95

**INNOVATION IN ETHNOGRAPHIC FILM: FROM INNOCENCE TO SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS, 1955-1985**
Peter Loizos, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 224 pp., pb, rrp $39.95

**INSIDE SOVIET CINEMA: LAUGHTER WITH A LASH**
Edited by Andrew Horton, Cambridge University Press, New York, 171 pp., hb, rrp $95

**MELODRAMA AND ASIAN CINEMA**
Edited by Wimal Dissanayake, Cambridge University Press, New York, 281 pp., hb, rrp $99

**LITERATURE/FILM QUARTERLY: THE AUSTRALIAN CINEMA (VOLUME 21, NO. 2, 1993)**
Edited by Brian McFarlane, Salisbury State University, 1993, 169 pp., pb, rrp $12

The current issue of Literature/Film Quarterly is a special issue on "The Australian Cinema" edited by Brian McFarlane, a regular contributor to Cinema Papers and the author of several books on Australian cinema. Included are essays by Bruce Molloy, Graeme Turner, Geoff Mayer, Rose Lucas, Ina Bertrand, Lorraine Mortimer, Stephen Crofts and McFarlane. It will be reviewed in the next issue of Cinema Papers.

**THE MEDIA IN AUSTRALIA: INDUSTRIES, TEXTS, AUDIENCES**
Edited by Stuart Cunningham and Graeme Turner, Allen & Unwin, St. Leonards, 1993, 414 pp., pb, rrp $29.95

**NEW MEDIA TECHNOLOGIES (TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS SERIES)**
Edited by Rose Harley, Australian Film, Television and Radio School, North Ryde, 1993, 177 pp., pb, rrp $18

The above titles arrived too late for review in this issue; reviews will appear in future issues of Cinema Papers.

**SITES OF DIFFERENCE: CINEMATIC REPRESENTATION OF ABORIGINALITY AND GENDER**
Karen Jennings, Australian Film Institute, South Melbourne, 1993, 87 pp., pb, rrp $14.95

Sites of Difference launches the AFI's current initiative in monograph publications. Karen Jennings examines a range of features, documentaries and experimental films which focus substantially on Aboriginal women. A review will be published in our next issue.

**WHO'S WHO IN HOLLYWOOD**
Edited by Robyn Karney, Bloomsbury, London, 1993, 499 pp., pb, rrp $49.95

This A-to-Z of "actors and directors in Hollywood" is a mine of information. It was written by eleven journalists "dedicated to film", and edited by Robyn Karney, who clearly had a tough time choosing who to fit in - the Introduction apologizes for several omissions (James Foley and Steve Buscemi, to name but two).

From an Australian viewpoint, the slim selection of local-bred talent is puzzling: no George Miller (what does a director have to do?) and no Phil Noyce, even though he recently made two A pictures in Hollywood. Fred Schepisi makes it, but not Gillian Armstrong or Simon Wincer. Mel, of course, breezes in, but not Judy Davis!

So, while Aussie spotters will be disappointed, others will enjoy the resplendence of birthday entries, the varied details interspersed in the text (Drew Barrymore was actually christened Andrew!) and filmographies (Schepisi's, for one, is accurate). Pity, though, about the price. S.M.
This essential reference book documents and analyses all the theatrically-released Australian feature films from 1978-1992. Over 350 stills illustrate the text, which covers every aspect of production, financing, casting and even the critics reactions to the films.

Australian Film 1978-1992 comprehensively and accurately records each film's technical and cast credits. Carrying on the spirit of Andrew Pike and Ross Cooper's pioneering Australian Film 1900-1977, this book will become the essential reference work of this period.

Scott Murray - himself a prominent writer on film - has commissioned succinct articles on all the films of the past fifteen years from exceptional writers such as Keith Conolly, Phillipa Hawker and Adrian Martin. The detail and accuracy of each article is extremely impressive.

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Scott Murray is a film-maker and the editor of Cinema Papers.

Contributors include Keith Conolly - longtime film critic for the Melbourne Herald, now with the Sunday Age - Geoff Gardner, Paul Harris and Adrian Martin.
A wide variety of releases and imports this month. Works of real originality which stand on their own, away from the images they were written to accompany, are rare as ever, but those to whom the word "nostalgia" means something are well served and there are plenty of entertaining discs.

**CLIFFHANGER** (SCOTTI BROS. 72392 75415-2)
The mountain scenery in this action adventure is certainly spellbinding which is perhaps why composer Trevor Jones consciously or unconsciously quoted the opening of Miklos Rozsa’s well-remembered theme for Spellbound as the opening of his major theme for this film. This is a pity really, since it takes away from the rather majestic and certainly appropriate mood Jones presumably had in mind. He tends also to use the same distinctive opening notes for a lot of the variations employed throughout the movie, so one expects at any moment that Peck and Bergman may ski up to Sly Stallone and give him their advice on getting rid of the villains.

This overall, is a big score, well orchestrated and performed with enthusiasm by the London Philharmonic, but one frankly for the traditionalists – and maybe for those who don’t know the Spellbound theme!

**THE TEMP** (VARÈSE SARABANDE VSD-5410)
The reviews for this movie were of the kind which makes producers shudder. The Temp is almost certain to be on video shelves before you can repeat the adjectives used to describe it, the kindest being “derivative” and “pointless”. It is an attempt, presumably, at a thriller of the Basic Instinct- and Hand That Rocked The Cradle-type. The music by a new name to me, Frederic Talgorn, is competent, smoothly romantic with sinister undertones as befits a story in which the good-looking “Temp” (Lara Flynn Boyle) at a firm in Portland climbs her way up the corporate ladder leaving dead executives in her wake.

That curious instrument called the Ondes Martenot gets a work-out on some tracks (“Main Title” and “Masturbation”(!) for example), which adds to a slight eeriness to the proceedings, but the themes are not particularly distinguished.

**THE FIRM** (MCA/GRP MGD 9007)
The Dave Grusin score on disc contains much that wasn’t featured in the film, but if you’re a fan of Grusin’s piano playing you won’t mind a bit. Without being able to check, even the track labelled “Main Title” and “Masturbation”(!) for example), which adds to a slight eeriness to the proceedings, but the themes are not particularly distinguished.

**FREE WILLY** (EPIC SOUNDRAX EK57880)
Basil Poledouris gets the credit on the CD cover for composing and conducting the music for director Simon Wincer’s boy-meets-whale movie, but make no mistake – the record is being sold on the music of Michael Jackson, NRTOB, Funky Poets and others, with the emphasis on “Will You Be There”, a lyrical, sentimental and spectacularly engineered tune performed and written by Jackson and heard twice on the disc.

This is sub-titled “Theme from Free Willy”, but you have to get to Track 6 before the “Main Title” by Basil pops up. When it does, it’s worth waiting for. A big orchestra, a wordless chorus, plenty of percussion, and, even though the actual theme lacks real grandeur, Poledouris and his orchestrator (Greig McRitchie) have come up with some evocative sounds, redolent of seascapes, as the music surges and swirls. Lots of variety and synthesizers are effectively blended and used. Overall, this should please anyone looking for a memento of a film which, by all accounts, exceeded expectations.

**DENNIS THE MENACE**

**RICH IN LOVE** (VARÈSE SARABANDE VSD-5370)
This film was the last for Georges Delerue who died of a stroke after having just finished recording the score. Delerue, who had been writing finely-crafted and inventive scores for decades, made his name with François Truffaut and ended his career with Bruce Beresford, who has written a loving tribute to him in the notes accompanying the disc.

Cartoonish in style as befits the sort of movie it accompanies, Goldsmith, his superb orchestralists (Arthur Morton and Alexander Courage) and his equally fine musicians bring out all the humour and ingenuity of the score. Special credit – richly deserved – is given to the tuba and harmonica soloists (Jim Self and Tommy Morgan), who get a good work-out. Goldsmith has written scores of far more intrinsic interest than this, but there seems no diminution in his enthusiasm and musical ability to write appropriately for whatever is offered him – the mark of a true professional. However, surely only those who collect Goldsmith will want this record. Admirers of the movie will get all they want from this.

**DEER IN THE HEADLIGHT**

**RESERVOIR DOGS**

**THE TEMP**

**CLIFFHANGER**

**THE FIRM**

**FREE WILLY**

**RICH IN LOVE**

**DENNIS THE MENACE**

**SOFT ONES**

**THE TEMP**

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**FREE WILLY**

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**THE TEMP**

**CLIFFHANGER**

**THE FIRM**

**FREE WILLY**

**RICH IN LOVE**

**DENNIS THE MENACE**

**SOFT ONES**

**THE TEMP**

**CLIFFHANGER**

**THE FIRM**

**FREE WILLY**

**RICH IN LOVE**

**DENNIS THE MENACE**

**SOFT ONES**
Another composer with more movie credits than one can name is Ennio Morricone, who has written the score for Clint Eastwood’s new thriller “In the Line of Fire.” Morricone has written some marvelous scores, but this isn’t particularly memorable. It sounds as if it would work well enough in the cinema, but as a listening experience it seems too tied in to the action to make much sense away from the visuals. Morricone always writes a pretty good romantic theme, though, so try Tracks 2, 11 and 21, where “Lilly and Frank” gets a good work-out.

**THEMEs FROM CLASSIC SCIENCE FICTION, FANTASY AND HORROR FILMS**

The themes come mainly from Universal movies of the 1950s (TaraTula, Creature From the Black Lagoon, This Island Earth, etc.) and the disc itself is a re-issue of an old Coral Records LP. The arrangements of the music by Henry Mancini, Hans J. Salter and others are by the conductor Dick Jacobs, and, as a whole, don’t sound all that interesting by themselves. They give a fair representation of the sounds, but the excitement is decidedly missing — but then, so is much of the excitement from the films themselves! Recording is a bit on the thin side, but the liner notes are good and comprehensive.

