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Cinema Papers #97-98 April 1993

Scott Murray

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Contributors

MARCUS BREEN is a freelance writer on film and music; JOHN CONOMOS lectures at the College of Fine Arts, University of NSW; ANNA DZENIS is a tutor in Cinema Studies at LaTrobe University, Melbourne; richard franklin is about to begin production on an adaptation of Hamme Rayson's award-winning play Hotel Sorrento; Dena Gleeson is a lecturer in Cinema Studies at LaTrobe University; LEILANI HANNAH is a freelance writer on film and a camera assistant to Geoffrey Burton; chris long is a Melbourne film historian; jackie Malone works for the Concentration Area in Media Policy and Practice, Queensland University of Technology; BRIAN McFARLANE is an Associate Professor in the English Department at Monash University; Ken Mogg edits MacGuffin: Newsletter of the Film/Alfred Hitchcock Special Interest Group; JIM SCHEMBRI is a film and entertainment features writer at The Age; PETER M. SCHEMBRI works for the Concentration Area in Media Policy and Practice, Queensland University of Technology; GRAHAM SHIRLEY is a freelance documentary filmmaker and researcher, and co-author of Australian Cinema: The First Eighty Years; hayley smorgon is a recent honours graduate in Visual Arts at Monash University; Stephen Teo is a film critic specializing in Hong Kong cinema and other Chinese language films; Raymond Younus is a lecturer at the University of Sydney and a passionate lover of films.

Editor: Scott Murray; Assistant Editor: Raffaele Caputo; Technical Editor: Fred Harden; Advertising: Barry Teller; Subscriptions: Raffaele Caputo; MTV Board of Directors: Chris Stewart (Chairman), Patricia Amad, Ross O'Meara, Natalie Miller; Legal Adviser: Dan Pearce, Holding Redlich Sohier; Design: Ian Robertson, Marcus Foley; Page Output: Willahype P/L; Printing: Jenkin Buxton, Distribution: Network Distribution. © Copyright 1994, MTV Publishing Limited A.C.N. 006 258 699. Signed articles represent the views of the authors and not necessarily that of the editor and publisher. While every care is taken with manuscripts and materials supplied to the magazine, neither the editor nor the publisher can accept liability for any loss or damage which may arise. This magazine may not be reproduced in whole or part without the express permission of the copyright owners. Cinema Papers is published every two months by MTV Publishing Limited, 43 Canning Street Abbotsford, Victoria, Australia 3067. Telephone (03) 429 5511 Fax (03) 427 9555. Cinema Papers is published with financial assistance from the Australian Film Commission and Film Victoria.
This special double issue is part of a celebration of Cinema Papers' twenty years of publication in its present format. Although Cinema Papers first appeared in 1967, it was not until December 1973 that the first of the magazine-format issues appeared (dated January 1974). Over the next twenty years, Cinema Papers has seen many changes (with different editors and a smaller design size), but its commitment to Australian cinema has not only remained firm but strengthened. Coverage of foreign films used to represent up to 50 per cent of an issue's content, but today that has dropped to less than 10 per cent. While this may not have always been a popular move (sometimes Australian films are less interesting than what's happening concurrently elsewhere), Cinema Papers has found the extra space necessary to continue its wide-ranging exploration of feature film production in Australia.

Part of that commitment will be celebrated in various ways in this and other issues. For a start, as with the 10th Anniversary double issue in May 1984, top industry professionals and commentators have provided analyses of how they see the film industry in Australia over the next decade.

As well, two noted Cinema Papers writers give more personal viewpoints: Richard Franklin, the acclaimed director who has written for Cinema Papers since day one (and who very happily is back writing again), contributes an article on the differences between working here and in the U.S.

The other 'memoir' is from Jim Schembri, whose first writings appeared in Cinema Papers. They became the launching pad for his subsequent career as a feature writer for The Age in Melbourne.

Fred Harden, who has been compiling "Technicalities" for as long as anyone can remember, has prepared a special tribute which examines Cinema Papers' discussion of technical advances and equipment over the past two decades. Sadly, this will be Fred's last issue as he is now the editor of Australian MultiMedia. Cinema Papers wishes him well.

Finally, Simon Wincer, whose most recent release is the hit Free Willy, completes the sense of celebration. Simon was interviewed in the 10th Anniversary issue and it was decided to return the favour to discuss his eagerly-awaited new film with Paul Hogan, Lightning Jack.

As many readers will have also noted, this issue also contains a 52pp. New Zealand Supplement. In 1980, Cinema Papers did a similar supplement and it was felt the decision to recross the Tasman was long overdue. Many thanks to Lindsay Shelton, Sales and Marketing Director of the New Zealand Film Commission, who provided invaluable help and guidance.

This Supplement, along with the special Queensland issue that preceded it, marks a growing trend at Cinema Papers to give several issues a year particular topics of discussion. Sometimes it will be with a special Supplement, sometimes just a grouping of articles. The next issue, for example, as is traditional, will be the special Cannes issue with a round-up of all the Australian films hopeful of making a mark at Cannes this year.

The issue after will be Cinema Papers' 100th, and another excuse for some celebration. The poll of the Top Ten Australian films of all time announced in the previous issue has been held over till then, giving readers of the magazine even more time to send in their selections. Happy reading, The Editor

Australian Film Focus in Madrid

Forthcoming in March at the annual Festival of Experimental Cinema in Madrid is a major retrospective of Australian experimental cinema from the 1960s to the present. The programme contains more than 50 films by a diverse range of filmmakers including Jane Campion, Arthur and Corinne Cantrill, John Dunkley-Smith, Lalita Jayamanne, Dusan Marek, Tracey Moffatt, Abbie Thoms, Tony Twigg and Paul Winkler.

The most substantial survey of Australian experimental films to be staged in the international arena, the programme is curated by Marie Craven, who will be in Madrid to present the Australian Focus.

Critic Adrian Martin has written the catalogue essay and will also participate as a judge of the International Competition section of the Festival. The Festival of Experimental Cinema is staged in association with Arte Contemporáneo (ARCO), Madrid. The Australian Focus has received generous support from the Australian Film Commission and the Australian Embassy, Madrid.

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FILM VICTORIA NEWS

New Marketing Venture

The Melbourne Film Office, a new film industry marketing and locations advisory service offered by Film Victoria, was officially launched by the Hon. Haddon Storey, QC, MLC, Minister for the Arts, on 15 December 1993 at the Melbourne Film Studio. The Minister also launched the new Film Production Handbook for Victoria and Tasmania.

A forum on the role of the Office was held just prior to the launch, at which Jennifer Hooks, executive director of Film Victoria, and Mariel Beros, manager of the new Melbourne Film Office, outlined the services to be offered.

The Office provides locations advice to producers interested in shooting in Victoria, and markets the industry and its services and facilities nationally and internationally. It represents Victoria's interests in the Export Film Services Association, a federal body set up to increase film service exports and access Austrade financial assistance. The Office will also facilitate production by familiarizing local authorities with film and television production procedures.

The Melbourne Film Office was formed after wide consultation with the industry. This close relationship with its clients will be maintained by
the Office through the establishment of industry advisory groups representing the services and facilities sector, commercial producers, and locations and production managers.

One of the Office’s first tasks has been to coordinate the visit of Alfonso Arau, acclaimed director of the Mexican art house hit *Like Water for Chocolate*, to scout locations for his next feature film, a $20 million Hollywood film called *A Walk in the Clouds*. Arau’s interest in Victoria has been stimulated by photographs he has been sent of local locations and the prospect of saving between 30 and 40 per cent on his budget by using Australian locations, crews and facilities.

Film and television production is a substantial contributor to the Victorian economy. The Australian Film Commission’s recent National Production Survey puts the value of feature film and television production in Victoria at $78.5 million, up from $70 million in 1991/92.

**New Film Board for Film Victoria**

Victoria’s Minister for the Arts, Haddon Storey, announced three new appointments to the Board of Film Victoria. Producers Lynda House, Daniel Scharf and writer Mac Gudgeon have been appointed for three-year terms.

The Minister thanked outgoing Board members Eve Ash, Justice Howard Nathan, Sharon Connolly and Roger Simpson for their dedicated contribution to Film Victoria. Storey:

Film Victoria is the leading state government film agency in Australia and I expect the new appointments will contribute to the organization’s depth of project evaluation and assessment skills.

Each of the new appointments is a professional from within the film industry. The principle of appointing practitioner Board members at Film Victoria was established by the Hamer Liberal government and that principle has contributed to the success the corporation has achieved since it began.

Film Victoria plays a role through its funding of scripts, production investments and marketing assistance to local producers. Recent projects which have received assistance include *Muriel’s Wedding, That Eye the Sky, Speed, The Heartbreak Kid, The Silver Brumby, Romper Stomper,* and *Law of the Land and Snowy.*

Producer Lynda House is currently in post-production on the feature film *Muriel’s Wedding,* which she has co-produced with Jocelyn Moorhouse. The two last collaborated on box-office hit and multi-award winner *Proof* (Best Film, 1991 AFI Awards). House’s other credits include *Death in Brunswick* (associate producer) and *Malcolm* (production manager).

Producer Daniel Scharf is completing *Speed,* the third of a series of films he has made as a writer-director Geoffrey Wright (Romper Stomper, Lover Boy). As a documentary maker, Scharf is close to completing *Pat and Eddy’s Greyhound Racing Family,* which will screen on ABC television later this year.

Filmmaker Mac Gudgeon has worked in the film industry since 1977, principally as a screenwriter. A former chair of the Australian Writers Guild, his credits include the mini-series *Waterfront,* on which he was also associate producer. He co-wrote the feature film *Ground Zero* and the mini-series *The Petrov Affair.*

**New Documentary Manager**

Sally Ingleton has taken up the position of acting documentary manager for a period of three months. Ingleton comes to Film Victoria after having spent several years as an independent documentary producer-director. Her most recent film, *The Tenth Dancer,* was co-financed by ABC Television, BBC Television and the Australian Film Finance Corporation.

Prior to making *The Tenth Dancer,* Ingleton worked with SBS Television on the *Mosaic* series as a producer-director and has made several programmes for government departments and community groups.

Ingleton will be acting as project officer for the independent documentary sector and as executive producer on selected government documentary projects.

Former documentary manager Penny Robins has returned to independent production after spending three years at Film Victoria.

**Appointments to the National Film and Sound Archive**

The former Minister for the Arts and Administrative Services, Bob McMullan, announced on 22 December 1993 a new appointment and several re-appointments to the Interim Council of the National Film & Sound Archive (NFSA).

Christopher Chapman, deputy managing director of Channel 7 in Sydney, will join the Interim Council for a two-year term. Chapman’s appointment fills a vacancy arising from the resignation of writer-director Jackie McKimmie early in 1993.

McMullan said he welcomed the contribution Chapman will make to the NFSA: “Mr Chapman brings to the Council a distinguished television industry background and a strong interest in audiovisual heritage.”

The re-appointments to the NFSA Interim Council are Victoria Rubensohn as Chair, as well as Tony Buckley, Fij Millar, Alan Bateman and Les Heil. McMullan: “I am very pleased that Ms Rubensohn will continue to bring to the NFSA her wealth of experience in the recording and broadcasting industries, as a lecturer and communications consultant.”

Each term of appointment is for two years (or until a permanent Council is appointed following enactment of legislation to establish the Archive as a statutory body). The chair and members serve on a part-time basis.

**AUSTRALIAN FILM FINANCE CORPORATION (FFC) NEWS**

Another 1993 Film Fund selection announced

On 29 November 1993, FFC chief executive John Morris announced a third selection for the 1993 Film Fund. The project is *Angel Baby* written by Michael Rymer. *Angel Baby,* which Rymer will also direct, will be produced by Timothy White and Jonathan Tietz.

The feature film is a love story about two lost souls who find hope and strength in each other to accomplish the impossible.

Rymer has studied filmmaking at the University of Southern California, where he was awarded the Warner Communications Scholarship for directing. Two of his feature screenplays have been produced, and he has also written and directed for the stage.
At the time of CINEMA PAPERS' 10th Anniversary issue, Simon Wincer had just seen Phar Lap (1983) become the second most successful Australian film in its home territory, after The Man from Snowy River (George Miller, 1982), which he executive produced.