Two Elmer Bernstein scores from the 1950s are re-issued on CD (CNR CNS5004) and are of considerable interest. Bernstein is back working regularly after a time in the ‘70s, when he seemed to have had few commissions. In the ‘50s, he was particularly active, and his often strongly melodic, sometimes jazz-flavoured dramatic scores accompanied some big films. *Kings Go Forth* (1958) and *Some Came Running* (1959) both starred Frank Sinatra. Neither are great movies, but the scores are good examples of his work, with *Some Came Running* having the edge.

*Kings Go Forth* is a wartime love story set in Italy in the ‘40s. The music is by turn military, pastoral and romantic, but somehow the material doesn’t seem to have inspired Bernstein to give his best. Tracks 5 and 6, however, are very attractively played and melodically appealing.

*Some Came Running*, with its wide variety of themes and styles, is one of Bernstein’s best efforts. Bluesy, jazzy at times ("Ginny’s Theme", Track 21), romantic in the best ’50s Hollywood manner ("Gwen’s Theme", Track 20), the score gives its cardboard characters some depth. The pursuit music (Track 28) is a good example of Bernstein at his most angular and agitated, combining themes and propelling the whole thing along with steadily increasing excitement as its hero is pursued by a vengeful enemy through Mardi Gras crowds.

Let’s finish this round-up with genuinely contrasting movie soundtracks.

**SLEEPLESS IN SEATTLE**

The "chick’s" movie everyone seems to enjoy has an eclectic collection of singers and tunes to help tell its story. Jimmy Durante, of all people, sets the scene and ends it as well with inimitable versions of "As Time Goes By" and "Make Someone Happy", while Nat Cole sings "Stardust" and Joe Cocker "Bye Bye Blackbird". Carly Simon’s "Wee Small Hours of the Morning" is worth the price of the disc alone, in my opinion.

Reservoir Dogs and The Piano could hardly be more different in style and content if they tried — and that includes the music that accompanies the images. Both are highly successful movies and the music in both is memorable, though again for different reasons.

**RESERVOIR DOGS**

This is a great sounding disc of songs, mainly of the ‘70s, many introduced by the most spaced-out or laid-back disc jockey you’ve ever heard. "Little Green Bag", "Hooked On A Feeling", "Coconut" are among the tracks, but the use of "Stuck In The Middle With You" during the ear-slicing sequence will ensure that you’ll never seem quite the same about that song again. The disc also includes part of the opening dialogue sequence, an analysis by members of the "dogs" of Madonna’s "Like A Virgin" which won’t be heard on local radio unless attitudes change and broaden considerably.

More dialogue excerpts on discs of movie soundtracks could only improve sales, incidentally, although costs would be prohibitive, one presumes.

**THE PIANO**

You wouldn’t get much dialogue from Holly Hunter in *The Piano* since she’s a mute. The Michael Nyman score for that film doesn’t leave much room for dialogue anyhow. It’s a generous CD with a lot more music than actually is heard in Jane Campion’s film. Nyman’s work here has a wider appeal than his music for Peter Greenaway’s films, for example. Although there are some tracks which seem to waffle about without much purpose, his Gaelic-flavoured theme associated with Ada is quite haunting, whether as a piano solo (Track 4) or arranged for a larger orchestra.

Track 12 ("Lost and Found") is another compelling track and the final "Dreams Of A Journey" (Track 19) is Nyman at his individual best. Some tracks and abruptly, but this should not bother too much those who loved the film and appreciate Nyman’s work for it. Nyman’s own notes on the composition of the music are instructive.

NB: As usual, many thanks to readings for supplying the CDs for review.

*Australia’s First Films*

Two weeks later, *The Sydney Morning Herald* advertised the Polytechnic’s surviving equipment for sale by auction. It included the Edison and Wrench projectors, two kinetoscopes, a movie camera and two hundred films. Some of it went on to be advertised in the “special lines” section of *Australasian Photographic Review* during June, July and August 1899.

From 28 March 1899, the Polytechnic re-opened with a *Great Spanish Bullfight film*, but attendances were poor and it closed when Blow’s lease expired on 30 April 1899. Eighteen months later, St. Hill and Moodie opened a New Polytechnic in George Street, but without Blow’s technical support they produced no local film. Mark Blow didn’t resume production until May 1901, when the Royal Visit for the first opening of Federal Parliament provided an event worthy of coverage. One of our coming instalments dealing with film of Australian Federation will cover this effort.

With the demise of Blow’s Polytechnic early in 1899, Sydney production ground to a standstill for almost two years.

**BLOW’S POLYTECHNIC FILMOGRAPHY**

None of these films, which were from one to three minutes in length, are known to survive. Film programmes were not always rigorously listed in *The Sydney Morning Herald* advertisements, so there may be some omissions.

(1) Bondi Bathers

(2) Congregation Leaving Grace Church, Easter Sunday (1897)

(3) S.S. “Miowera” with NSW Premier G. H. Reid Arriving in Sydney
   Refer *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 September 1897, p. 2. Premier Reid returning from England, where he took part in Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee Procession.

(4) Randwick Races
   Refer *Australasian Photographic Review*, 21 September 1897, p. 23.

(5) A Cruise Around the “Miowera”
   Refer *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 September 1897, p. 3. May be the same film as (3).
(6) Maypole Dance, Public Schools’ Carnival Agricultural Showgrounds, Sydney
   Refer The Sydney Morning Herald, 25 September 1897, p. 2. Shot 18 September 1897.
(7) (a) Start and Finish of 1897 Melbourne Cup
   (b) The Winner, ‘Gaulus’, Being Led to the Starting Gate
   (c) Crowds on the Lawns at Flemington
   Refer The Sydney Morning Herald, 4 November 1897, p. 2. Premiered in Sydney on the evening of the day after the race, 3 November 1897. Other versions of this event were shot by E. J. Thwaites and A. J. Perier.
(8) Sydney Wheel Race
   Refer The Sydney Morning Herald, 6 November 1897, p. 2. Bicycle race held at the Agricultural Grounds, Moore Park, won by W. J. Elliott. Shot at 4:30 pm, 6 November 1897, exhibited at 10:30 pm the same night. Refer The Sydney Morning Herald, 8 November 1897, p. 2.
(9) Arrival of Special Melbourne Cup Train at Flemington Station
   Refer The Sydney Morning Herald, 9 November 1897, p. 2. Added to Melbourne Cup film set.
(10) Breakers at Bondi
   Refer The Sydney Morning Herald, 11 December 1897, p. 2. Taken 10 December 1897.
(11) Breakers at the Bogey Hole, Coogee
(12) Scenes of First Test Match N.S.W. versus England
   Refer The Sydney Morning Herald, 24 January 1898, p. 2. Shot at Sydney Cricket Ground.
(13) Australians Leaving the Field During the First Test Match, England vs. Aust.
   Refer The Sydney Morning Herald, 1 February 1898, p. 2. Passing views of Messrs Darling, Iredale, McLeod, Hill, Gregory, Trumble, Lyons, Trott, Kelly, Jones and McKibbin. Shot at Sydney Cricket Ground (could be the Barnett film, q.v.)
(14) The Two English Batsmen, Ranjitsinhji and McLaren
   Refer The Sydney Morning Herald, 1 February 1898, p. 2. Included views of umpires going off the field. Refer The Sydney Morning Herald, 5 February 1898, p. 12. (Possibly Barnett’s film.)
(15) Departure of S.S. “Ophir” for England
   Refer The Sydney Morning Herald, 4 February 1898, p. 2.
(16) Fort Street School, Church Hill
   Refer The Sydney Morning Herald, 8 February 1898, p. 2. Showed the children coming out of the school at midday. Refer also The Sydney Morning Herald, 15 February 1898, p. 2.
(17) Ferry Landing Passengers At Milson’s Point
   Refer The Sydney Morning Herald, 19 February 1898, p. 2. Shot at 10 am, 18 February 1898.
(18) Sea Taken from R.M.S. “Ormuz” in mid-Ocean
   Refer The Sydney Morning Herald, 19 February 1898, p. 2. Taken by Blow down the side of the liner.
(19) George Street, Opposite Redfern Railway Station
   Refer The Sydney Morning Herald, 19 February 1898, p. 2. A film advertised in Australasian Photographic Review, 24 August 1899, as “Broadway at Post Office” may be this film. Length 150 feet, offered for 10/-.
(20) George Street, in front of New Markets
   Refer The Sydney Morning Herald, 19 February 1898, p. 2.
(21) Governor Brasseys Crossing Princes Bridge, Melbourne
   Refer The Sydney Morning Herald, 19 Feb. 1898, p.2.
(22) Hon. G. H. Reid with His Colonial Escort
(23) Bent Street Tram Terminus
   Refer The Sydney Morning Herald, 24 February 1898, p. 2. Advertized in Australasian Photographic Review, 24 June 1899, length 75 feet, price 10/-.
(24) Northern Mail Arriving at Strathfield
   Refer The Sydney Morning Herald, 24 February 1898, p. 2.
   Refer The Sydney Morning Herald, 25 February, 1898, p. 2. Shot at 1 pm, 24 February 1898. Refer also The Sydney Morning Herald, 26 February 1898, p. 2.
(26) Passengers Leaving Redfern Station
   Refer The Sydney Morning Herald, 26 February 1898, p. 2. Shot at 8:10 am, 25 February 1898.
(27) East Sydney Rowing Club
   Refer The Sydney Morning Herald, 8 March 1898, p. 2. Shot 5 March 1898.
(28) Mort’s Dock Employees Going to the Pay Box
   Refer The Sydney Morning Herald, 22 March 1898, p. 2. Shot 19 March 1898.
(29) Platelayers on the Tram Line, Elizabeth Street, Sydney
   Refer The Sydney Morning Herald, 26 March 1898, p. 2.
(30) Divers at Farmer’s Baths Sydney
   Refer The Sydney Morning Herald, 21 April 1898, p. 2. Included Cavill, Farmer, Lane, Reid, Little and Norman.
(31) The Wreck of the “Hereward”
   Refer The Sydney Morning Herald, 9 May 1898, p. 2. Shot at Maroubra beach, where this square rigger had run aground. Advertised for sale in Australasian Photographic Review, 24 June 1899. Film length 75 feet, offered at 10/-.
(32) Queen’s Birthday Review at Centennial Park
   Refer The Sydney Morning Herald, 25 May 1898, p. 2. A long film taken on 24 May 1898, probably in one continuous shot of the passing troops reviewing before Governor Hampden. Troops shown included Permanent Artillery, 1st and 2nd Regiments, Scotch and Irish Rifles, Naval Brigade and New South Wales Lancers. Advertised for sale in Australasian Photographic Review, 24 June 1899. Length 150 feet, sale price 30/-.
(33) Club-Swinging by Mr. Renshaw and his Pupils
   Refer The Sydney Morning Herald, 26 May 1898, p. 2.
(34) N.S.W. Governor and his Escort Going to the Opening of NSW Parliament
   Refer The Sydney Morning Herald, 23 June 1898, p. 2.
(35) Sydney Public Schools Carnival
   Refer The Sydney Morning Herald, 17 September 1898, p. 2. Showed children at this sporting carnival, shot 16 September 1898. The event was covered in two films. Refer The Sydney Morning Herald, 19 September 1898, p. 3
(36) (A) Arrival of the Governor, Lord Hampden, at Sydney Metropolitan Fire Brigade
   (B) Gallop Past of the Sydney Fire Brigade
   (C) Brigade Practice - General Turn-Out
   Refer The Sydney Morning Herald, 21 September 1898, p. 2. Shot
same day, in Castlereagh Street, Sydney. Detail in The Sydney Morning Herald, 1 October 1898, p. 2. These are probably the films advertised in Australasian Photographic Review, 24 June 1899, as:

1. The Fire Brigade at Work (50 feet)
2. Rescuing Children (50 feet, available with the above for £2)
3. Start of Fire Brigade (50 feet, £1)

(37) Arrival of S.S. Manly at Manly
Refer The Sydney Morning Herald, 29 September 1898, p. 2.

(38) Children Playing on the Sands at Manly
Refer The Sydney Morning Herald, 29 September 1898, p. 2.

It is quite possible that some of these films might survive. Apart from the sale after the Polytechnic fire, Blow was advertising these films for sale to independent exhibitors from 27 April 1898 through The Sydney Morning Herald.

Our next issue highlights the Queensland film producers of the 1890s:

1. G. Boivin (1897), Professor A. C. Haddon (1898), Fred Wills and Harold Mobshby (1899). We will investigate the largest surviving collection of Australian colonial film, still awaiting a public premiere promised 94 years ago!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, my thanks go to Pat Laughren and the staff of Griffith University for funding and supporting the Queensland Vintage Film Project, from which this Australia-wide project grew. For the information on E. J. Thwaites, I am particularly indebted to his daughters, Beth Clark (Melbourne) and Doreen Maxwell (Peregian Beach). Peter Burgis of Port Macquarie provided the initial contact. The National Film & Sound Archive’s Melbourne Office was exceptionally helpful in expediting access to films and documentation. I should particularly mention the assistance of Ken Berryman and Meg Labrum in the context of this instalment.

Further information and/or corrections to the ms were provided by Clive Sowry (Wellington, New Zealand), John Barnes (England), Allan Davies (Sydney), Judy Adamson (Sydney), Graham Shirley (Sydney) and Gae Newton (Canberra).

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 all made vital contributions to the work. Phil Grace (Melbourne) was constantly helpful with information on equipment and processing technology.

The newspaper staff of the State Libraries in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia provided the core of my data base. Lastly my thanks go to Prudence Speed (to become Mrs. Prue Long on 7 November) for her constant support, encouragement and empathy.

Notes

1. Tasmanian Evening News (Hobart), 24 December 1906, p. 4; 29 December 1906, p. 5.
2. War Cry (Melbourne), 6 August 1904, p. 12. Newcastle Herald, 15 August 1904 (the film was shot in North Queensland). Northern Miner (Charters Towers), 4 November 1904.
3. Argus (Melbourne), 9 March 1901, p. 15; 11 March 1901; 15 March 1901; 29 March 1901.
4. South Australian Register (Adelaide), 20 December 1898. War Cry, 1 July 1899, p. 3.
5. Mark Blow, actively producing in Sydney, August 1897 to March 1899.
6. The Salvation Army's Australian coverage was recently restored and released in the NFSA video, Federation Films (1991).
7. Unidentified cutting, probably from Melbourne Argus, labelled “1892”, formerly held by Thwaites’ daughter, the late Doreen Maxwell, of Peregian Beach, Queensland.
8. A photo of Thwaites at the tiller of this car in the course of an 1898 demonstration at St Kilda cricket ground survives, together with oral family accounts connected with it.
11. Colonel Lumare (probably a pseudonym) acquired the “Cinématographe Perfectionne” originally imported by Gustave Neymark, probably the first projector landed in Australia. He toured Northern Victoria with it January-March 1897 before purchasing Thwaites’ films for the Tasmanian tour during March-June 1897. He returned to Victoria on 19 June with shows at Ballarat. His last known show was at Castlemaine, 23 August 1897. A. J. Pigon, the Paris optician whose projector Lumare used, first demonstrated it in Paris under the name of the “Cinégraphoscope” on 2 March 1896.
15. Charles Musser, loc. cit., p.145 et seq.
16. The cover of the flip-book has a printed identification stating its title and the maker of the film.
21. Ibid., 16 October 1897, p. 8.
22. Leader, 23 October 1897, p. 22.
24. Ballarat Star, 9 November 1897, p. 3.
25. Argus, 20 August 1898, p. 16.
26. Ibid.
27. Everyones, 13 June 1923, p. 38: “Another Pioneer of the Movies”. Ibid., 15 December 1926, p. 126. Several Bond projectors are held in a Melbourne private collection.
28. Alex Gunn: Catalogue and Supplement of Apparatus, Dissolving Views etc.. Copy held by Ian MacFarlane, Public Records Office, Laverton, Victoria. Date of receipt of catalogue by Victorian Government is listed on front cover as July 1898.
29. Unidentified clipping held by Thwaites’ daughter, the late Doreen Maxwell.
32. Obituary clippings held by Doreen Maxwell, including Argus, 13 July 1933.
43. The Sydney Morning Herald, 2 March 1897, p. 2.
44. Ibid., 8 June 1897, p. 7.
46. Australasian Photographic Review, 19 June 1897, p. 27.
47. Ibid., 21 September 1897, p. 23: “At the Randwick Races”.
49. Ibid., 13 March 1899, p. 3.
50. Ibid., 28 March 1899, p. 2.
51. Ibid., 29 April 1899, p. 2.
52. Ibid., 18 May 1901, p. 12.
PRODUCTION SURVEY

INFORMATION IS CORRECT AND ADJUDGED AS OF 3/9/93.

THAT EYE THE SKY
Prod. company Entertainment Media
Dist. company Beyond Films
Pre-production
Production 25/10/93 ...
Post-production 20/12/93 ...
Principal Credits
Director: John Ruane
Producer: Peter Bellby
Co-producer: Grainne Marmion
Exec. producers: Fred Schepisi
Robert Le Tat
Tim Bevan
Scriptwriters: John Ruane
Jim Barton
Based on the novel That Eye the Sky
Written by Tim Winton
DOP: Ellery Ryen
Sound recordist: Lloyd Carrick
Editor: Ken Saltos
Prod. designer: Chris Kennedy
Costume designer: Vicki Friedman
Planning and Development
Script writer: John Flaus
Casting: Maura Fay & Associates
Production Crew
Prod. manager: Tony Leach
Prod. co-director: Susie Wright
Prod. secretary: Robin Astley
Location manager: Maurice Burns
Unit manager: Michael Batchelor
Prod. accountant: Kevin Flaherty
Jardines
Completion guarantor First Australian Completion Bond Company
Legal services: Holding Redlich
Camera Crew
Camera operator: Mandy Walker
Key grip: Barry Harsen
Gaffer: Ted Norden
On-set Crew
1st assistant director: Phil Jones
2nd assistant director: Annie Berfred
Make-up: Amanda Rowbottom
Make-up ass't: Zelka Stann
Special fx supervisor: Michael Badlon
Art Department
Art director: Brian Dusting
Art dept co-director: Sharon Young
Post-production
Asst editor: Maria Kaltenharn
Lab: Cinexus
Marketing
Intr. sales agent: Beyond Films
Publicity: Palace Publicity
Cast: [No further details supplied]
Synopsis: A young boy struggles to free his father from a coma following a car accident.