Since then, Wincer has had major success in the U.S., particularly with the mini-series Lonesome Dove (1989). But nothing compares with the international acclaim and box office of his family drama, Free Willy (1993).

Based again in Australia, Wincer has recently produced (with Greg Coote) and directed Paul Hogan's eagerly-awaited new comedy, Lightning Jack, which is now in international release. This comes after a hectic period in which he also directed six episodes of The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles for producer George Lucas.

Wincer says he found in Lucas' Skywalker Ranch an environment similar to his beloved farm in the Yarra Valley. In fact, hearing Wincer passionately describe his love of the the natural beauty of the billabongs which dot his property, one understands why he is so gifted when filming landscape and his characters' relationship to it.

Wincer has a straightforward relationship with his audience. He is a fervent believer in the importance of concept and script ("eighty per cent of a film is made in pre-production"), and in a film's accessibility. As he says, "If an audience doesn't understand something, then you haven't done your job right and you should fix it."

A CINEMA PAPERS interview with Wincer five years ago was titled "Trusting His Instincts". So far, he has been proved decidedly right.
LIGHTNING JACK

After having had great success in Hollywood with Free Willy, you have come back to do an Australian film?

Well, Lightning Jack is not really coming back to Australia because, although it’s an Australian movie, it was actually filmed over there.

I was approached in March last year when I was doing an episode of Young Indiana Jones in Turkey. Greg Coote sent me a script, which I read and thought was a lot of fun. I wanted to work with Paul Hogan and I wanted to do a comedy. Although I had done funny scenes, I had never done a comedy as such. I thought it would have great appeal, and also it was Australian. So, I decided to do it, and it has been a pretty pleasant experience.

How would you describe the film?

A charming comedy, a good old-fashioned, light-hearted Western about an Australian outlaw in the American west who is a legend in his own mind. He teams up with a young town’s boy who can’t speak but is extremely bright. Together they have this wonderful adventure.

The style of comedy is very much like Crocodile Dundee’s self-deprecating humour that Paul is so good at. It has the look of older-style Westerns, with saloons and wide streets and classic Monument Valley locations. John Wayne could ride into shot at any minute. But it’s not big on violence; it’s much bigger on laughs.

How would you compare Hogan’s character, Jack Kane, with his characters in Crocodile Dundee [Peter Faiman, 1986] and Almost an Angel [John Cornell, 1990]?

Almost an Angel is very different, but Jack Kane could almost be an ancestor of Mick ‘Crocodile’ Dundee’s. He’s probably a bit more of a larrikin than Mick, and he likes to be a bit flash – he puts a bit too much silver on his gun belt and spurs, and so on. He is laconic, though he definitely likes to get good reviews about his bank robberies, and is very upset when he doesn’t.

INTerviewed by Scott Murray

Wincer
I think the film is a good move for Paul, because, if anyone is born to wear a cowboy hat and look good in the saddle, he is. He really fits the genre.

Suddenly, there is an interest in Westerns again.

Yes, which is interesting because Paul wrote this way before Unforgiven [Clint Eastwood, 1992] came out. He wrote it mainly, I think, because Linda [Kozlowski] kept saying to him, “You’d make such a great cowboy.” Some people can wear hats and Paul is one of those.

Lightning Jack took Paul a long time to get it off the ground. I think Almost an Angel gave him a bit of a fright because he couldn’t put a foot wrong with the ‘Crocodile’ Dundee movies. But I don’t think people wanted to see him in the role of a petty crim, with a little beanie on his head. It didn’t have the romantic image that he created in the ‘Crocodile’ Dundee movies. People want something Paul is in to be light and bright and warm, not dark.

Lightning Jack was a really nice film to do. Comedy is a very difficult area compared to anything else I’ve done. What is funny to the eye and makes the crew laugh is usually not funny on film.

Paul is also the master of understatement. Some of the nuances that he can get simply amazed me. I would say, “My God, that looks subtle”, but then I’d see it on film and he would be spot on.

Almost an Angel is a curious film. It’s hated by many critics, but the degree by which it is misjudged is probably quite small.

I agree with you, absolutely. It has a lot of charm, but I think Paul has such a large persona that people don’t want to see him any other way than as a romantic scallywag.

Paul is just as easily recognized in America as he is here. I don’t think people here realize just how successful those ‘Crocodile’ Dundee movies were. They are both in the top 100 movies of all time: the first is number 45 and the second is about 76. That’s extraordinary.

I also think there has been a lot of unfair pressure put on Paul by the media. They are all saying, “Can he come back?” I mean, Angel wasn’t exactly disastrous; it did make its money back. It’s just a minuscule success compared to the magnitude of the Croc movies.

Where did you shoot Lightning Jack?

It was actually a logistics nightmare because there were so many Westerns going into production at the same time. In Santa Fe, we were shooting alongside Wyatt Earp – that’s the Lawrence Kasdan film with Kevin Costner. In fact, there was one day when we were four hundred yards away and we could hear each other’s gunfire.

When we went to Tucson, Tombstone [George Pan Cosmatos] was shooting there. Geronimo was also filming – that’s the Ted Turner Network version, which is actually pretty good.

Then when we went to Moab, Utah, City Slickers 2 was filming there. Paul and I had dinner with Billy Crystal, because he’s a mate of Paul’s and a lot of his mates from the ‘Crocodile’ Dundee movies were working on that film.

The Walter Hill version of Geronimo was also being shot in Moab. They had just finished when we arrived during pre-pro-duction. We, in fact, got most of their wranglers.

Then when we went to Page, Arizona. Richard Donner was there with Mel Gibson doing Maverick. We went out to their set one night and my first assistant director from Free Willy, Jimmy Van Wyck, was working on it.

Then we were followed into Tuscon by The Quick and the Dead, the thing that Russell Crowe is doing.

You also shot some scenes in Australia.

We wanted to shoot some interiors in Australia because the cost savings were enormous, despite the fact that we had to bring cast and everything over here. There was also the fact that it was an Australian production, and, given the way the money had been raised, we needed to do all our post-production here, and a certain amount of production. So we shot at the Movie World Studios in Queensland, which are just terrific. God, it was good shooting there.

We had five interior sets: a saloon, a bank, a gaol and a couple of bedroom sets. We shot up there for nine or ten days and that’s where we wrapped.

Did you have a part-Australian crew?

Every head of department was Australian. David Eggby was the cinematographer and the first assistant was Bob Donaldson, who I have worked with a lot. Bernard Hinds was the production designer, but [American] Liz Thomas was an art director because it still needed to have an American perspective to it.

Bruce Rowland is the composer and we had an American editor, Nick Brown. He has cut some terrific movies over the years, from The Accused to City Slickers and Sleeper. He’s worked with some great characters, and some wild directors. He’s even experienced the wrath of Steven Seagal.

You have worked with David Eggby quite a few times. He is almost ‘your’ DOP.

We started together years ago at Crawfords, and he was an operator on The Man from Snowy River. But it’s a case quite often of who is available. David is very highly regarded and as a matter of fact he’s committed to doing another film with Rob Cohen, a thing called Dragon Heart. I may not be able to get him
on my next film, which is unfortunate. I'll have to find somebody else, but there are so many great people. I'd love to work with Dean Semler again, or with John Seale and Russell Boyd. But certainly David and I get on very well. We talk the same language, and he's done an exquisite job on this. It looks just stunning.

Eggby doesn't seem to get the recognition here that he deserves. Quigley is sensationally photographed, as is The Salute of the Jugger [David Peoples, 1989].

David literally directed the camera on that movie because David Peoples had not directed before.

Lightning Jack looks equally as good as Quigley. You can't go wrong with the locations and we both like to work around the movement of the sun, trying to back-light everything we can. David also knows how to compromise. If the sun goes in, he knows what he can get away with, and what he can't. Some guys just dig their heels and that becomes economically diabolical. Being a director yourself, you know how much you rely on those guys to get you out of difficult situations.

I am sorry that the final cut of Lightning Jack doesn't have a few really beautiful crane movements that proved a bit too languid and a bit long. Instead of making an establishing shot 6 seconds, it would take 15 seconds and that's a little indulgent.

Why has the post-production been so hectic?

Savoy, which is a new, heavy-weight company like a new Tri-Star, wanted to preview the film in the U.S. in December. It was difficult because we were doing the post-production in Australia and we had to go back there, come back here and then go back. We weren't able to lock the film off until mid-January, a week before starting the final dub.

It's been very, very hard, and again it seems to be the way things are moving over there, where everything gets pushed through so very fast. It doesn't give you time when you've finished a cut to remove yourself from it for a week so you can come back and take a fresh look.

The first cut of Free Willy was 154 minutes and it ended up 104 mins. I think Lightning Jack was 124 mins and is now about 96 mins. We haven't lost much, just general tightening, and one little sequence.

Comedy is harder than drama and there is a lot more fiddling that goes on, particularly after you see the film with an audience. The first preview was in Phoenix and, because it was the week before Christmas, it was much harder recruiting a broad audience. It was mainly a white, middle-class audience, and the reaction was very, very good. But the film was slow. I knew it was going to be slow, because it was basically my first cut.

We did some tightening and had another preview in Culver City, Los Angeles, on 2 January. The difference was amazing, just having Hispanics and blacks and a multi-racial audience – and, of course, a tighter film.

I find the audience-previewing process frightening, but for a comedy it is great. It's not what people say afterwards, or what they write on the cards, it's just being able to sit in the middle of the audience and feel the buzz. For me, that is the moment of truth. Your heart is in your mouth when the lights go down, and the first time you hear them laugh is such a feeling of relief.

You have always been a relative fan of audience testing.

Yeah, but I'm not a slave to it. You can become a slave to focus groups and to the cards, particularly in Los Angeles where everyone is a film critic. They have so many of these bloody screenings and the tendency is for people sit down and think, "How can I make this film better?"

I've never been a slave to the cards. I don't even read the cards usually, though I glanced at them with Lightning Jack. If there is something consistently that people say, then you obviously have to look at it. Maybe the audience didn't get a particular point, which can be solved with a snip or putting a wild line in somewhere.

If an audience doesn't understand something, then you haven't done your job right and you should fix it. That is very important, but that is very different from getting eight thousand people saying "Well, wouldn't it be better if ..."

The point is you have to be bold. You commit to doing a script and you believe in it, and you go out and shoot it. You know straight away whether it's working or if it's dying.

The Free Willy previews were also awesome. My first was on a Saturday afternoon at a place called Woodland Hills in the Valley, and it was basically myself, the editor, Jenny Lew Tugen and Lauren Shuler-Donner [producers], Dick Donner [executive producer], the post-production people, the audience recruiting company and some general public. It was just extraordinary. There weren't any credits on the movie, so the lights came straight up, and you could see people were crying. Some actually wanted to give us money to help set up a foundation to save whales.

Dick said to me, "Let's not show this to the studio at Warner Bros. Let's invite them to another preview next Sunday. We'll have another audience, and invite them along with their kids." So we did it again at Sherman Oaks and 50 Warner executives came with their families.

We had made quite a few changes after the first preview and took out about five or six mins. The reaction was amazing; it couldn't have been better.
Simon Wincer

Arnon Milchan [executive producer] was the first to come out and he said, “Simon, I want the sequel on my desk on Monday”, tears rolling down his cheeks. He had some of his German investors, who had visited us on the set during filming. They had dollar signs in their eyes.

All the Warner Bros. people were over the moon. It was a great way for them to see it with an audience of five hundred people, with kids and everyone cheering and shouting at the end. The public stayed to fill in their cards, but all the executives rushed out of the theatre, reaching for their dark glasses. It was just terrific.

FREE WILLY

How did you become involved with Free Willy?

The script was sent to me by my agent. I liked it, but a couple of weeks later my agent rang back and said, “Ah, they’re looking at another director and have decided to go with a newcomer. But would you still like to meet with the Donners?” As they’d already chosen this other guy, I couldn’t see much point and passed.

That was the last I had heard about it until 18 months later, when I was filming an episode of Young Indiana Jones in St Petersburg. I got this message from my agent saying the Donners weren’t happy with the director and wanted to replace him.

I finished that episode and, on my way back home to Australia, dropped into Los Angeles. I met with the producers, Jennie Lew Tugen and Lauren Shuler-Donner, who explained that everyone at Warner Bros. had looked on Free Willy as a little film. But it was quite a big film – and a logistical nightmare.