VACANT POSSESSION
Prod. company Wintertime Films
Pre-production
Production
Principal Credits
Director: Margot Nash
Producer: John Winter
Scriptwriter: Margot Nash
DOP: Dion Beebe
Other Credits
Casting: Barry Harsen, Susan halford
Prod. manager: Susan Wright
Location manager: Dion Beebe
Unit manager: Nick Dale
Production crew: David Rosenthal
Red Processing Co.
Production
Intr. sales agent: Beyond Films
Publicity: Palace Publicity
Cast: [No further details supplied]
Synopsis: A young boy struggles to free his father from a coma following a car accident.

June
FEATURES
ROUGH DIAMONDS
Director: Donald Crombie. Screenwriters: Donald Crombie, Christopher Lee. Mike Tyrell is a Queensland cattlemen who seems not to have a care in the world but in reality is a young man with responsibilities beyond his years. His life changes when the cattle truck he is driving hits a parked car that belongs to barrister's wife Christine Bright, a former professional singer.

FIFTY YEARS OF SILENCE
(1 TV hour) City Pictures. Producers: Ned Landers, Carol Ruff. Director: Ned Landers. Screenwriter: Carole Bulan. Mrs Jan Ruff-O'Meara, an Adelaide grandmother, has broken her 50 years of silence. As a young Dutch Indonesian girl in a prisoner of war camp in Java during World War II she endured countless rapes and beatings. In 1992, along with two other Dutch women who were enforced prostitutes for Japanese officers, she appeared before the International Public Hearing for Post-War Compensation in Tokyo.

WARRIORS IN TRANSIT
(1 TV hour) Tracey Gromme. Producers: Tracey Gromme, Liz Thompson, Tom Zabrycki. Directors: Tracey Gromme, Liz Thompson. Screenwriters: Tracey Gromme, Liz Thompson. Seen through the eyes of William Takaku, the director of Papua New Guinea's National Theatre Company, this film will examine how theatrical performances are being used in urban centres to guide people through the confusing turmoil of their world. Film will use the look of theatre as an educational tool to inform villagers in rural areas about the long-term consequences of logging on the environment.

BOYS AND BALLS

July
FEATURES
NAPOLEON
(100 mins) Film Australia/Flurry Features. Executive producers: Ron Saunders, Maisato Hara. Producers: Mario Andreaechio, Michael Bourchier. Screenwriters: Mario Andreaechio, Michael Bourchier. Napoleon is a puppy dog happily living with a family in suburban. He is unexpectedly lifted out of his backyard and transported into a natural bushland world.

TELEVISION DRAMA
MINI-SERIES
BURNT BRIDGE

LIFT OFF 2
(13 x 1 hour) Australian Children's Television Foundation. Executive producer: Patricia Edgar. Producers: Patricia Edgar, Sue Seabrook. The sequel to the highly-acclaimed series continues to entertain and guide young children discovering the world, exploring and having fun.

DOCUMENTARIES
THE SCHOOL OF BABEL

ISLANDS OF FIRE AND MAGIC

THE RAINBOW WOMAN
(1 TV hour) Magic Lantern Productions. Producers: Andrew Wiseman, Co-producer: Manuela Alberti, Director: Manuela Alberti. Screenwriter: Manuela Alberti. Lyndall Hendrickson has received world acclaim for her unorthodox methods of teaching music to gifted children as well as those with severe autism. The film presents her current work with Patrick Farley, an 11-year-old autistic boy, who can now play piano duets with his teacher.

THE PARISH
(1 TV hour) OOP Limited. Executive producer: Geoff Barnes (SBS). Producers: Andrew Wiseman, Jack White. Director: Mark Osborne. Screenwriter: Mark Osborne. The parish of St. Ambrose, a modern Catholic community in inner-city Brunswick, is a microcosm of Australian society. The documentary explores this dynamic community and the daily routine of its engaging characters. The film presents the work of American scientist, Dr. Peggy Rismiller, who studies these little-known mammals against a chemical company, and becomes ensnared in a web of lies and corruption. [No further details supplied]

MURIEL'S WEDDING
Prod. company House & Moorhouse Films Dist. company Village Roadshow Pre-production 23/8/93 ...
Production 18/10/93 ...
Principal Credits
Director: Paul J. Hogan
Producers: Lynda House
Scriptwriters: Jocelyn Moorhouse, Tony Mahood
Sound recordist: Michael D. Aglionby
Editor: David Lee
Prod. designer: Patrick Readon
Costume designer: Terry Ryan
Planning and Development
Casting: Alison Barrett
Production Crew
Pro. manager Katharine "Tatts" Bishop
Project manager: Roverso Takawa
Prod. secretary: Sherry Mansur
Location manager: Patricia Blunt
Production runner: Martin Williams
Prod. accountant: Money Lamer
Insurer:
Completion guarantor: Film Finances
Legal services: Roth Warren

Cinema Crew
Camera operator: David William
On-set Crew
1st assistant director: Tony Mahood
2nd assistant director: John Martin
3rd assistant director: Karen Mahood
Continuity: Daphne Paris
Art Department
Art director: Hugh Batheup
Art dept co-ord: Christina Norman
Art dept runner: Peter Forbes
Set dressers: Glen W. Johnson
Steady props: Robert Moxham
Post-production
Film editor: 35mm
Government Agency Investment Development Film Victoria
Production Production FFC
Marketing
Intr. sales agent: Gilby Salas
Publicity: Village Roadshow
Cast: Toni Collette (Muriel), Bill Hunter (Bill).
Synopsis: Sometimes your better half is you.

NOTE: Production Survey forms now adhere to a revised format. Cinema Papers regrets it cannot accept information received in a different format, as it does not have the staff to re-process the information.

FEATURES PRE-PRODUCTION
EBB TIDE
Prod. company Genesis Films Budget $2.6 million
Principal Credits
Director: Craig Lahiff
Producers: Craig Lahiff
Scriptwriters: Paul Davies
Writers: Helen Leake
Prod. designer: Peter Gorham
Costume designer: Warwick Hind
Other Credits
Guaage: 35mm
Length: 94 mins
Synopsis: A lawyer takes a compensation case against a chemical company, and becomes ensnared in a web of lies and corruption. [No further details supplied]

SUMMER LUMBER
Prod. company Hidden Farm Productions Pre-production 19/8/93 ...
Production 10/1/94 ...
Principal Credits
Director: David Dettling
Producers: Elkhart & Moxham
Art director: Phillip Greenhough
Production designer: Adele Cooper
Set dressers: Lynne Evans
Make-up: Kelvin Cockburn
Sound recordist: Mike McGraw
Camera operator: Robert Balin
Editor: David Greenhough
Prod. design: Aggie Hooper
The film will explore a real-life family and community in rural Victoria, and the effects of the war over a generation in the small country town of Hay in Western NSW.
The Seventh Floor

Directed by John Sexton

Produced by

Peter Chilvers

Principal Credits

Director: John Sexton

Producer: John Sexton

Executive Producers: Victor Glynn

Productions: Chris Brown

Hyouku Ikeda

Youhisho Watanabe

Susumu Konno

Alan Balaman

Tony McPhettr

DOP

Martin Grinagh

Sound recordist

Gunks Sics

Tim Wellburn

Producer

Roger Ford

Design

Terry Ryan

Composer

Roger Mason

Planning and Development

Maura Fay & Assoc.

Production Crew

Prod. manager: Stephen Jones

Production co-ords: Barbara Ring

Producer: Nathalie Capone

Sanctuary

Art director

Richard Stilgoe

Location manager

Phil Roopen

Unit manager

Bob Graham

Production runner

Jamie Platt

Prod. accountant

Sally Campbell

Insurer

Hammond Hewlett

Completion guarantor

Finnish Finances

Legal services

Maelstroms Stephens Jacques

Travel

Jet Aviation

上映

DOP

John Christopher

Sound recordists

Kevin Faucett

Editor

Henry Dangar

Composer

Laurie Landmark

Storyboard artist

Brandan Hird

Shooting schedule

Keith Hayget

Budgeted by

Julia Ritchie

Production Crew

Prod. manager

Julia Ritchie

Prod. co-ordinators

Rowena Talcake

Caroline Somerh

Production manager

Rick Komaat

Unit manager

Will Milne

Unit assist

Russell Fawcett

Unit assist

Virginia Croell

Production runner

Julian Ryan

Prod. accountant

Dianne Brown

Insurer

Steven Lewey

Completion guarantor

Finnish Finances

Legal services

Michael Frankel & Co.

Camera Crew

Focus puller

Gusher

Camera

Michael Frankel & Co.

Camera equipment

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Camera
Beyond Distribution
Jo Fairburn
Tony Read
David Watts
Lynne O'Brien
Tony Read
Rondor Music
John Anderson (location)
Lara Griffin
Simon Leadley
George Ogilvie
Kathleen Bourke
Julia Gelhard
Graham Burke
Graham Ellery
Jennifer des Champs
Susan Beak
Gail Hall
Andrew Friedman
Anna French
Heather Muirhead
Barbara Lucas
The Battlers
Margaret Antoniak
Sandra Gross
FFC
Faith Martin & Assoc.
Rhonda Fortescue
April 1993 ...
Audine Leith
Maree McDonald
Various
Marina Glass
Margie Beattie
Tim Stanley
Atlab
Sue Beak
Bob Hicks
Geoff Fairweather
Amle Custo
Danny Cairns
Mark Wareham
Ron Stigwood
Rick Maier
Errol Sullivan
Richard Roberts
Grant Nielson
Robert Qiu
Ga Hee Lim
Bob Fosbery
Toivo Lember
David Elmes
Denise Wolfson
4/1/93 - 14/3/93
Jacon Parry
Synopsis: A love story set in the 1930s depression, based on a novel by John Tennant.

**The Battlers** (mini-series)
Prod. company: SAFC Productions
Dist. company: London Films
Prod. budget: $4.1 million
Pre-production: April 1993 -
Production: June 1993 -
Post-production: August 1993 -

**Primary Credits**
Director: George Ogilvie
Producer: Sue Howard
Exec. producers: Emot Sullivan

**Planning and Development**
Casting: Faith Marten & Associates
Extras casting: Audie Leith

**Production Crew**
Prod. manager: Elizabeth Symes
Prod. co-director: Sally Clarke
Prod. secretary: Heather Munro
Location manager: Masson Curtis
Unit manager: Gary Buss
Unit asst: Tim Stanley
Prod. runners: Chris Gunn

**Government Agency Investment**
Development: SAFC Productions

**Marketing**
Int. distributor: London Films
Cast: Jacqueline McKenzie (Dancy), Gary Sweet (Snow), Marcus Graham (Bucker), Aude Leith (Dora), Peter Stanhom (Jimmy).
Synopsis: Paradise Beach, where the perfect white sand stretches for miles: the music is hot and the party just goes on, where teenagers from everywhere converge to cut loose, find the perfect wave, and fall hopelessly in love. That's SHIP TO SHORE (scripts) - The adventures of kids who live on the coast of Western Australia.

**Casting**

*Ships being read with sailor voices.*

*Design* by A.C.T.F. and Film Finances.

Catering

**Vice Admiral**

*Commander of the Triton*  
*Admiral of the Fleet*  
*Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff*

**Secretary to the Admiral**

*Rear Admiral**

*Admiral of the Fleet*  
*Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff*

**Lieutenant Commander**

*Executive Officer*  
*Head of Staff*

**Sergeant**

*Chief Petty Officer*  
*Seaman*

**Chief Warrant Officer**

*Director of Personnel*  
*Commandant of the Fleet*

**Commander**

*Flag Officer*  
*Commander of the Fleet*

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A Local International Success

The votes are in. The event billed as the International Cinematographers’ Forum, which ran from 27 June to 4 July at the Australian Film Television & Radio School, has been counted as a hit. By now you may have seen other reports but the depth of talent that the Head of Cinematography at AFTRS, Josef Demian, pulled together for that week of lectures and discussion demands “technicalities” space. If like me you were unable to attend, the flavour and wisdom of the week is evident here in Dominic Case’s journal of highlights, and a mix of lecture and interview that Lindsay Amos conducted with the popular hit of the forum, Allen Daviau. Lindsay also spoke at length with Robby Müller, but that will have to wait for a later issue.

Notable in Dominic’s piece is the strong part in the debate played by Australian DOPs (if they are not quoted here at length it’s because they will be). While having nationalistic pride and being a bit precious about our local DOPs, it was obviously concluded from the panel discussions that they were no better at elucidating the Big Themes than the foreign guests.

Experience would suggest that hoping for conclusions from any bunch of artists on a topic like “Shooting the Australian Outback” would be doomed to failure and the assembled panel on this occasion was no exception. The discussion along the way, however, sounded like enough reason to attempt it.

The director of photography walks a line between commerce and art, between individual achievement and team results. The final result can be shot down in many ways: technically, by producers and directors, or even the vagaries of the star system. To ask them to then explain the process, other than from their individual experience on a particular job, is asking a lot. This balancing act is what they do best and it appears from the reports that the individual sessions were the greatest success of the Forum.

Any accomplished industry person talking freely about how they work allows you to place your own work in perspective. Gossip and anecdote play their parts in the learning process as well.

The Cinematographers’ Forum should be an annual (or at least regular) event touted around the world. Next time I bet I’m not the only one who will walk on coals to be there. Our thanks go to Josef Demian and all the others who organized it.

Fred Harden

Dominic Case reports on the International Success Pictures

“There’s only one director of photography on a picture – so you don’t ever get to meet any of your counterparts.”

However much of a fact of real life this may be, it certainly wasn’t the case at the Australian Film Television & Radio School (AFTRS) in July. For a week, participants were surrounded by the world’s greatest cinematographers, and the only thing more remarkable than the similarity of the themes they all touched upon was the extreme differences they were able to put into shooting the deceptively simple set in the studio.

Together with the participants for the week were Geoff Burton, Allen Daviau, Peter James, Denis Lenoir, Robby Müller, Sacha Vierny, and, for much of the time, Russell Boyd and Christopher Doyle. Other prominent Australian cinematographers there included Erika Addis, Kim Batterham, Josef Demian, David Gibble, Steve Mason, Ellery Ryan . . . the list goes on.

The mornings were spent in lighting workshops, when participants worked with the international guests, and in the afternoons and evenings we saw an eclectic selection of films showing the guests’ work, and learnt a little of their approaches to their work.

This report is necessarily selective: I have highlighted and synthesized some of the technical aspects of the sessions, particularly in the way the cinematographer uses the technology of film – the film stocks, special processing, camera speeds, colour effects and so on – and the way in which all the guests described their relationships with directors, designers, and operators. There was much more, with quite detailed descriptions of how particular technical problems were solved, and how the cinematographers used lighting techniques through their film to tell the story.

All the guests were quite unrestrained in their sharing of expertise and experience: Allen Daviau spoke for hours at a time, keeping the capacity audience entranced; Sacha Vierny spoke only in French, and Kari Hanet did an excellent job in interpreting. Many of the guests, when not presenting their own work, were in the audience learning from the others. This conference must go down as one of the great successes of the AFTRS, and a significant contribution to the film culture of Australia.
and Words

On colour and black & white

It is strange that, in an art form that began its life without the ability to reproduce colour, there should now be so much energy devoted to discussing the presence or absence of colour, and the control of it. The most strikingly coloured film of the week was The Cook The Thief His Wife & Her Lover (1989), shot by Sacha Vierny for Peter Greenaway. The restaurant is richly draped in red, the kitchen is as dominantly green, the night exteriors blue, and the restaurant toilet is a powerfully over-lit white. Sacha shrugged it off, "It's what's in the script", but the colours stem from his use of a variety of different shades of coloured gel, as well as the colours chosen by the set designer. The variety of shades prevented the scenes from being monochromatic.

Chris Doyle had used coloured lights in the stage piece Peach Blossom Land, that opened the forum, to augment the theatrical nature of the story. He noted that straight stage lighting was too dark and contrasty, and the coloured lights, acceptable in live theatre, caused focusing problems on the film. Robby Müller explained that heavy red gels caused a slight shift in focus, and lenses had to be calibrated specially: this is all the more critical as often you have the lens wide open to offset the filter factor.

By comparison, the closing feature, Broken Highway (Laurie McInnes, 1993), shot by Steve Mason, was in black and white. Steve worked for every bit of contrast possible in this film, aiming for a sense of unreality and alienation. It is clear that black and white offers all this and more: the process is capable of as many subtle degrees of image control as the colour stocks were shown to have in the week.

Director Patrice Leconte had wanted Denis Lenoir to shoot Monsieur Hire (1989), in black and white, but a potential television release required colour. They considered the colourization process (which would have been an interesting twist to the argument over the artistic ethics of colourizing old movies), but this was too expensive. Eventually, Denis hit upon the technique of bleach-bypassing. For this film, the negative was processed normally, but the prints received only 50 per cent of the normal bleach time, resulting in a dark sombre look, with very muted colours. To keep this in check, Denis used coloured gels over lights, shooting on 5294 for the extra speed to offset the filter factors. The set was dressed with some vivid colours, and faces had extra make-up to avoid a "dead" look. Lenoir explained that midtones are all greyer in the process, "like painting with gouache", while shadows are deeper.

Bleach-bypass seems to have been in vogue: Chris Doyle had spoken of the process as he used it in East Meets West, after experiments in a music video. However, Chris was unable to have all the prints treated, and so settled on an unbleached interpos. Steve Mason, on the other hand, had bypassed bleaching the original negative for a flashback sequence on Strictly Ballroom (Baz Luhrmann, 1992), as well as parts of Redheads (Danny Vendramini, 1992). In Ballroom, this provided a different look from the vivid colours of the rest of the film. It seems to me that bleach-bypassing the negative will brighten highlights rather than deepen shadows. Mason's experience was that the stock gained a lot of speed in the process.1

Before starting a film, Robby Müller asks

TOUCHY TERMS

It's been mildly infuriating to Cinema Papers editor Scott Murray that we use the term "cinematographer" (literally "cinema-maker") interchangeably for "director of photography". I've always used the terms DOP or cameraman to explain the different weight of responsibility for the image-making on a project. Call-sheets have the same problem: what do you call a female cameraman? If cameraperson is the genderless, preferred alternative, I feel it doesn't describe the role well enough; it could be anyone on the camera crew: assistant, focus puller, clapper-loader, etc.

I've been guilty of using the term cinematographer to distinguish between the different weight of input on, say, a corporate documentary (as opposed to a feature), where the term "director of photography" is pretentious and not used. "Camera operator" implies that there is a DOP around. Does anyone have suitable suggestions or do we just roll over and use "cinematographer" to describe a Betacam camerawoman?

1 Before starting a film, Robby Müller asks
"Why is this in colour?" This led to a discussion of the (then East) German Orwo black & white stock. Planning a film set in 1940s Warsaw, he had tested the stock, processed in Munich, and found it "incredibly beautiful." Apparently, Orwo had kept developing and improving the stock when Western manufacturers had directed all development to colour emulsions. However, the distributors had insisted on colour.