The director had made a short film which had done well at Sundance, but he was just out of his depth. There comes the day in every director’s life where you actually have to say, “Yes, I like that person”, “Yes, that’s how I want the set to look” and so on. They actually called him “see more”, because he wanted to see more and more.

The script was floundering and there was only six weeks to shooting. All they had was a whale in training in a tank in Mexico City. They had no locations, no cast and Warners was ready to pull the plug. So they said, “We’d like to offer you the film.” I was a bit tired and I wanted to go home to Australia, as I hadn’t seen my kids in quite a while. In the end, I actually said, “No.”

Then Richard Donner [executive producer], whom I hadn’t met and who was building a house up on the Pacific Northwest, got on the phone. He was incredibly persuasive, and he said, “I’m going to fly down. Just come and talk to me.”

Dick is this larger-than-life character, like the movies he makes. Movies tend to reflect the personalities of the makers, and Dick’s is certainly larger-than-life, a wonderful bear of a man.

He came down and managed to convince me to do the movie. He never actually explained why he wasn’t going to do it himself, but he was tied up in the post-production of Lethal Weapon 3, which had one of those nightmare post-production schedules, a bit like Lightning Jack’s. They were literally finishing mixing on the Friday and opening in theatres a week later.

The director had trouble making a selection. Isn’t that a case of how, as you become a more experienced director, you learn to trust your instincts more?

You say Jason James Richter selected himself, yet the first director had trouble making a selection. Isn’t that a case of how, as you become a more experienced director, you learn to trust your instincts more?

Oh, yes. But any smart guy should have seen straight away that Jason was the one. I guess this young director was so apprehensive about putting his foot wrong that he just kind of backed himself into a corner.

RAE (LORI PETTY) AND JESSE (JASON JAMES RICHTER) FEED WILLY. SIMON Wincer’S FREE WILLY.
But yes, it is experience. I have worked a lot with kids. Both *The Girl Who Spelt Freedom* [tele-feature, 1986] and *D.A.R.Y.L.* [1985] had leading kids, and I had also done a *Young Indiana Jones* episode in Africa with a very young kid.

I guess being a father helped a bit, as well. The other director didn’t have any kids, and, unless you’ve been a parent, I think it’s hard to manipulate and manoeuvre a kid when directing, to understand that they do get tired, and so on.

**What are the advantages and disadvantages of coming quite suddenly onto a picture?**

The disadvantage was that I inherited the entire crew. But because the original director was a first-timer, they had chosen a very experienced crew, all of whom were terrific. I didn’t have too many problems, especially as I had the best first assistant in the country, Jimmy Van Wyck. He is also the co-producer.

When I first walked in the office, I felt like a visiting dignitary meeting a line of people. Fortunately the crew was a pretty organized group. Most had all come off *Lethal Weapon 3* [Richard Donner, 1992] and were really good.

I did choose, however, the editor, Nicholas Brown, the composer, Basil Poledouris, and all the post-production people.

In Australia, directors are sometimes so involved in getting a film off the ground that they arrive on set exhausted. That wouldn’t have been a problem here.

No, but that’s the difference between making a film in Australia and making a film over there. The support structure is so different. All you have to worry about is directing. You don’t have to drive a car, because they don’t won’t you to worry about traffic jams or the risk of having an accident. Somebody picks you up and you can actually work in the car on the way to location. Little things like that lighten the load.

The film was obviously difficult logistically. How much had been solved before you got there?

Virtually nothing was in place. I had to solve it all. The problem was that they had a whale in a tank in Mexico City, but the setting of the film was in the Pacific Northwest. So the production designer, Chuck Rosen, had to make that tank look like it belonged in the Northwest. The idea was that we would matte in the ocean in the background.

But, on top of that, we needed an exterior of the tank and the amusement park that it was set in. We also needed the observation room underneath.

For a while, everything seemed achievable. We found an amusement park up in Portland, Oregon, that was on the Columbia River. That was terrific for the exterior and the ride up to the park. We also found the ocean in Oregon at Canon Beach, which is, ironically, where they had filmed *The Goonies*.

But the underground observation room proved the biggest problem. I was shown a swimming pool in East Los Angeles, which had a glass window that looked into the swimming pool. But it was a really small working area. So I asked, “Has anybody thought about investigating tanks?” “No, we haven’t”, they said, but then somebody said, “There’s one across the road at the Warner Bros. ranch.” So we jumped in the car and drove there.

It was a half-circle tank, which was almost the same shape as the pool in Mexico City. I suggested we cut some glass windows in the side, build the set around the curve and match it to the swimming pool. In five minutes we had literally solved the problem.

The only difficulty was that the tank wasn’t that big, and the animaltronic whale was 22 feet long. Fortunately, there was just enough room to have its nose out of shot in one glass window and then swim him to the other side, and have his tail just disappear out of shot, before he bashed into the other side.

The rest of the locations were more straightforward. It was just a matter of getting the ambience of this ocean-side community. We finally chose this little place called Astoria, which had been used for *Kindergarten Cop* and *The Goonies*. It’s a tiny place but another big movie was shooting there at exactly the same time, *Ninja Turtles 3*.

**Did you use computers for the special effects?**

Yes. We used a company called Video Image.

Every time you see Willy in the ocean he had to have the curved dorsal fin added. The cartilage on whales in captivity seems to go weak and their dorsal fin hangs over. It’s really pathetic, because that’s the first thing you notice about a whale in captivity.

One complicated shot, just after the whale is free, is where Willy leaps out of the water. They had to replace the shot we had and turn it into Willy. It’s not only moving, but it’s taking on different shapes, and has water falling off it.

As for the leap over the wall, that starts as a special effect with the whale coming out of the water to about this high [1 metre] and then a computer-generated image takes over.

There are five or six matte shots of the ocean behind the tank, and also of the whales at night when Jesse climbs up the lighthouse and sees them playing in the ocean.

In the very final shot of the movie there are three whales swimming through the ocean: a father whale, the mother whale and a smaller whale with a bent dorsal. The bent dorsal was put on.

All this was pretty complex and very expensive, but it is this computer technology that makes movies like *Jurassic Park* possible.

**Are you still editing on video?**

No, but that’s the difference between making a film in Australia and making a film over there. The support structure is so different. All you have to worry about is directing. You don’t have to drive a car, because they don’t won’t you to worry about traffic jams or the risk of having an accident. Somebody picks you up and you can actually work in the car on the way to location. Little things like that lighten the load.

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**Are you still editing on video?**

Yes, though it was pretty primitive compared to what we use now. They don’t even use laser discs any more, it’s just computer discs and stuff. I think it’s all fantastic and I hear Fred Schepisi is now a convert.

**You mentioned the whale family. One of the most striking aspects of *Free Willy* is that, like Mrs Doubtfire [Chris Columbus, 1993] and others, it is redefining for Americans the meaning of family. You show alternatives to the stereotypical 1950s nuclear family.**

One thing I liked about *Mrs Doubtfire* is that it doesn’t cop out at the end. In an interview I saw, Christopher Columbus, who was also the writer, said that he refused to bow to the pressure to give it a ‘happier’ ending. The reason the film works is because people relate to the fact that the couple doesn’t get back together again.

For me, the theme of *Free Willy* is family, and Jesse’s struggle to come to terms with foster parents, and not having a mother or a father.

There’s also an interesting parallel story with the whale, in that Willy is plucked away from his family. The thing to remember about whales is that their whole life is family; they never leave. When you see these pods of whales, and there are sixty or seventy in a pod, it’s quite breathtaking.
**Simon Wincer**

In a way, films now reflect reality a lot more than they do the Leave It To Beaver-land, as I call it, of the 1950s and '60s.

Jesse never calls Glen [Michael Madsen], his foster father, "dad". You don't sentimentalize their partial bonding.

One of the reasons I cast Michael Madsen is that he has a really blue-collar quality that very few actors have. I wanted Glen to be an older version of Jesse. You can see that Glen was a real larrikin when he was a kid.

There is a scene where Glen comes out and wants to throw baseball with Jesse. They are like a couple of dogs circling each other, a couple of old mongrels who don't trust one another. Both are streetwise and uncomfortable with each other. Glen is trying to make an effort to get through to this kid, and I think it would have been pretty yucky if Jesse had called him "dad".

The most powerful dramatic moment in the film is actually when Glen decides to help Jesse on the forest road at night.

It's interesting, because that is one of the few times that I had to reshoot Jason's close-up. The first night we did it, he was just a little bit off and he couldn't get the magic. So we redid Jason the next night, and he was so much better. It had to be totally believable when Glen throws his arms around Jesse and he looks up.

Yes, it is a very powerful moment. Glen gives in to the kid and backs him with tears.

What audience did you pitch the film at? There isn't the tokenism towards adults one finds in many children's films.

I guess the conscious thing was to make it for families. I never think I would ever get involved in anything that's too juvenile.

Also, there was a conscious effort made not to Disney-ize the film. I'm not saying that in a derogatory way, just to highlight that we didn't want to over-sentimentalize it.

Jim Schembri, who always writes fairly interesting interviews for The Age, said, "Oh mate, I loved the film until the whale shook its head." It's interesting what he said because that used to be an arch moment for me, too. Jesse offers it a fish and the whale shook its head. "It's interesting, because that is one of the few times that I had to take out something the people like? I suppose these are the things we put in for kids, if you like.

Free Willy has ended up your biggest film.

By a long way. It had an American theatrical gross of US$78 million and it has sold 8.1 million videos there, which makes it one of the top videos of all time. It's been incredibly successful, and it's now opening up in all the foreign markets, and doing great business here.

**YOUNG INDIANA JONES**

You have also recently done episodes for The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles.

I did one 2-hour episode in Africa, and another in Czechoslovakia. It was about the battle of the Somme and was All Quiet on the Western Front and The Great Escape rolled into one. I also did a Russian one-hour, which was filmed in St Petersburg and Prague, and another in Turkey, which is The Lighthorsemen revisited.

They were great fun to do, and it was really good working with George Lucas. I got to know him pretty well because he sat in on all the cutting sessions. I learnt a lot.

George is very script-orientated, which surprised me. Everyone thinks of him as this technocrat, but he is totally story- and script-orientated. Everything radiates from there.

What George does have is this incredible knowledge. When he looks at a cut of something, he can break a scene down to the bones. And he's never averse to going out and reshooting something because it's not clear. On Young Indiana Jones, we were always going out to do pick-up shots: "You need a shot of this" or "You need a shot of that." And 99 per cent of the time he was absolutely right. It was so frustrating never being able to second guess him.

I also had the great experience of working with Ben Burtt, who was George's chief sound person. Ben designed the sound for Star Wars, Raiders of the Lost Ark and all those movies, and was also one of the mixers.

Ben cut a couple of my episodes and he would spend hours before we'd shoot something cutting battle scenes together to give me ideas. He even directed some second-unit stuff for me in Africa. He was very creative.

George and Ben are both such nice people and totally removed from the Hollywood system. George says he built Skywalker Ranch because, when he started out as a filmmaker, he learnt there are three things you need: good research, because out of good research comes good scripts; good post-production facilities; and good food. Skywalker has all of these.

It has the most fantastic state-of-the-art post-production facilities in terms of foley stages, dubbing theatres, a big music recording stage and beautiful theatres. It is all so tastefully done and is in a beautiful setting, up near the Napa Valley.

There are very comfortable rooms to work in, because, as you know, everyone in this business works long hours. They also supply good food and have a just unbelievable research library.

George bought the Paramount research library, which was put up for sale because no one knew what to do with it. They have photographs dating back to the beginning of Paramount. For example, if you need to know what a Parisian restaurant in 1932 looks like, you just look it up and there it is.

You can also stay up there for an entire mix, as happened with Jurassic Park. They just moved in.

Apparently Lucas is getting back into production.

Yes. He's just done Radioland Murders, which is a script he wrote years ago. He is also gearing up for three new Star Wars movies, which will be made back to back. They are doing them that way for cost-saving reasons. There is also a new Indiana Jones movie in the works, with Steven Spielberg.

**What are your future plans?**

I'm going to do a film for Disney called Operation Dumbo Drop, which is a true story that happened in Vietnam about a ragtag group of soldiers who had to replace a village elephant that had been inadvertently killed because of something they'd done. They trek this thing across Vietnam by stealing planes and boats and aeroplanes and so forth, and eventually drop the elephant by parachute out of the sky into this village.