At the Designer/Director/DOP forum earlier in the week, Brian Thomson had shown two very different clips. One was from one of my favourite short films, The Shadow Knows, a black & white film noir shot by Russell Boyd, in which the style of the image was set by Brian’s reported first question to Russ of “What are all those lights for?”. The other was a section from The Rocky Horror Show (Jim Sharman, 1975), shot in colour, which had been designed as a strictly monochrome sequence until a last-minute change of heart. They threw down a red carpet and filled the set with brightly-coloured props - “and so a cult was born”. Unfortunately, this clip was shown on video, and the coloured props were almost indistinguishable from the grey ones.

On changing exposures

Allen Daviau drew attention to a long pan and track shot in Avalon (Barry Levinson, 1990) that required a 3-stop aperture pull from a dark room round into a sunlit cloister. “Opening up is just the same as the human eye adjusting – it’s cheaper than lighting the dark room.” He highly recommended a Swedish device called the Hayden Stop Changer, and used the technique frequently.

On the same subject came this quote from Peter James, after screening Black Robe (Bruce Beresford, 1992):

Did you see the aperture pull in the last shot ... it’s a wonderful shot. It probably changed my life. The young priest had a dream, and the vision appears in the last shot. We needed sun. The weather was closing in. Two weeks beforehand, I asked Billy Two Rivers [Canadian Indian spokesperson and consultant on the film] for sun. We moved the cross outside the Huron Mission to a new position, and on the day we were ready for a big dolly shot through the walls, with amber filters on all the lights outside. Then the sun came out from nowhere, just as we were to start the shot. It was about T/4.5 in the gloomy mission hut inside, and about 16 outside, and the sun was right behind the cross at the end of the dolly...

On filming the outback in Australia

This was the most successful panel discussion, with Geoff Burton, Robby Müller, Denis Lenoir and Russell Boyd, and much participation from the audience. However, as with the other panel discussions during the week, little was resolved.

We heard that the inevitable worries about lighting ratios in the harsh sun could be avoided with reflectors (so long as they were sky blue), fill lights (if you could get enough) or polarizers (so long as they didn’t kill skin textures) – a controversial point.

Arguments about using the widescreen formats were unresolved: Russell argued that the Australian landscape was full of interest as you got to know it; he recalled that Ross Woods had filmed The Back of Beyond (John Heyer, 1954) in Academy ratio very successfully, using high horizons, Robby found it difficult to fill a ‘scope screen; Denis said, “It's easy!” A speaker from the audience insisted that ‘scope was wasted on desert landscapes, which were always too empty to make good pictures, but Geoff Burton countered that Freddie Young had made good pictures in Lawrence of Arabia (David Lean, 1962).

From the audience, Martha Ansara voiced concern that visiting cinematographers “collected” the landscape much as they might collect exotic butterflies, rather than deal with the issues that the land represented. Denis Lenoir suspected though that he had been hired for Dingo because he would not make the landscape look pretty. Robby Müller complained that on Wim Wenders’ Until the End of the World, (1992) “I had wanted to show how fucked-up parts of this country are already – not just the beer cans – but I wasn’t allowed to.”

And on black faces

In one of the best phrases of the week, Allen Daviau described the difficulties of filming black faces as “photochemical racism”. His technique with Whoopi Goldberg in The Color Purple (Steven Spielberg, 1985) depended upon the production designer: the sets were dressed with darker-than-usual walls, so that he could light the faces brighter without the entire set appearing over-ill. By contrast, Kim Batterham, lighting Black River (Kevin Lucas, 1993), took care with positioning of fill lights to give direct reflections in the faces. Full marks, though, to Peter James for a practical solution to the problem of lighting Hoke (Morgan Freeman), the black chauffeur, together with Miss Daisy (Jessica Tandy) in Driving Miss Daisy (Bruce Beresford, 1989). He needed about two stops more light for Hoke’s face, but, finding that Jessica Tandy was over a foot shorter than Morgan Freeman, Peter simply netted the bottom of the key lights, leaving Tandy’s face in relative shadow.

On different frame rates and other times

Chris Doyle and Allen Daviau both described an under-cranking technique: Chris had filmed a martial arts fight sequence at about 10 frames per second and then had the sequence optically stretch printed – every frame twice – to produce a slightly speeded-up ‘strobe’ effect, which emphasized the exaggerated actions. For a subtly different effect in Avalon, Allen had filmed the opening sequence – set in 1914 – at 15 fps (exactly half the U.S. mains frequency, thus avoiding flicker problems with HMI lights), and then stretch-printed back to nearly the normal speed. This gave a very slightly fast but jerky movement, undeniably reminiscent of silent films, and setting the film very clearly in its time. The scenes of the Thanksgiving Day firework displays were very impressive in this process.

Special techniques are often used to give this “distancing effect”, but they always depend on the production designer’s work too. Allen Daviau said, “Everyone yearns for a time machine to take them back to the past: the amazing thing is..."
when you look through the viewfinder and — there it is.” In *Empire of the Sun* (Steven Spielberg, 1987), Allen recalled his parents’ photo album: they had visited Shanghai just before World War II. This was the visual starting point — and obviously accurate. When they started shooting, a local assistant director looked round the location and said, “I was here that day.” They were filming the day the Japanese army arrived.

(On one of many resonances through the week, Chris Doyle’s *Peach Blossom Land* dealt with, *inter alia*, an old man’s reminiscences of his first love in Shanghai just before the revolution.)

**On dealing with the labs**

The great Australian one-light workprint formed a common topic. Australian DOPs, unused to daily corrections, continue to rely on the one fixed element in the process; Sacha Vierny admitted that labs like working with him and find his experiences very consistent (the one-light graded answer-print?). Allen Daviau insisted on shooting a normally lit grey scale at the start of each scene (fearful of a night-shift grader’s “Gosh, he can’t want it that dark”, Allen says. “You take care of the grey scale and I’ll take responsibility for everything behind it”); Robby Müller was prepared to shoot a grey scale at the start of each roll, but found it held him up too much. Allen said, “Get a script for the people who are dealing with your rushes — it’s important to be able to talk about the characters in the film so you can discuss the scenes with them.” He spoke warmly of his experiences with the famed Don Donecke at Du Art labs in New York, and Bob Crowdy of Technicolor, who phoned print labs were now flashing the new intermediate (16:9) television to arrive, so that the entire cinema format can be scanned.

Allan Williams, New Technologies Manager for Philips, gave us a “state of play” review of wide-screen and high-definition television later in the week. He told us that PAL-Plus was soon to arrive, giving viewers regular definition, wide-screen viewing on conventional or wide-screen sets. He suggested that there would be an increase in the letterbox format on conventional television, to prepare viewers for the change. However, Allen Daviau’s experience with *The Color Purple* suggests more viewer resistance. *Purple* was filmed with a hard matte for widescreen; to avoid clipping both edges of the image, it was screened on television in the letterbox format (with a black bar at top and bottom of the 4:3 television screen). There was even an announcement explaining this at the start of the film. Within minutes of the film starting, the network’s switchboards were jammed with calls: “This picture is cut off on my TV!” “Sure, that’s so you can see all of the picture, the same as in the cinema.” “No, you don’t understand, I’m not getting the whole picture now, it’s cutting off the top…” Allen expects the 16:9 ratio to be adopted for television, but is concerned about old Academy frame movies: “Will they have to do a vertical pan-and-scan?”

**Digital paranoia**

The new digital image processing techniques are obviously a source of paranoia for cinematographers. Geoff Burton quoted Bob Fisher,
editor of American Cinematographer: “Digital Post could eliminate the need for artistic lighting — we will just shoot everything under flat lighting and create the effects in digital.” Chris Godfrey of Animal Logic countered that they’d tried it and it didn’t work — yet. He predicted that film had another ten years before digital chip technology and compression had caught up, and Lindsay Arnold from Kodak’s Cineon project was there to show how far digital processing and the film interface had gone already. As usual, though, Allen Daviau had already had the last word on Digital Post a couple of days before. After advising cinematographers to take “an aggressive and enthusiastic stance towards digital sessions ... or you may find your background lighting has been changed”, he predicted the day when “a Ted Turner may wake up and say, ‘Who was this Vivien Leigh, anyway? Let’s redo Gone With The Wind (Victor Fleming, 1939) with Julia Roberts.” And a single shot of Julia Roberts would be all that the digital “search and replace” programme would need.

On collaboration, and on being a cinematographer
Although there was a session on collaboration, some of the best comments about the DOP’s relationship with the rest of the crew came out of their individual sessions. The line between DOP and director, and between DOP and camera operator, is clearly not a constant one.

Christopher Doyle said that on martial arts films, after he had lit the set he would leave, and the fight director would operate the camera — as part of the choreography of the fight sequence. Denis Lenoir’s director in Monsieur Hire doubled as camera operator (although Denis’ opinion was that the director’s first responsibility was to support the authors “as if they were hanging from the edge of a cliff”). Peter James said that in a big production, the DOP may be running between three sets, leaving the operator and the gaffer in charge in his absence from each. Peter has always involved himself in design, make-up and directorial decisions as soon as possible in a film (he described the research done through the Jesuit missions to get the Indian make-up right for Black Robe, and his use of El Greco paintings as inspiration for the look). Allen Daviau emphasized the importance of three-way collaboration early on, between director, DOP and production designer — although several DOPs felt they were always brought into the production too late. Sacha Vierny allowed no credit to himself — he felt very fortunate that working with Peter Greenaway allowed him the opportunity to create images and he admitted that they often thought on the same wavelength.

Geoff Burton suggested two models: either that “the chicken was greater than the sum of its parts”, or, more cynically, that in any collaborative venture each person tries to eradicate all traces of the work of the others.