It's a wonderful, heart-warming adventure story, and it's good to see something positive come out of the war. It's a lot of fun and terrific action sequences in it.

Are you filming it in Vietnam?

No, in Thailand. It doesn't start shooting until mid-October because of the monsoons.

I'm developing a couple of Australian films as well. Hopefully, after Dumbo Drop they will see the light of day. I can't wait to do something back here.
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The industry comments on the past ten years and the future

Now and the next ten years

Sue Milliken
PRODUCER AND CHAIR OF THE AUSTRALIAN FILM COMMISSION

The industry is going through one of its most stable periods in a long time – possibly since it could be dignified by the word “industry”.

The system of delivering government assistance is working well: commercial investment through the Australian Film Finance Corporation (FFC), development and culture through the Australian Film Commission (AFC), training through the Australian Film Television & Radio School (AFTRS); each organization’s responsibility is different but complementary. Alternative doors and regional development are provided by the state bodies, most of which have undergone major overhauls since the 1980s.

The culture of disdain so long embedded in the bureaucracy’s attitude to filmmakers is, happily, becoming a thing of the past.

The staff of the government agencies these days pretty much see themselves as part of the team, as partners with the filmmakers in the process.

Funding levels, while somewhat austere compared with ten years ago, are probably about as much as we have a right to expect at this time. This does not mean that more money could not be spent well.

The industry continues to fulfil its side of the bargain to the Australian people, who underpin our existence with their taxes. Year by year, films emerge which we and our fellow Australians can be proud of, and which continue to keep our culture and our art in front of world audiences. It could be said there are not enough of them; we must try to achieve more films of high quality in the next few years.

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with the exception of children’s programmes, continues to languish.

Multi-culturalism has entered our storytelling. No longer are we presenting only the Anglo-Saxon view of Australian life. The first small steps have been taken to give Aboriginal Australians the opportunities in film and television which white Australians have enjoyed for the past twenty years.

Two problems which will weaken our ability to produce more successes are the need for more well-rounded producers with both creative and management skills, and the squeezing of budgets in the $3 to $4 million range.

Producers with the entrepreneurial talent to get a picture financed do not always have the appropriate skills to get the best out of the elements during production. In these cases, “line” producers are usually employed, who have no authority to function creatively, although many of them have the ability to do so. The picture frequently falls between the two. A high priority for the future is to encourage and empower more good producers.

Pictures in the “medium” budget range often flounder for lack of funds which would allow for the extra polish which would push them out of the ordinary and into the special. Too many scripts are still going into production before they are ready.

The industry has come a long way. We have much to be proud of. But we can never take our feet off the pedals. If anything, we have to push harder than we have ever done before.
Future of Australian film over the next decade

John Morris
CHIEF EXECUTIVE, AUSTRALIAN FILM FINANCE CORPORATION

The Australian film industry has developed and matured substantially over the past four years, and I'm confident that this progress will continue, providing stable and consistent funding is available from 1996 onwards.

Much is said about the importance of maintaining "critical mass" within the industry. This refers to upholding a basic level of production to ensure a healthy infrastructure and talent base. I don't know what that level is, but I'm concerned that the FFC's 1995/96 appropriation of $50 million is about as low as it can get.

The FFC committed $68.12 million in 1992/93 to support $112.57 million worth of production. This represented 14 features, 14 television productions, and 38 documentaries. It is reasonable to expect that this volume will drop accordingly with reduced appropriation. Although this will be offset to some extent by a steady level of earnings to the FFC, private sector investment in FFC-backed projects is falling below our original target of 40%, which creates an additional drain on our available resources.

Overall, 34 films were made in 1991/92, 24 last financial year, according to the AFC's annual production report. As those volumes drops, it's feasible that perhaps as low as 15 films - including AFC projects and private endeavours - will be made each year in Australia by the latter half of the decade.

That's a worrying scenario. It's heartening therefore to know that the government is also concerned about a decline. Former Arts Minister Bob McMullan announced the planned 1995/96 review of the FFC will be brought forward to 1994/95 to give sufficient time to determine appropriate levels of support.

And, importantly, culture has become an increasingly important item on the political agenda of both sides of government. I can only hope that the National Cultural Policy, a 10-year blueprint for a cultural strategy currently being put together, will reflect strongly what Canberra learnt in this year's elections: that Australians care deeply about the development of their culture and how it is presented.

The Australian film industry is working from a more performance-based platform that is delivering better films, enhancing our business acumen, and honing our technical skills. An internationally-recognized Australian sales-agency base has evolved while our unprecedented presence at Cannes last year showed the world's film industry the quality and range of films Australia is now making.

This momentum must be maintained, otherwise we jeopardize these achievements, and the wealth of experience gained since the 1970s. At the same time, we must continue to face the challenge of presenting our stories in a way that is as accessible to foreign audiences as they are to Australian audiences.

Looking ahead, I can see the American concept of test screenings becoming widespread. More Australians are seeing more Australian films than ever before, and test screenings - by identifying a film's strengths, weaknesses and likely audience before release - could help attract even bigger audiences.

And, of course, in coming years the industry faces the challenge of new media. We will need to be flexible and entrepreneurial to capitalize on the opportunities offered by the introduction of Pay TV and other niche programming outlets. However, the FFC believes standards of quality must be set and maintained in this new programming environment.

The Australian film industry has all the skills and talents needed to be a medium-size but important player in the world market over the next decade. What it needs to maintain that position is a consistent, sensitive and committed funding base.

The education of young Stuart, or, just another bildungs roman

Stuart Cunningham
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF MEDIA STUDIES, QUEENSLAND UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, AND A COMMISSIONER OF THE AUSTRALIAN FILM COMMISSION

I am one of those fortunate enough to have grown up with the contemporary Australian film and television industry - too young to experience the full weight of the cultural cringe (although it was certainly in evidence in some of the pathetic Anglophilic university dons whom I came across); too old to either take it for granted or experience it as simply a (muted?) part of the cultural furniture.

Still at school when all the backroom action was taking place to kick start the industry, I was blissfully unaware of what it had taken to get Australian accents and stories up on the big screen again. But, soon after, watching *Between Wars* (Michael Thornhill, 1974) at about the same time as films that took a rather serious adolescent's roof off like *Sweet Movie* (Dusan Makavejev, 1974), I could appreciate that this country also had a tradition of sexual and intellectual rupture. I then could stumblingly learn the
etiquette of savouring art cinema at what seemed like proper art houses per courtesy of Picnic at Hanging Rock (Peter Weir, 1975) or "The Priest" episode of Libido (Fred Schepisi, 1973) as much as through Bergman, Antonioni or Fellini. I took the advice of an expatriate American Anglophile that one should subscribe to a whole season of American Film Theatre. But I learnt, soon enough, after a three-and-a-half-hour Eugene O'Neill number which took place on one set, that the calling card of serious cinema didn’t require ponderous theatrical adaptations of leaden existentialists. I didn’t go back.

But there was something even then out of kilter about the pan pipes and Peter Pan figures of Peter Weir in the same year as the dismissal and the sense of political impotence caught so viscerally in Exits (Paul Davies, short, 1980). Visiting the sub-cultural otherland of the 1970s through Dalmas (Bert Deling, 1973) and Pure S... (Deling, 1975) was to travel a long way from the fateful gundown at Yarralumla gulch — but maybe, as Exits suggests, not such a long way.

I read Phillip Adams’ columns and books of republished essays, encountering the agnostic and the agonistic voice of Australian secularism — Manning Clark’s third voice in the country’s history — well before the filmic cultural nationalism. In an experience like that of my first realization that the Paul Schrader of Transcendental Style in Film was the same Paul Schrader of Taxi Driver (Martin Scorsese, 1976), I began to see that they were of one piece. Models for the situated intellectual began to take shape.

I got my first ‘real’ job tutoring at Griffith University when it first opened and was still a mess of Nissen huts and mud between a few award-winning buildings and began to be exposed to the cutting-edge fashions of new cinema theory and, at the same time, the shards of the Australian film tradition. It was the Tower of Babel, the languages were so discordant — a powerful stimulant. When first shown Sons of Matthew (Charles Chauvel, 1949), a light went on. This beefcake movie (I’ve always thought of it as the Australian version of the great John Ford’s How Green Was My Valley, 1941) made me realize that the strongest dynamics of Hollywood had been tapped, and now continued to be tapped, here. I tried to follow the leads. With the demise of the National Film Theatre, and the concentration of film societies in outlying states played a particular role in laying a platform for an encounter with the Australian cinema. There came to be so much pleasure in screening it to another generation.

Seeing Newsfront (Philip Noyce, 1978) after a few years living in the States and wanting to identify strongly with the implacable gusto of its citizens, I didn’t think I would have cried so much with homesickness for the gum trees and the sense of open space and the pioneering spirit and the situated criticism of U.S. imperialism, while the snow piled up in the deep dark and the temperature dipped below minus thirty outside the flea pit in Madison, Wisconsin. The film historians there knew about The Story of the Kelly Gang (Charles Tait, 1906) as much as I did.

I had the fullest Hollywood tie-in/merchandising experience with my five-year-old and his love affair with Jo Kennedy in Star Struck (Gillian Armstrong, 1982). I just had to buy all the paraphernalia — the record, the posters for his room — and go see it four times. It wasn’t a problem — I think I might have been going through a similar experience. I learnt the ‘positive originality’ lesson about Australian culture through it.

And then the great cycle of mini-series. You don’t get out as much when you have kids, do you? Television took the place of movies in rendering the roots of Australian experience at just the right time for me. I watched the first one, Against the Wind, when it screened in syndication in the U.S. I really didn’t know what to make of it until years later, when I was able, in the context of debates back home, to think through how it had been Australia’s Roots, and it had been that with considerably greater historical veracity than its American forbear.

I couldn’t imagine my life — couldn’t bring an image of it up — without the cultural and intellectual dialogue that the film and television industry has engaged me in over the past twenty years.

To all who have laboured in the sweet vineyards, a thank you.

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**Ghosts ... of a national cinema**

**Adrian Martin**

**Film Critic, Co-winner of the 1993 Byron Kennedy Award**

Australian cinema is elusive, which is not an altogether pleasant thing. It seems very difficult, and maybe even impossible, for an Australian critic to get any real perspective on this national cinema as it takes shape from one new film to the next. Reactions are almost always polarized: to Helen Garner, writing in The Independent Monthly, Strictly Ballroom (Baz Luhrmann, 1992) is a profound piece of popular entertainment; to John Flaus, in Filmnews (February 1993), it is “trifle served as main course [...] brazenly derivative, redundant and sentimental”. One way or another, it is as if we are all too invested in our local product, all looking up too closely to really see anything clearly, all pinning too many unreasonable hopes (or projecting too many unreasonable paranoias) onto what we behold.

From where I stand in the film culture scene, the recent history of Australian cinema can be written as a series of responses for and against the notion of screen realism. There is hardly a brash, young filmmaker making his or her feature debut in Cinema Papers who does not wipe off virtually every Australian film coming before as ‘realist’. This iconoclastic campaign has had decidedly mixed effects. On the one hand, it has led to the production of lyrical essay films like Breathing Under Water (Susan Murphy Dermody, 1992) and independent experiments like My Life Without Steve (Gillian Leahy, 1986). On the other hand, it has pushed film students into a vain search for imaginary
below the surface of mainstream film culture, there will forever lurk our one unquestionably great achievement in the international context: the glorious, 30-year history of the Australian avant garde ... ADRIAN MARTIN

bogeys like the 'AFC genre' – a reportedly rapid form of national cinema they will find in neither Picnic at Hanging Rock, Peter Kenna's The Umbrella Woman (Ken Cameron, 1987), nor Summer Locke Elliott's Careful He Might Hear You (Carl Schultz, 1983).

Worse still, an anti-realist bias blinds many to the actual traditions – somewhere between varieties of naturalism and the tall tale – which already exist in Australian cinema, especially in our most innovative documentaries, like Kelvin and his Friends (Brian McKenzie, 1987) or Journey to the End of Night (Peter Tammer, 1981), but also in our often charmingly-oddball versions of 'exploitation' genres, from Stone (Sandy Harbut, 1974) and Hostage: The Christine Maresch Story (Frank Shields, 1983) to Sons of Steel (Gary Keady, 1989) and The Marsupials: The Howling III (Philippe Mora, 1987).

As in Britain or Canada, ours may not ultimately be a 'cinema cinema' (Dr George Miller excepted), but more of a televisual cinema – an idea cued strongly by the fondly elaborate television pastiches that litter Australian films from BMX Bandits (Brian Trenchard-Smith, 1983) and Nirvana Street Murder (Aleksi Vellis, 1991) to BeDevil (Tracey Moffatt, 1993) and Body Melt (Philip Brophy, 1994). A televisual film (which is not the same as a telemovie) is geared to a different intensity, a different mesh of style, content and 'social text' than either a pumped-up Hollywood spectacle or a lush, visionary, European art film – so perhaps we should stop always faulting local cinema in comparison with either of these models, and look at what it is that we actually (sometimes) do well.

Australian cinema is never going all in the one direction – thank god. There will always be, in the feature realm, a strange and fascinating mix of residual and emerging values – the crazy, male fantasy of Map of the Human Heart (Vincent Ward, 1993) against the progressive, female fantasy of The Piano (Jane Campion, 1993), for instance. And below the surface of mainstream film culture, there will forever lurk our one unquestionably great achievement in the international context: the glorious, 30-year history of the Australian avant garde from the Cantrills and Paul Winkler through to Arf Arf and Melanie El Mir.

After the kerfuffle in 1993 about the feature nominations for AFI Awards, however, one trend bearing upon the ghost of our national cinema seems particularly clear: Where do we draw the borders around 'Australia' – and do we even need to? This is not only a question of the inevitable, unstoppable increase in international co-production. It is a question of self-defined cultural identity, and it impacts on the films we make. Look at Spotswood (Mark Joffe, 1992) or The Nostradamus Kid (Bob Ellis, 1993), Ghosts ... of the Civil Dead (John Hillcoat, 1989) or Romper Stomper (Geoffrey Wright, 1992): whether in nostalgic elegy or violent self-immolation, the clear stake of these films is a once-upon-a-time, racially self-enclosed, mainly Anglo, mainly male Australia.

Faced with the perplexity of new kinds of films proposing new, hybrid identities, a recent, cagey response on the part of some mainstream reviewers is symptomatic: they choose to celebrate Blackfellas (James Ricketson, 1993) – a film about 'the Aboriginal problem' directed by a white man – as a 'true' Australian film, over either The Piano or BeDevil. This latest ruse of conservative ideology reminds me irresistibly of one of my all-time favourite moments in Australian film: when the neo-Nazi Hando (Russell Crowe) in Romper Stomper takes time out from dodging the death-blow delivered by Australian-Vietnamese to philosophize – and compares his historical plight as a member of a vanishing species to that of “the fucking Abo”.

More opportunities for the commercial filmmaker

Lyndon Sayer-Jones

FILM LAWYER, LYNDON SAYER-JONES & ASSOCIATES, SYDNEY

In 1994, there are several major trends evident in the Australian film and television industry which hold out great promise for increased opportunities.

First, it is clear Australian films are being well received with titles as diverse as The Piano, Antarctica (documentary, 1993), Sacred Sex (Cynthia Connop, documentary, 1992) and Strictly Ballroom enjoying critical and commercial success. There is no reason to believe that trend will not continue given that production levels should remain at present levels with the government support that we can all reasonably expect.

Second, the parochialism that has been a feature of the world's largest entertainment market, namely North America, is being reduced at a rapid rate. Most notably this autumn 1994 in the U.S., The Gordon Elliott Show is to be launched by the giant CBS and Fox networks. The Australian journalist, Gordon Elliott, is to host a prime afternoon talk show scheduled head-to-head against the current talk show leaders Oprah Winfrey and Phil Donahue. How things have changed!

Third, technology is now genuinely opening the horizons of the communications and entertainment industries in a way that

Nobody knows what is ahead, but my guess is that the opportunities for the Australian artistic community will be greater than they ever have been, providing that they are prepared to create their art in a way that has commercial appeal. LYNDON SAYER-JONES
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will profoundly affect everyone. These new technologies of multimedia, satellite transmissions and new delivery systems present enormous challenges to the Australian legal system of copyright — certainly many writers and filmmakers will be distressed that they have unwittingly given away rights that will be exploited in ways they had not even contemplated. To my mind, however, these changes will serve the Australian film industry well — at least in financial and skill-sharing terms — because these technologies, coupled with our lower cost structure and world-class expertise, should cause considerably more foreign productions to take place in this country. I will leave the cultural debate on Australia's being rendered Hollywood's backlot to others, but feel compelled to say there is a hell of a lot we can learn from the Americans, especially in the area of deciding what films will have a market and the marketing process itself.

Last, there will be an ever-increasing emphasis on commercialism to justify the expenditure of capital which is devoted in enormous quantities by any film industry. That commercialism is not just coming from the demands of the studios and distributors but now also from within government film bodies such as the Australian Film Finance Corporation. While some would see this as a healthy move that will inevitably give our film industry a greater chance to stand on its own feet, others will take the view that it will only diminish the likelihood that we will produce the great films for which we are famous. Because this country has such a small domestic market, a film that receives an excellent domestic response will often return a fraction of its actual production cost. The same situation occurring in the U.S. would push such a film into significant profit. No matter how commercial we may aim our films to be, they will always essentially have the enormous disadvantage of coming from an exceptionally small domestic market. For that reason, it will be very difficult for this country, at least in the foreseeable future, to have an indigenous film industry which would be genuinely self-supporting.

I am confident, however, that Australian governments will continue to provide significant support for our industry, if only because matching our film skills are our superb lobbying skills to extract political support.

From a lawyer's point of view, there will never be more work than in the near future. Certainly lawyers are now taking on the rôle of quasi-executive producers in co-ordinating the complex financing that is an ever more a critical aspect of film production.

Nobody knows what is ahead, but my guess is that the opportunities for the Australian artistic community will be greater than they ever have been, providing that they are prepared to create their art in a way that has commercial appeal. There is ample room for niche marketing, but a market there has to be.

Children's television

Dr Patricia Edgar
DIRECTOR, AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN'S TELEVISION FOUNDATION

Ten years ago I concluded that "Although the groundwork has been laid in the past 10 years for an Australian children's television industry, the next 10 years will tell if it is going to succeed." It is very satisfying therefore to be able to look back over a decade of remarkable achievement and success in children's television in Australia during one of the most turbulent periods in Australian broadcasting history.

This success has been due to government policies to improve both the level and quality of Australian children's programming on Australian networks, by a unique system of government regulation, subsidy of production by direct investment in children's productions and support for the Australian Children's Television Foundation (ACTF).

Last year, the ACTF celebrated its tenth anniversary. Established as a non-profit organization and funded jointly by the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments, the ACTF's rôle is to encourage the development, production and transmission of quality children's programmes. The ACTF has led the way in producing innovative children's films, demonstrating what can be achieved if sufficient resources and development care are allocated to children's productions. The ACTF's series have been screened in more than 90 countries around the world, developing for Australia an international reputation for producing quality children's productions. A highlight of the decade was winning an International Emmy for Captain Johnno in 1988 (with further Emmy nominations for Boy Soldiers in 1991 and Round the Twist II in 1993), although the ACTF has won more than 40 other national and international awards for its programmes.

As well as screening on the ABC and commercial networks, the ACTF's programmes are used extensively in Australian schools. The growth of the video market over the past decade has facilitated greater access to the ACTF's programmes. The ACTF pioneered the introduction of video-study packages (containing a video, teachers' notes and a tie-in novel). Eight years after the Winners series was produced, the series is still a part of the school curriculum in many schools. The videos still sell steadily and the novels remain in print, with a new generation of children seeing the series for the first time. The ACTF has fostered greater links between television and education by producing curriculum materials alongside its programmes, particularly the Lift Off series, which is a first for any children's television series, and which has been endorsed by the Directors-General of Curriculum as part of the school curriculum.

In 1978, the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal (ABT) introduced a number of regulatory measures for commercial broadcasters, which led to the standards for children's television in 1984. The ABT recognized that the drama format is an essential ingredient in children's television so that children may identify with Australian themes in drama programmes made especially for them, and so it introduced the requirement that from 1984 onwards each commercial broadcaster must screen a minimum quota of eight hours per year of first release Australian children's
The industry comments

The Alliance

Anne Britton

Joint Federal Secretary, Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance

Some two decades on since the so-called renaissance of the Australian cinema, the industry may not have “come-of-age” but it has certainly found its legs. The giddy success of the early 1980s where the industry churned out box-office hits with local audiences has not been repeated.

While Strictly Ballroom, Proof (Jocelyn Moorhouse, 1991), Crocodile Dundee (Peter Faiman, 1986), Young Einstein (Yahoo Serious, 1988), Flirting (John Duigan, 1991), The Big Steal (Nadia Tass, 1990) and Death in Brunswick (John Ruane, 1991) are among a number of local films that have recently found favour with domestic audiences, the fact remains that the success rate of the early 1980s has not been repeated.

The late 1980s has reinforced Hollywood’s domination of the box-office not only in Australia but throughout the world. Nevertheless, the case for continued government support of the Australian industry remains compelling.

The pressure to convince government of our continued worth has made us an industry reluctant to acknowledge our craft and artistic weaknesses. This must change if we are to survive.

Anne Britton

In assessing our performance we should not fall into the trap of measuring our success only on our ability to outrate Superman (Richard Donner, 1978), Pretty Woman (Garry Marshall, 1990) or Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (Steve Barron, 1990). Australia should content itself with producing films which enjoy critical and commercial success both at home and overseas.

This is not to say we should content ourselves with mediocrity. We should be brave enough to constructively criticize our ability as filmmakers. The pressure to convince government of our continued worth has made us an industry reluctant to acknowledge our craft and artistic weaknesses. This must change if we are to survive.

So what does the industry hold for the next decade?

It is important to persuade the Federal government that the FFC’s marching orders to deliver a commercially-viable industry within five years must be withdrawn. It is nonsense to believe that
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Australia will defy world trends and produce the only national film industry outside India and the U.S. that can survive without government intervention.

The drop in FFC funding from $70 million in 1988 to $50 million in 1996 with future cuts foreshadowed threatens the ongoing viability of the feature film sector.

While the government cannot be expected to return production levels to those of the mid-'80s, it must be persuaded that the feature industry will simply not survive if the downward funding spiral continues.

Of course, government support cannot be judged solely on direct financial assistance to the industry. Supporting a viable audio-visual sector, with measures from copyright protection to quota regulation, is equally important.

The feature film industry cannot afford to view itself in isolation from other sectors. The unfortunate truth is that unless we can guarantee our hire services, post-production facilities, performers, technicians, writers and directors a reasonable level of work they will be forced to look elsewhere. That's why continued quotas for television remain essential.

The relaxation of Australian content rules in television advertisements in 1991, and the consequent dramatic drop in production levels, serves as a timely reminder of the role quotas play in our broadcast sector.

Over the next decade we will undoubtedly see a new push by the commercial networks to rid themselves of their Australian content obligations. Not only must this be resisted, but the industry must be prepared to fight to ensure that all new media are required to include Australian programming.

Regrettably, the Australian industry cannot sit back and relax now the Uruguay round of GATT has been concluded. Hollywood, led by Jack Valenti, will inevitably regroup in its campaign to ensure that support mechanisms designed to carve out a meagre place for non-American product are prohibited. The Australian government's position to date has been laudable. It has reliably championed the cause of Australian culture in the audio-visual sector. The challenge for the industry will be to ensure this resolve is maintained.

And, finally, the industry over the next decade must re-address the traditional trench warfare that passes for industrial relations. We cannot afford a repeat of the public relations debacle witnessed last year where SPAA applied for a decrease in the lousy feature-film minimum of $434 per week for actors. With actors earning on average just over $14,000 a year, the continued resistance of the producer community to decent residuals and copyright protection must be re-assessed.

* * * * *

**Independent distribution**

**Andrew Pike**
**MANAGING DIRECTOR, RONIN FILMS**

The most exciting development in Australian production for me has been the strengthening of the position held by low-budget films by first- or second-time directors taking creative risks.

Films like *Proof, Romper Stomper* and *Strictly Ballroom* have shown that films produced for around $3 million or less can have a significant impact internationally and locally. Audiences no longer seem to cringe at local productions, critics no longer patronize them with half-hearted encouragement, and exhibitors in the mainstream are willing to screen them ...