This leads to an opportunity to conclude with a quote from each cinematographer.

Christopher Doyle: “I always add to the script. Even if the script is bad, that’s no excuse for sloppy or unimaginative cinematography. I always try to be different.”

Allen Daviau: “A cinematographer needs to think photographically: to see the negative and see it processed; to visit the magic of making a print. Study what the past masters have done; there’s a whole history to draw from.”

Sacha Vierny (on realism): “Film is not realist — and reality is always greater than fiction ... Did you like the film [The Cook]? Is it perhaps too violent for Australia?”

Robby Müller: “Diffusion? In my films you will seldom see it. It’s my private plan to solve everything with light.”

Denis Lenoir: “I like to put in lots of little things that the audience might not see but only feel. Cinema reduces in the cooking — if we put in more at the start, then there is still something left for the audience. We cinematographers don’t have anything to say — we just try (with more or less success) to interpret the director’s choice. If the director couldn’t care less about framing or light, then it’s very hard to do anything good.”

Geoff Burton obviously felt in sympathy: “As a cinematographer, you must facilitate what the director wants, but the most important thing is to be sure that the director doesn’t screw up.”

1 Skipping part or all of the bleach results in a silver image superimposed on the coloured dye image. Deep tones are made even darker, while bright colours are darkened and become more shadowy. In the negative process, highlights go brighter, and bright colours would be milkier. A similar effect is used normally in optical soundtracks on prints, to gain the strongest possible audio signal in the projector sound head.
Allen Daviau is probably best known for his work on the key films of Steven Spielberg (E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial, 1982; The Color Purple, 1985; Empire of the Sun, 1985), George Miller’s “Terror at 20,000 Feet” (episode from Twilight Zone: The Movie, 1983) and the more recent Avalon (1990) and Bugsy (1991), both directed by Barry Levinson.

Daviau delighted a capacity audience with his enthusiastic, informative mix of lecture, awareness of film history, readiness to grapple with the digital revolution – “Why don’t you make sure you’re there when the decisions are made?” – and his ability to share (during the discussion) solutions to the problems he encountered on his films. He seemed to have total recall of the smallest detail. Incorporated in his lecture were screenings of Avalon excerpts in 35mm, several filmstock tests and E.T. excerpts, on laserdisc.

On the studio floor, during the student Masterclass sessions, Daviau passed on the tricks of the trade in a mixture of demonstration, commentary and instruction. The following is a compilation of Daviau’s thoughts incorporating his lecture and personal interview.

Opening thoughts
Film just keeps getting better all the time. It’s not a stationary target, it keeps on improving. You can take gambles – after all, creativity is based on them – and knowing how certain things happen. By knowing the filmstock and what it can handle, and how much you can 'beat it up', as we say, you get confidence in being able to express a lot more emotional tones in the scene of a film, to squeeze that emulsion in such a way that you’re letting the shadows go just as dark as you possibly can and then, a moment later, using an intense highlight. You’re letting the colour temperatures clash; you’re doing things that allow you to create a great variety of images.

On ‘Amblin’ and meeting Steven Spielberg
It’ll be 25 years on Sunday, 4 July, that we started shooting Amblin’ (1968). When Steve made that, he was looking for a film that would get him taken seriously. Universal Studios had sort of made him their mascot of young talent programming – you know, future director type of person – but they wouldn’t give him any work! He was doing short films and taking them in and showing them. They were 16mm films and they would look at them and say, “Oh, you’re talented... some day.”

But someday wasn’t now, and he was getting very frustrated. He knew he had to do a film in 35mm to be taken seriously. He said something like, “I realized there was this little image in the centre of the wide screen and until I filled up the screen they wouldn’t take me seriously.”

In 1968, he found a guy called Dennis Hoffman, who was one of the owners of an optical house called Cinefex. Dennis was a young man and was very interested to see how he would do as a producer, so he decided, as a test, to finance a short film.

One of the sidelines was Dennis’ intention to have the film shot in 16mm and then blown up to 35 on his company’s new 16-35 blow-up printer, so he could write off part of the cost as a demonstration of the printer’s capabilities. Well, the first thing Steven did was to persuade Dennis to let Steven shoot it in 35mm and, when I was brought into the project by Steve, I did the same thing. Eventually, we wore Dennis down and we actually made it in 35mm. I think the film cost $15,000 in 1968, which is a lot of money.

Shooting in 35mm, in 1.85:1, was a great adventure and experience. We shot the sunrise every morning and the sunset every night for 10 days straight. It was a very intense experience. Then Steven edited the film.

I don’t know how to describe the film. I’ve always called it an “idyll”. There’s no dialogue, just music and effects. You have to remember this was ‘68, the height of the hippy era, and the film is about a young man and young woman...
hitch-hiking in separate directions through the desert. They join forces and proceed to have a love affair. They reach the coast and he runs down to the ocean, while she smiles and turns and walks away. That's the end of the film! I think Steven felt it was a bit calculated. It was made to be shown to studio executives and, while it was dealing with contemporary themes, it was also very much an old-fashioned motion picture.

There was quite a buzz when this 21-year-old was signed by Universal. He tried to bring me along with him and Universal even tried to sign me to some sort of deal, but the union at that time said, "Forget it. No way are you getting in." So I said, "Don't worry, Steven. I've got this 35mm film to show and I'll get into commercials and I'll be able to do work for you." And I did - it just took 11 years, because I was so involved with union politics, lawsuits and so on. I didn't get into the union until 1978!

But Amblin' inspired a whole bunch of people with the idea of the "calling card film". When you see it today, you can see touches of Spielberg's style. There's no question about that.

On 'Schindler's List' (Steven Spielberg 1993) the black-and-white film Daviau didn't get to shoot

It was shot by a Polish cameraman named Janos Kaminsky. I've never worked with Steve since Empire of the Sun, but this Polish cameraman is supposed to be fabulous. Not only had he worked in black and white before, he knew about film being processed in this lab in East Germany, which is supposed to be one of the best-kept secrets going.

Steven told me just before he left to shoot it in Poland that he found these guys in New York who are doing some variation on the old stencil process from the '20s. They're going to be able to stamp colour onto a black-and-white print, in the selected areas. The stars on the Jews at the railway station will have pale yellow, and the flags will have a pale red - not on colour stock, but on a black-and-white print! There'll only be one extra flag, put a little bit of shade somewhere, so that designed was in place, with a little bit of indirect lighting above. The goal was that George wanted a lot of freedom.

The other thing was that I had done a television movie just prior to this where I met Garrett Brown, who'd been involved with Steadicam on that, and I said to him, "I know you've worked all these years to make the camera as steady as possible, but could you make it the UNstedicam?" So I had the best of both worlds: the man who invented the Steadicam on Steadicam and John Toll, the greatest handheld operator going.

I think there's only six or eight cuts in the entire segment that are done on a dolly in a standard way. Basically the movement in the plane comes from the camera, other than the little 'jigging' which we could do. The actors had to do their own movement and the cameras did all of the other movement.

The built-in lighting was predicated on the new high-speed stock at the time, S293. Nobody was really sure how fast it was. So we put in all the lights and shot a test. We found out I had to expose it at between 2 and 2.8. Thank heavens there was enough light, because that's all there was! We bet the farm that we could make it work with the low-voltage lamps, but that was in the spirit of what George had encouraged. He brought incredible discipline to it; he storyboarded the whole episode.

We had video-assist for the Steadicam and George, who had never seen video-assist before, asked to have it for the hand-held camera, too. George would sit down with the storyboards at a desk where he had a video monitor. He could observe whatever was going on in the case of whichever camera was shooting and he just energized the whole thing.

That was it, basically: working at very low-light levels in a way that we could move very quickly from set-up to set-up. The two cameras in motion, the Steadicam and the hand-held were good for different things. We could choreograph any way they wanted. They never saw a light, which was part of the game, or if they saw the little 'pop' lights - fine. I walked around with a fluorescent tube in my hand, being able to move around the cameras.

George just created this atmosphere of freedom and I just have to say that it was one of the most enjoyable experiences in filmmaking. I consider myself very lucky. I'm the only American cinematographer to have worked with both George Miller and Peter Weir, and it was just a delight to work with both of them. I look forward to working with them again!

On operators and operating

I feel it's just much more efficient to work with an operator - maybe in terms of the kind of things I've had to light. I knew years ago when I was doing educational and commercials that the day would come when I would get into feature production and I would have to use an operator, and I wanted to prepare myself for it because, believe me, it's the most difficult thing in the world to tear yourself away from that eyepiece.

I also learned that if you have a lot of complicated dollies moves and so on, while the operator and the assistant and the dolly grip are working this out and the director is going over the blocking of the scene, I can be lighting.

Working beside the camera I can make things happen more quickly. I can get things into place, alter the lighting a little bit, maybe float an additional flag, put a little bit of shade someplace that didn't have it before. I just find that it's easier to do than if I were also intent on the operating, because somebody said to me, "A great operator looks at the corners and feels the centre." I should be looking at the centre. I'm there to look at the people, to look at the light falling on them.

That's my feeling.

With Spielberg, I never made it because Steven basically hogs the camera himself in blocking a scene. He's the most magical person in blocking people to the camera that I've ever seen, but it takes time to do it. Because I've worked with him for so long, I have to know which direction he is headed. We'd talk general parameters and I'd start lighting as soon as he started blocking. Sometimes I'd have to start over again but it was the only way to work fast enough to be ready on time, because, "boom", once the shot's set up, let's start shooting; he wants to be there.