Andrew Pike
Jenny Sabine
DEAN, VCA SCHOOL OF FILM AND TELEVISION
(FORMERLY SWINBURNE FILM AND TELEVISION SCHOOL)

The VCA School of Film and Television is now 27 years old. The productions made at the school over that 27 years have changed markedly as have our society and our film industry. Today, our student productions are more assured. They have achieved technical excellence and are still concerned with exploring ideas, content and challenging the form.

The Australian cinema, and dare I say psyche, also seems more assured. We no longer need to immerse ourselves in romantic examinations of Australian history. We now tell our contemporary stories in a manner which is not self-consciously Australian.

The future of cinema worldwide is partly tied to a technological revolution. The mechanical/chemical processes of production and post-production are changing radically as are the means of distribution and exhibition. This is an important challenge for the VCA School of Film and Television as we receive $30,000 per year to purchase new equipment. This is an inadequate amount for the replacement of old equipment, let alone to allow for the quantum leap needed to purchase new technology. The School is currently, with the assistance of a group of eminent Australians, setting up an appeal which will be launched in March 1994 to raise funds for equipment.

Although it is essential for our students to keep up with industry practice, the School will continue to emphasize ideas with technology providing the tools for their expression. Ultimately, if a film is edited on a pic sync, Steenbeck, Avid or Lightworks, this is invisible to an audience. However, if the creative editing decisions are poor, these are highly visible.

New forms of technology are no doubt providing new opportunities for expression. However, I suggest when the dust settles we will hopefully select the technology which suits what we want rather than the other way around. I would rather look at the ending chosen by Geoffrey Wright for Romper Stomper, John Ruane for Death in Brunswick and Gillian Armstrong for The Last Days of Chez Nous (1992) than make a choice from an interactive menu.

I believe both as a nation and as producers of cinema we are growing up. We will continue to have a need to express the concerns, dreams and visions of our society, and let us hope that governments share our desire to present these through cinema and continue to subsidize that imperative.  

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Contributors April 1984 – April 1994

The following is a list of all those who have written for Cinema Papers during the past ten years. (For a list of those who contributed in the first ten years, see Cinema Papers, No. 44-5, May 1984, p. 48.)

In all, 1984-94 has seen 344 different writers in print, as opposed to 259 in the preceding decade. This numerous and extremely diverse group of writers mirrors Cinema Papers’ open-door editorial policy. Anyone who wishes to contribute to Cinema Papers is welcome to submit material or contact the staff.

Of the 344 writers, 130 are women (38%). This is a higher ratio than in 1974-84 (68 or 26%), and counts the reality that most writers who contact Cinema Papers, or submit material, are male.

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A Naoko Abe, Phillip Adams, Judy Adamson, Sue Adler, Joyce Agee, John Alexander, Emma Althoff, Barbara Alynson, Lindsay Amos, Kerstin Andersson, Paul Aslanis, S. J. Ayre
C Raffaele Caputo, Rolando Caputo, Dominic Case, Tony Cavanaugh, Jan Chandler, Susan Charlton, Franco di Chiara, Mark Chipperfield, Gilbert Coats, Lorenzo Cordelloni, Joan L. Cohen, Mary Colbent, Felicity Collins, Ray Comiskey, Robert Conn, Keith Connolly, Sarah Connolly, John Conomos, Ross Cooper, Marcial Coppolino, Hunter Cordey, Paul Coulter, Brian Courtis, Peter Craven, Anne-Marie Crawford, Barbara Creed, Christine Cremen, Stephen Crofts, Michael Crosby, Simon Cunliffe, Sophie Cunningham, Stuart Cunningham, Dannu Cusack, Graeme Cutts
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U Irene Ulman, Andrew L. Urban
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Z Arnold Zable, Terence Ziegler, Tom Zubrycki

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Many people have also contributed to lists of favourite films, the “Dirty Dozen” and so on. Those who are not already listed above are: Peter Beilby, Nigel Buesst, Pamela Casellas, Dean Chamberlin, Barry Cohen, Bill Collins, Jill Croommellin, Mike Daly, John Flaus, Gordon Glenn, Don Groves, Mike Harris, John Hinde, John Hindle, Barbara Hooks, Stan James, Neil Jilliett, Tina Kaufman, Karen Lateo, Dougal Macdonald, Bert Newton, Michael Van Niekerk, Kathleen Norris, Robin Oliver, Andrew Peacock, Dennis Pryor, Kevin Sadlier, Andrew Saw, Bill Shanahan, David Sily, Raymond Stanley, Louise Stephenson, Gern Sutton, Peter Thompson, Mike Walsh, Paul Wicks, Evan Williams

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CINEMA PAPERS 97/98 • 23
Working in America

Richard Franklin

As a contributor to the first issue of Cinema Papers, I was pleased to be asked to contribute to this 20th Anniversary issue. The topic, however, is one I normally avoid, with the inevitable question of comparing our crews and theirs. But perhaps the time has come to explain why I came back.

Americans will tell you they live not in America, but in “the States”; that AMERICA is not a place but an idea. This may sound like semantics till you realize the HOLLYWOOD, about which you hear so much, is also an idea. It is to Los Angeles what America is to the States — a dream. And since L. Frank Baum (author of The Wizard of Oz) died in Los Angeles, I don’t think it a stretch to say that David Williamson stopped short in his quest for an Emerald City.

There’s a seedy part of LA which centres on a street called Hollywood Boulevard, which is paved with terrazzo stars and thronged with Americans hoping to see their dream glitter. At best they find tinsel. They read the names on the “Walk of Fame” and flash away at the footprints of “stars” in the grey cement of Grauman’s (now Mann’s) Chinese.

If you move away from the flashlights, there are less muggers, hookers, crazies and crack dealers than on any other street which bears the name of an idea — BROADWAY. The Hollywood Chamber of Commerce has imposed a curfew to keep the street people away at night (the U.S. has effectively no “dole”, so LA has lots of them). They also managed to stop the Disney organization demolishing an old movie theatre called The Paramount, pointing out the irony that this same company makes money from a re-creation of Hollywood Boulevard in Florida.

To baby boomers intent on taking their kids to the birthplace of Mickey Mouse, I’m now inclined to recommend the re-creation to the “real” — Florida also has tours of studios (built for the purpose) and a Disneyland of its own. But living in LA (where even the baggage tags are LAX), one tends to offer visitors rose-coloured glasses and allow their enthusiasm to bolster one’s own.

I rationalized a sort of love-hate with the city which has given the world so much of its culture yet has so little of its own. And I continued to believe in “Hollywood”, reasoning that somewhere (probably behind the gates of the fortress-like studios) a place as mythical as Camelot or the Emerald City MUST be hidden. After all, both had been built here. And if it wasn’t, why had all these Americans travelled so far — though perhaps “fallen” would be more in keeping with Frank Lloyd Wright’s wonderful “turn the map of the U.S. on its side and everything loose falls into California”?

Well, having finally breached the sacred stucco of the studio walls, I’m pleased to report that the “model train set” (as Orson Welles called it before he was denied its use) is still running — sort of.

Seeing a chair with my name on it on Hitchcock’s favourite sound stage excited me till we held the wrap party on our set, and I couldn’t understand why my producer (a former head of the studio) was so ill-at-ease. Then he told me that the mattresses and chicken wire with which all the stage walls are insulated are rat infested.

Nonetheless, the facility is awesome. Even in television, a director can decide at lunchtime he wants to do a crane shot, and by two o’clock a mighty “Titan”, the biggest piece of hardware ever devised to move a piece of celluloid around, lumbers onto the set. On one occasion, we had a Louma on top of a Titan crane and I was reminded how it used to bother me that the only piece
“Where once the Mayers and Cohns puffed away on cigars, while starlets knelt on velvet cushions giving lip service to their power, there are now lots and lots of the best and brightest young graduates (mostly of business and law, not film schools).”

of such hardware here with pedigree was a small crane supposedly used on Lawrence of Arabia. Then I saw an amateur shooting Hi-8 with a Steadicam Jr and realized how far our industry has allowed itself to fall behind.

You only need to look at a Panaflex sitting on a geared head (like a pimple on a pumpkin) to realize such a device was designed to handle much larger, outmoded cameras, or to look at Sony’s name above the gate of the old MGM lot (now Columbia) and at Matsushita/National’s acquisition of Universal to realize that the technology of the present and future is coming from much closer to our shores. And Hollywood, with its outmoded “plant” (the factories pretentiously called “studios”), will be the last to take advantage of it.

Seeing the two VCR giants go head to head this (American) summer with their gladiators/samurais Spielberg and Schwarzenegger was culturally perverse. Hollywood may still lead the Coca-colonization of our planet, but for how long?

Which brings me to the “front office”. According to Hollywood lore, Kubrick modelled the obelisk in 2001: A Space Odyssey on the fifteen-story Universal “tower”, one of the seats of “power” politics about which I said something in a previous issue. I worked in the valley of the shadow of the tower for the best and worst of two years and pictures, and then worked for a couple of the other “majors”.

Welles said “it was fun outwitting the dinosaurs, but the college graduates are something else”. Where once the Mayers and Cohns puffed away on cigars, while starlets knelt on velvet cushions giving lip service to their power, there are now lots and lots of the best and brightest young graduates (mostly of business and law, not film schools). And individually they’re perfectly reasonable people.

On one occasion, I was lamenting the “state of the art” with the executive assigned to my picture.

ABOVE: RICHARD FRANKLIN: “RIDING A TITAN CRANE ON THE FIRST DAY OF PRINCIPAL PHOTOGRAPHY, PSYCHO II.”
FACING PAGE: FRANKLIN: “JOHN FORD TOLD ME IN 1967 IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE IN MODERN HOLLYWOOD TO MAKE PICTURES LIKE HE USED TO. I ASSUME IT WAS A FUNCTION OF HIS ADVANCING YEARS.”
LEFT: FRANKLIN: “MICHAEL DOUGLAS ASKED ME TO DIRECT HIM IN A STRAIGHT THRILLER, INTO THE NIGHT. A COUPLE OF YEARS LATER, IT HAD BECOME A SEND-UP AND JON LANDIS ASKED ME TO APPEAR. HE SAID HE NEEDED SOMEONE WHO LOOKED LIKE A ROCKET SCIENTIST.”
Franklin: Working in America

"I was pleasantly surprised at first by the military-style hierarchy on American sets. Someone was always behind you with a chair, but, after a while, I missed the slap on the back egalitarianism of Aussies. Not that I like the ersatz British class notion that 'every director is an arsehole until he proves otherwise'. But I prefer the feedback from my collaborators to the deferential smile and the 'I knew that wouldn’t work' at the cast and crew screening – when it’s too late to fix it."

believing she had the power to control the picture and my future. She listened patiently, then asked if I could lend her $20 as she had to take my leading man out for a drink. I realized that power like other things on Hollywood is transitory and mostly illusory, like the “Wizard of Oz” asking us to “pay no attention to the man behind the screen”.

But collectively, a "suit" of executives is just a committee. And when one committee tries to please another in the distribution department, individual passion and vision are lost as all films try to be all things to all men. The end result pleases no one, least of all the members of said committees.

Those who complain about red tape here should be aware that bureaucracy is alive and kicking in Hollywood, that the “moving goalposts” about which you hear so much pale by comparison to what Hollywood calls "gaslighting". This is the process whereby (like Ingrid Bergman in Gaslight) following instructions leads to being asked why on earth you did what you did (and finally to, presumably, being driven mad).

Old Hollywood was a monopoly and the anti-trust laws of the 1950s busted it up. But with production, distribution and exhibition separated, Hollywood is now likened to a giant whose limbs have been severed, but still thrash about trying to interact with the torso. And the conglomerates have turned passion and vision into homogenization.

Which brings me to the no-win question about crews. Now that the tea breaks are a thing of our colonial past (they don’t even have them on English sets), Australian crews work ten hours plus lunch, while Americans work twelve less lunch. I’ve worked with all three types of U.S. crews (IA, Nabet and non-union) and they’re all good – excellent. There’s a depth of talent and a fierce sense of competition which is both a part of the American ethos and a consequence of closed-door unions and guilds, which you have to be invited to join. (The open-door policy here may seem more democratic, but it does lead to more insecurity among its members, and more phone calls looking for work during the final weeks of our shoots.)

I was pleasantly surprised at first by the military-style hierarchy on American sets. Someone was always behind you with a chair, but, after a while, I missed the slap on the back egalitarianism of Aussies. Not that I like the ersatz British class notion that "every director is an arsehole until he proves otherwise". But I prefer the feedback from my collaborators to the deferential smile and the "I knew that wouldn’t work" at the cast and crew screening – when it’s too late to fix it.

American crews work very hard and it’s a pleasure to work with them. But I’m afraid the Protestant work ethic, fuelled by fundamentalist guilt and the mighty dollar (whose symbol derives from the letters US), leads to bad things too. Here you ask permission to go into overtime; there, no reference is made as your crews’ eyes turn first into cash registers, then into taxi meters and finally glaze over as everyone staggers about thinking how rich they’ll become.

The last day of many shoots (and every Friday night on television), when actor "turnaround" is no longer an issue, can be a nightmare. I have worked on such occasions more than twenty-four hours straight and even had the crew propping me up, because even at double and triple "golden time" it’s cheaper than shooting an extra day.

The effect of this is that U.S. crews can sometimes go one "television Friday night" too many. Aussie crews are either for you or against you, whereas the Americans are inclined to run (quite efficiently) on one cylinder less than capacity.

I was shooting a stunt there and recalled an old Homicide trick, whereby a waft of dust thrown from next to camera could make the end of an action look more final. Suddenly my key grip had a sort of epiphany, "... so you want to make this show good, do you?", and ran off to his truck. He returned with some exotic device once used on Westerns to dispense something called "fuller’s earth" and I was struck by the fact that, if he had missed that I cared, he would not have bothered. There used to be a tendency here to act as if the entire future of our industry lies in the hands of a few key players, but this is no longer the case.

America and Hollywood (the ideas) are wonderful, but LA and the States are having their problems. I moved my family home, away from the crossfire of Magnums in school playgrounds, several years ago, but I continued to commute. Then in 1992, as I watched the rioters focus their rage on the trashing of a trashy lingerie shop called Fredericks of Hollywood, I was struck by the empty, impotent absurdity of such a statement. And as the flames obscured the Hollywood sign, I was reminded that the hero of Nathanael West’s The Day of the Locust was working on a painting entitled “The Burning of Los Angeles”. I wish I could say that modern Hollywood is still that of Singin’ in the Rain, but I suspect it has gone West.

Then came the Malibu fires. Now the 6.6 in the valley. And next will come the long overdue "big one", which is supposed to re-define the Richter scale and take the whole of California another “dream”) into the sea. And next ...

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CINEMA Paradiso

CINEMA PAPERS 97 / 98 - 27
On the wall at my place, just below the photocopy of Johnny Rotten and to the right of the New Idea cover featuring a baby altered with liquid paper and black texta to resemble Gene Simmons from 'Kiss', is a yellowing sheet of A4 paper headed CLICHÉS TO AVOID. It went up in the early 1980s as I was beginning to get used to seeing my film reviews appear in the pages of Cinema Papers.

The list, about 40 items long, was supposed to be some sort of vow. It detailed buzzwords and phrases that seemed to recur in film reviews and articles, especially in newspapers. Back then I read the list frequently, and with great pride. Each time I penned something for Cinema Papers I carefully cross-checked the list to make sure no transgressions had occurred.

Now, occasionally, sometimes at intervals that stretch into years, my conscience prods me hard enough to look at the list again, and I weep. Sometimes I howl.

An occupational hazard of working in newspapers is the almost hysterical demand for concision. Thus does one resort to phrases such as “the result is”, “the thinking man’s” so-and-so, “a must-see” whatever, and to words like “sweeping”, “sprawling,” and “stunning”. Often there is too little time or space to think of anything else. Often that’s just an excuse to keep you from having to think of anything else.

As I look at the list, I despair at those entries that have erupted into my copy. But as the depression deepens and the Wiltshire Staysharp hovers over the forarm ready to gouge in and put me out of my misery, I notice that, yes, among them is a solid handful of oaths undertaken in the name of Cinema Papers which have remained inviolate.

The one that screams out is the fawning use of the word “brilliant”, a standard I have (by and large) stuck by, especially recently amidst the messianic regard given Jane Campion’s The Piano and Clint Eastwood’s Unforgiven.

That working for Cinema Papers instilled standards that could survive 10 years at a newspaper is a cause not only for gratitude, but for belief in the Almighty.

Standards at Cinema Papers were always high. While in the office one afternoon chatting with editor Scott Murray, the 1982 Australian road movie Running On Empty (John Clark), which had just been released, came up. I said I’d seen the film and remarked that it was suitable only for “retarded midgets”. I didn’t mean anything politically incorrect by it, I just wanted to express the view that the film was a piece of shit. None the less, the comment received resounding applause and guffaws of approval. Someone may even have taken a note of it. It was then that I knew I was in the esteemed company of people devoted to an intellectual discourse on the intricate and subtle dialectics of cinema.

Certainly the freedom to discuss films at length in the pages of Cinema Papers is a luxury I have now come to fully appreciate. When I find myself trying to cram an overview of an eight-hour mini-series into 15 centimetres, or condense a detailed, exhaustive 45-minute interview with a director into 30, I yearn for the indulgence of being allowed the length to not only opine, but qualify.

Expressing opinion without the room for adequate qualification is one of the perpetual bugbears one has to live with in newspapers, and one which one has to ceaselessly fight against, however vain the battle can sometimes be.

I still think back with some pride on my CP review of James Cameron’s The Abyss (1989), which I was able to illustrate with quotes from the director. And as far as I know, my 2700-word appreciation of the 87 minutes of Puberty Blues (Bruce Beresford, 1981) is the longest-ever review to appear in CP. Sure, that may have been a tad excessive, but I have never ceased being thankful for the opportunity, and the room, to develop ideas, critical sense and writing style.

The Q & A interviews in Cinema Papers were a big influence. That people could ask critical questions of filmmakers to their faces has had a lasting effect on my own interviewing techniques. Over the years, this has no doubt resulted in being blackballed from a few Christmas-card mailing lists, but it is a CP tradition I proudly champion – time and space allowing.

Reading other CP reviews was also instructive for the sheer appreciation of how different views could open up a film in ways you never thought possible. Duet for Four (Tim Burstall, 1982) always seemed to me to be a boring, crappy, mishandled domestic melodrama until I read the Cinema Papers review, which had so many adjectives in it some of them had to have slashes in them just to give the reader time to draw breath.

Perhaps the most enjoyable aspect of writing for CP – and another I have come to deeply miss thanks to the hothouse environment of newspapers – was the almost infinite elasticity of deadlines. However pressing the phone calls were to finally get it in gear and get something done, there always seemed to be an extra week or two. Indeed, the piece you are now reading was promised – unconditionally – two-and-a-half weeks before it was finally faxed through late on a Friday afternoon. They thought I was being tardy. I was just being nostalgic.

I still look at the CLICHÉS TO AVOID list every now and again. While a lot of it has been violated by the compromise of concision, I console myself with the thought that I have at least tried to defend the dignity of an idea, and be faithful to that rarest of all things in journalism – a philosophy.

Anyone who can keep one of those in a business like this has got to be grateful for something – and I am grateful for Cinema Papers.

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1 The original title of Scott Murray’s Australian Film: 1978-1992 was actually Australian Film: 1978-87. The guy has really got to learn to put his foot down.
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NFSA documentation collection - Louise Lovely
Television programmes are currently one of Australia’s biggest export industries. This situation has emerged out of necessity. Domestic consumption can no longer sustain a profitable television industry; therefore, production is now dependent on overseas sales. Terry Ohlsson, managing director of Crawfords, claims that 50% of all Australian television drama is financed by sales overseas, bringing in annual export revenues of “well over $75 million.” The importance of overseas sales is also stressed by Nick McMahon, managing director of Village Roadshow Pictures and executive producer of Paradise Beach: “No TV production company can recoup its investment in its domestic market. You have to export.”

Of all the potential overseas markets for Australian television, the U.S. remains the most attractive because it is the most lucrative. The challenge for Australian producers is to introduce and maintain Australian television drama (series and serials) on American syndicated television, since these types of programmes build permanent audiences over time. However, the American market remains resistant to non-U.S. programmes; Australian television drama remains conspicuously absent from American television screens. Part of the problem, it seems, is the cultural parochialism of the U.S. In an attempt to break into the American long-form drama market, Australian producers have tried alternative strategies to the traditional strategy of exporting completed local product. Paradise Beach, a soap opera made for the U.S. syndication market, represents such an innovative strategy.
Produced at the Gold Coast-based Warner Roadshow Studios, *Paradise Beach* is a joint venture of Village Roadshow, New World Entertainment (a U.S. distribution company), and the Nine Network Australia. The involvement of New World Entertainment, which also distributes the two American soaps, *Santa Barbara* and *The Bold and the Beautiful*, has been crucial to the project. Nick McMahon has said that *Paradise Beach* could not have been made without an international deal: “You can no longer afford to get your full budget back from the licence fee paid by an Australian network—you have to look overseas.” The Goss Labor Government in Queensland, as part of its commitment to promoting the film and television industries in Queensland, has also provided financial support and other support in the form of incentives. In addition to attracting overseas revenue, *Paradise Beach*, it was hoped, would generate an interest in tourism and provide employment for a local cast and crew. In fact, *Paradise Beach* kept a crew of 85 in work for the first 26-week series.

New World Entertainment was responsible for the pre-sales of *Paradise Beach* to a large number of countries: networks in the U.S., parts of Western Europe, Asia and South America, and New Zealand. The television programme was also bought by Britain’s BSkyB. New World expected the potential worldwide audience for *Paradise Beach* to be forty to fifty million people. The television programme was bought by Britain’s BSkyB. New World expected the potential worldwide audience for *Paradise Beach* to be forty to fifty million people. In the U.S., 82% of television stations bought the television programme, which represented the biggest sale of a non-American television programme in the U.S. It went to air in the U.S. on 14 June 1993 and was shown on more than 200 stations across the country, screening in some markets at the peak time of 7.30pm. *Paradise Beach* was sold through the barter syndication market, in which a television producer gives a programme to a station in exchange for some advertising time in the programme. The producer then sells the advertising time and pockets the revenue. According to Nick McMahon, a three per cent rating in the U.S. would have translated into $U.S. 18,000 for a 30-second advertisement in the programme. For this reason, early ratings were critical. In particular, the producers identified the first ratings from the Los Angeles market as of particular importance.

This emphasis on Los Angeles ratings was unfortunate for a number of reasons. Scheduling in Los Angeles pitted *Paradise Beach* against a strong competitor, *The Oprah Winfrey Show*. One CBS spokesperson, in early July, reported that since *Paradise Beach*’s opening it was being seen in fewer than 40,000 homes in the Los Angeles area, compared to *Oprah Winfrey*, which was seen in 400,000 homes. As a consequence, *Paradise Beach* was significantly out-rated every day.
Another difficulty with identifying Los Angeles as the critical test market for ratings was the similarity between the region’s geographical and climatic features and those of Queensland. Initially, the producers assumed that part of the appeal of the programme would be based in differences between the show’s exterior setting and other less attractive geographical locations. Certainly the ratings in the U.S. suggested that regional viewing patterns differed according to proximity to, or remoteness from, the beach and sunshine.

As a result, since Paradise Beach went to air across the U.S., it has done well in some markets, not so well in others. According to Anne Elliot, communications director for New York-based Nielsen Media Research, for the week beginning 21 June the programme was on in 1.2 per cent of the 93 million American homes with television sets. Elliot pointed out, however, the importance of knowing when it was scheduled during the day “because a 1.2 share is good if it’s playing overnight, but not very good in prime times”. The nationwide rating was only slightly better than in Los Angeles.19

The concept of Paradise Beach was founded on an apparent global demand for soap opera. James M. McNamara, president of New World Entertainment, the U.S. distribution company for Paradise Beach, has observed that soap opera feeds a worldwide addiction that cannot be satisfied by American (and other) product. McNamara noted the prevalence and success of soap:

Soap operas are on in every country in the world and in most places they are successful. We have seen how profitable the soap opera can be and yet how difficult it is to do it. If you compare prime time shows to soap operas in 1993 there were 60 or 70 new prime time shows and 95 per cent of them failed, but there were no new soap operas produced in the US this year and to my knowledge no new soaps produced in the UK [...] So there’s only one new show this year [Paradise Beach]. We saw the potential for profit. We knew there’s not a whole lot of supply but there’s a lot of demand.”