The other secret is to find an operator who is better than you are! It's not that easy to find really good operators, but I've been very fortunate. I have a system in which people tend to suggest operators to me, but the most important part is that I'm aware of the shot. With the video assist, I'm always able to check just what's going on, while being free of the camera during the scene."
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I have great respect for Robby Müller, who does his own operating. Believe me, I think his work is absolute magic, so it's whatever works for you. As a situation, some people might prefer one and not the other. But I'm happy with the system the way it is, and I think you also get an additional creative input from somebody who's viewing the scene.

On incorporating new ideas

Empire of the Sun was the movie where I really started to do f-stop changes. It just became part of the vocabulary — cinematographers will appreciate what I mean. Adjusting the f-stop during a take seems like something you don't want to do, because if you mess it up somebody's going to see it. On Empire of the Sun, there was no choice because there were huge shots. No way could I have lit up the area to balance one side of the pan with the other. So the secret was to adjust the f-stop during the pan. I got into the habit of doing it with a remote f-stop changer and it just opened up a whole new world.

And this was something that has been going on since Billy Bitzer, probably, and the birth of film. Rather than pouring light in to fill a shadow area and bringing it up to the same intensity of the sunlit areas, it looked much better if I, like the human eye, just opened up. I found it to be a much more natural procedure.

Now it's become a part of the language and I found on Bugsy that I did it just in interiors. I call it "changing the exposure base." We were shooting in some extremely small rooms and I found that if people moved from one part of the room to another, particularly if they moved through a shadow, I could reset the exposure base as they moved, for the other side of the room.

On 'Fearless' (1993) and Peter Weir

A producer named Paula Weinstein found this property by marvellous young novelist, Rafael Iglesias. She's known him and his family for some years. She read it and, like great producers do, she knew exactly who should do it — Peter Weir. She'd met Peter and always wanted to work with him, and she sent him Rafael's novel. It worked out that Rafael also did the screenplay — he and Peter worked on it together. Peter just loved the idea of the film and was committed to it.

It is not a large budget film by Hollywood standards. It's a Warner Bros studio movie and was done in San Francisco last fall.

Peter had never worked with anyone but Australian cinematographers before, but he told me later that if he was going to continue making films in America he should occasionally try an American cameraman. I know Paula brought up my name. Peter told me he had really enjoyed Avalon, in particular, and that was the impetus of his wanting to meet me. I remember my agent called and said "Peter Weir wants to meet you," and I said, "I don't care what he's doing. This is somebody I want to meet."

Peter Weir is the kind of filmmaker that has impressed me. I've been seeing his films for so long, from the Australian films through, and I found every one of them to be so gratifying. So the chance to work with him was absolutely the kind of experience I wanted. He is not only a great artist, but a great gentleman. He is somebody who enjoys sharing the moment of creation and allows everyone who works with him to share that kind of joy.

Actors in particular just gravitate to him. That is also true of cinematographers and designers. The designer John Stoddart and Paula Weinstein, and her late husband Mark Rosenberg and the company they set up, have a philosophy of making the most wonderful quality films.

I love to be involved in things that don't concern the cinematographer at all. I just like to be there to see a scoring session and I like to see some portions of the dub. I find it an incredible ticket to ride that I get to sit in and watch people like Peter Weir and Maurice Jarre in a tiny studio not much bigger than this, with five musicologists who all have different forms of synthesize. This is the fifth film they've all done together; they run a scene and Maurice goes over the music with the people and they each audition their instrument. Then Maurice and Peter pick the parts that each of them are to play. It is the most unusual and directly creative system of recording a soundtrack that I've ever seen and here's Maurice — "the man who did Lawrence of Arabia" — and he is just a very nice quiet person. You see the people Peter surrounds himself with and it's all on this thing of enjoying creating together.

Fearless is a very hard film to describe because you say something along the lines of "a man survives a plane crash and views his life in a different way," and go, "Uh, oh, this could sound like some Yuppie drama about somebody going off to save the earth," but it's not like that at all. It's literally Jeff Bridges playing a man who, after surviving plane crash — half the people live, half the people die — questions why he was chosen to survive.

The film touches on so many things that are unusual and impossible to summarize in a few sentences, but it is one of those films which, although it sounds so quiet, is utterly dynamic and moves like lightning from one thing to the other! People cannot believe the film is over. It's got such quiet power to it and Jeff Bridges' performance is something else.

What we were looking for, I think, is "This is a man looking at the world in a different way." We wanted to get images that read quickly, that were very clear. At the same time, it's very different photographically — it's a study of faces. There are some pyrotechnics, some effects and some things like that, but it is a study of faces more than anything else. As such, it doesn't sound as if it were so exciting to do, but it absolutely was, particularly when you see the circumstances in which some of the meetings of the people take place.

The word "straightforward" springs to mind but wasn't the way it was achieved. We tried to get images that would state what the characters' feelings were at the time, studies of faces that would help understand the transformation of all the characters. Every major character in the film has a transformation.

On 'Avalon' and working with Barry Levinson

One of the thrills, when a cinematographer is assigned to a film and meets with the director, is that you have the whole of film history that you can go back and evaluate to see which elements will lend something to the story you're about to tell. While we have all these modern techniques, sometimes looking back and studying what the past masters of the medium have done can give us inspiration. I think the most satisfying of all the films I've done in recent years is Avalon, for Barry Levinson.

We had never met before. I had just done Empire of the Sun, which was another very satisfying experience. I took a long time after that film to do another and I was looking for something that said something to me. When I met with Barry and read the script for Avalon, it was like, "This is what I've been waiting for." I remember thinking, "How could we make this film special in a visual way?" I felt that the film spoke to everyone who had ever known a first generation arrival in a foreign country.

I ran the test for Barry, he understood right away what I was trying to say about the nature of motion. I said to him, "Barry, you've seen this many times in restored silent films and documentaries; the difference is, you've never seen it in colour." He immediately accepted it and backed me completely. The one question he had was, "How would it work with fireworks?" We did a test for that and we found out some interesting things: the motion across the screen was more dramatic in terms of exaggerating the judder that you get from inserting the missing information. He incorporated this into a lot of his ideas for shots and it became the basis for the framing flashbacks in the film.

You get an idea, you test it, and the director looks at it and you work from there. It sets a motif for how the whole film is going to be made.

The filmstock was the new 5096, which had just been introduced, and the extraordinary speed of it definitely changed the way we approached doing this film. It's the kind of thing that helps get more realism into a picture when we go into real locations. Avalon is a film that was most definitely influenced by where it was shot. The director had been carrying many of these locations around in his head his entire life — he was telling his own family story and he wanted to get so much of his city into it. Baltimore's a fantastic
city in that regard. Like Sydney, from what I've seen in the brief glimpses, Baltimore has the soul of a city where people actually live in the city.

One of the great experiences on working on _Avalon_ was getting to work again with a production designer named Norman Reynolds. We worked together on _Empire of the Sun_. The collaboration of the cinematographer and designer is the most important after the collaboration with the director. If it's not in front of the camera, it's not there to shoot, particularly when you're dealing with a period film. I can't tell you how much it means to have the attention to detail that's put there.

Because of Levinson's preference for shooting with two cameras, in _Avalon_ I had to try and use natural sources as much as I could so that it played. I wasn't able to do a specific kind of lighting on close-ups. I had big dinner table scenes and so on - we had to use a lot of small, hard units, which is not my favourite thing, but I found it was the only way I could make the close-ups survivable and have the highlights in the eyes and the shape of the face - the look of it.

**On lighting techniques**

When you shoot on location, one thing I find is that it gives an instant inspiration; you find things in a location that speak to you and encourage you to use authenticity in the lighting and compositions. The interesting thing was the re-discovery of the sound stage probably around the late '70s when people suddenly discovered it was a really excellent idea to have these things around.

If we go into a day interior, I say, "Before we have the rehearsal, let me get some light coming through the windows." If it's a night interior - this is true stage or location - just let me get the practical lamps turned on. I have found out that when you present the motivations for the light sources in a scene before the rehearsal starts, people tend to block the scene with the light in mind. They tend to block around the light; they make the light an organic part of the scene. Actors tend to play toward the light.

I find that when you start the lighting in an organic manner like that, you get a feeling that's very real, even when you have moments that you want to be theatrical. It's not just motivating sources - it encourages movement of the actors. I swear with all kinds of directors this works as a system: have light that means something.

I also find as a matter of philosophy that the fewer lamps you use, the simpler you keep it, the better it is. Every light you turn on is going to create its own set of problems and you get too fussy. When I look back at images that I've done, the ones that drive me crazy are the ones that got too fussy.

I find that my tendency is to be a soft lighter. I come from soft light and I like it very much, but hard light is far more controllable and a cinematographer has to be able to use both. Both occur in real life and both occur at the same time. As a cinematographer, you spend a lot of your time looking at light and looking at situations. You study light, particularly where you have an emotional response to something. You tend to remember light for that reason.

I notice a writer like Nabokov always describes the light in a situation. You're left with images because the man obviously went through his life noticing light and knowing how to describe it eloquently. What we're trying to do is interpret light in dramatic terms, in poetic terms. It's not just a visual phenomenon - it's light and emotion and I think you can't do that until you have the confidence in everything that you're doing. It's like a musician looking for certain notes.

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A panel of eight 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: Sandra Hall (The Bulletin); Paul Harris ("EG" The Age, 3RRR); Ivan Hutchinson (Seven Network; Herald-Sun, Melbourne); Stan James (The Adelaide Advertiser); Scott Murray; Neil Jillett (The Age); Tom Ryan (3LO; The Sunday Age, Melbourne); and Evan Williams (The Australian, Sydney). David Stratton was in Venice.

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