The producers saw a niche in the market for a teen-oriented soap opera. Their vision has not been shared by many of the show's critics for whom Paradise Beach poses certain problems, largely because it is a soap opera and a hybrid soap opera, at that. Soap opera, despite recent attempts in criticism to elevate its status, remains an easy target for the barbs of journalists, and Paradise Beach has attracted more than its fair share of these. Paradise Beach has provided journalists with an ideal opportunity to outdo each other in journalistic wordplay. Diana Wichel dubbed the programme “Stupidity Beach”, likening the intellectual capacities of two key characters, Sean Hayden (Ingo Rademacher) and Roy McDermott (John Holding), to the “combined IQ of a mentally challenged cane toad”. She contends that the absence of a concept is obscured by a focus on the “bulging pop muscle” of Tori (Megan Connolly) and Cassie (Kimberley Joseph).20 Robin Oliver also noticed the “pecs” which, when combined with “glazed looks”, become the “modus operandi” of Paradise Beach.21 But a contradiction soon becomes apparent. Paradise Beach is dismissed as merely frivolous soap opera; for example, Rachel Shohet contends that it, like other soap operas (including popular soaps), relies on “bizarre plot twists and endless family dramas”.22 At the same time, Paradise Beach is condemned because it lacks intellect and it does not match the production values of American teen series, such as Baywatch or Beverly Hills 90210.

Comparisons with American series such as these have emerged largely because they are one of the many sources on which Paradise Beach draws. Other sources include television advertisements, music clips, the Australian film The Coolangatta Gold (Igor Auzins, 1984) which centres on an iron-man contest, and the beach blanket movies of the 1960s. James M. McNamara implicitly tied the show’s concept to a worldwide fantasy of “running away to the beach” – a fantasy that began, according to McNamara, with the days of the beach blanket movies.23 Greg Coote, president of Village Roadshow Pictures, described the programme in an early interview as “slick, glossy Beverly Hills 90210 meets Neighbours meets Baywatch”.24 This account of the cross-cultural cross-generic mix that comprises Paradise Beach was developed further in The Age: “Baywatch/Beverly Hills 90210/Melrose Place meets Neighbours/Home and Away! Coolangatta Gold meets KFC babefest”.25 Paradise Beach is certainly an amalgam, a soap opera that addresses teenagers and uses certain stylistic devices of American teen series, and of music clips and advertisements. Almost all programmes engage in such selective borrowing. Therefore, this should be taken into account before making uninformed aesthetic comparisons between these sources and Paradise Beach.

The most frequent comparison drawn is that between Paradise Beach and Baywatch. Both television programmes share a beach setting, teen address, and what some critics have called “an MTV moment”, with its “two-minute montage of sleek shots of beautiful bodies and plenty of sun, surf and sand set to the latest pop music hit”.26

There, the similarities end. In the first instance, there are significant differences in budgets and production schedules (and associated production values), as McMahon pointed out in an interview with the Brisbane Sunday Mail. The eight-day shooting schedule for Paradise Beach consisted of three days of studio taping and five days of outside filming. For this, the output was five episodes per week or twenty-four minutes of drama per day. In contrast, teen series such as Baywatch operate on a budget of $1 million per episode and allow ten days to produce one hour of drama.27 This may sound as if Paradise Beach operated on a tight budget; it did. To break even, the serial had to return about four times the cost of production, so keeping costs low was important.28 Furthermore, there are differences in genre and associated viewing expectations and pleasures. As McNamara has noted, Baywatch is a weekly series; Paradise Beach is a weekday soap opera, and audiences bring different expectations to each.29

However, these expectations will vary depending on the market and products available. According to McNamara, the soap opera scene in the U.S. can be defined in terms of local daytime soaps such as Days of Our Lives and Santa Barbara. These soaps would be used to provide the basis for audience comparison of Paradise Beach in the U.S. When compared to these U.S. soaps, Paradise Beach offered three innovative features: teen address, higher production values and location shots. Since American soap operas only accommodate teenagers in the summer, Paradise Beach could, it was hoped, fill a void in the U.S. market. A further selling point for overseas audiences was to be the higher production values evident in the location shots of the “spectacular” Gold Coast.30 As an example, McMahon has pointed out that, of every twenty minutes, eight minutes were shot outdoors.31

Compared to the U.S., the Australian context is somewhat different in that Australian product has considerably extended the definition of soap opera to encompass a range of programme types. Australian programmes such as A Country Practice and G.P. also included a conscious treatment of contemporary
social issues. Furthermore, soaps such as Neighbours and Home and Away have increased the legitimacy of teen address. If Paradise Beach is to be evaluated against well-established Australian product for its innovative storylines and production values, it will likely be found wanting. There are, however, a number of reasons why such a comparison is unwarranted. One reason why it is rather pointless to draw comparisons between Paradise Beach and other local soap opera (or any long-standing soap opera, for that matter) relates to the ways that fandom is established. Paradise Beach has simply not been given the opportunity, or the time, to court its fans. As Ridley Williams, who lectures in film and television at the Queensland University of Technology, has commented:

It is unfair to compare Paradise Beach with the Home and Away or Neighbours of today; the show would be better compared to each of these in their early days. The other shows have had time to develop; they have honed and refined their actors and writers.

Another reason is that Paradise Beach shares more with American day-time soap opera than prime-time Australian soap. The main similarity is an emphasis on visually depicting glamorous lives, but on a tight production budget. When Robin Oliver comments on the wedding of (the rich and shameless) Tom Barsby and Lisa, he criticizes its low production values. But were similar criticisms made about the production values in Days of Our Lives when Beau and Hope wedded or when Patch and Cayla were married (for the first, second, third time)? For their fans, the pleasure related to the intensity of characters' relationships, not to the production budget. Perhaps some Australian, and overseas, critics still need to watch more U.S. daytime soap to appreciate the significance of the genre for an evaluation of Paradise Beach.

Notes
2 Ibid.
7 “Hollywood on the Gold Coast?”, Filminneres, July 1993, p. 3.
15 Herald-Sun, op. cit.
16 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
25 Sunday Mail, Magazine, loc. cit.
26 “Paradise Beach - not all washed up”, Communiqué, 10 September, p. 2.
28 Ibid.
29 Sunday Mail, Magazine, op. cit., p. 5.
30 Communiqué, loc. cit.
Australia's First Films: Part Seven: Screening the Salvation Army

The Salvation Army, long known for its illustrated lecture Soldiers of the Cross (1900), established Australia's first permanent film production unit in 1897. Australian production had the support of an organization for the first time. It was no longer limited to the resources of individuals.

Far from being the religious film producer portrayed in most accounts, the Salvation Army used films to raise funds for its social and religious work. It was a commercial venture, the “Limelight Department” producing 300 diverse films before 1909 to attract patronage for its shows. It stimulated others into production by providing film processing facilities at reasonable rates. It persuaded the governments of Victoria, New South Wales and New Zealand to film important events with its facilities. When its film activity ceased in 1910, many of the Limelight Department’s operators entered the labour force necessary for Australia’s burgeoning cinema industry.

A NEW FILM HISTORY RESOURCE

In 1984, the Salvation Army established Melbourne archives under George Ellis’ direction, which include many Limelight Department records. Last year, the Salvation Army Heritage Centre expanded to occupy two floors of a building behind the Limelight Department’s old headquarters at 69 Bourke Street. Its holdings reveal some surprising Salvation Army film production achievements:

- Construction of Australia’s first film studio (February 1898).
- First films of slum life (1898).
- First Australian narrative films for lecture, Social Salvation (1898-99), on Salvation Army social work.
- First local feature-length film, Inauguration of the Australian Commonwealth (1901), most of which survives.
- First Australian history documentary, Under Southern Skies (August 1902).
- First registered production company, the Australasian Kinematographic Company (1901).
- First Australian bushranging drama, Bushranging in North Queensland (shot March 1904).

The myth of Soldiers of the Cross has obscured the scope and the scale of Salvation Army film production for decades. The new archival resources will re-align perspectives on Australia’s outstanding pioneer producer.

THE ARMY OF ALTRUISM

The Salvation Army was born in the London slums, where from 1865 its founder, William Booth (1829-1912), ran a Christian mission at Whitechapel. Booth was able to sting the public conscience into action with his eloquence, and to back it up with assistance to the poor. By 1878, the mission had spread beyond London, and it was re-organized on quasi-military lines as “The Salvation Army” with Booth as its commanding “General.”

Left top: William Booth (1829-1912), founder of the Salvation Army, photographed in Brisbane while on an Australasian tour, probably 1899. Photo by courtesy of George Ellis, Salvation Army Archives, Melbourne.
Bottom: Joe Perry (1864-1943), chief operator of the Salvation Army Limelight Department, photographed in his commercial photographic studio in Ballarat, 1889. Note “P.G.B.” epaulettes (“Prison Gate Brigade”). Photo by courtesy of George Ellis, Salvation Army Archives, Melbourne.
work in combating financial, moral and spiritual suffering was regarded as organized warfare against social evils, clearing the way for evangelization. Booth in particular believed that those alienated from society could be reclaimed if they felt that a decent member of that society cared about their conditions.

In the 1880s, without any state aid, it established schemes for prisoner repatriation, low-cost accommodation, job placement assistance, cheap food supply, legal aid for the poor, a missing-persons bureau and a drug and alcohol rehabilitation programme. In 1890, Booth published his integrated social work plan, *In Darkest England, and the Way Out*, then he worked until his death to see that plan carried out.

Booth’s scheme promoted emigration to Britain’s colonies as a solution for the problems of slum life. Australia figured largely in these plans. Our first Salvation Army meeting was held in Adelaide in 1880, and in December 1882 a small group met in Melbourne to establish its Australasian headquarters. By 1890, Australia’s Salvation Army force was only exceeded outside Britain by the movement in the U.S.

**Barritt and Perry**

Slide projection had occasionally been used as a Salvation Army lecture aid in Britain for several years by the time of William Booth’s first Australasian tour in 1891. The Army’s Special Projects Officer, Major Frank E. Barritt, was looking for a novel method of advertising Booth’s visit when he chanced across the work of Joseph Henry Perry (1864-1943).

Born in Birmingham on 5 August 1864, the son of a shoemaker, Perry had emigrated to New Zealand with his parents at the age of 10. After working in the Dunedin Fire Brigade, he joined the fledgling Salvation Army in 1883, touring New Zealand organizing corps brass bands and ministering to congregations varying from Wanganui Maori to Wellington prostitutes. Especially successful work at the Nelson prisoner repatriation home led to his Australian posting in October 1885, soon after his marriage to Captain Annie Laurenson.

Perry amassed musical, artistic and oratory skills on his travels. At the Sydney Salvation Army centre he worked as a lithographer, then during preaching assignments in Northern New South Wales, in about 1888, he took up photography as a hobby. Brief appointments to the Victorian towns of Castlemaine, Shepparton and Benalla were followed in April 1890 by a lengthy ministry at the Ballarat “Prison Gate Home” (repatriation scheme). There, on 21 January 1891, his young wife succumbed to heart disease, leaving him with three small children: Eva (b. 1885), Orrie (b. 1888) and Reg (b. 1890). Compassionate leave and renewed activity in his photographic hobby helped him to recover.

To supplement the Ballarat home’s income, he set up a commercial photo studio there. A “bi-unial” projector with a gas-heated lime block (“limelight”) illuminant was acquired with the intention of screening advertising slides on Saturday evenings in Ballarat’s streets. Frank Barritt visited by chance and recognized its potential for advertising Booth’s Melbourne lectures in September 1891. Perry was sent to Melbourne with his projector, and the successful advertising experiment induced Barritt to explore its possibilities further. A trial lecture tour, explaining Booth’s social work text, *In Darkest England*, with around 50 slide illustrations, was inaugurated at South Melbourne by Commissioner Thomas Coombs on 26 December 1891. The tour continued north along Australia’s Eastern seaboard early in 1892, clearing a healthy profit through admission charges.

After this demonstration of viability, on 11 June 1892 Perry...
Above: One of Perry's earliest narrative productions was the slide set *A Daughter of Ishmael* (c. 1894) dealing with illegitimacy, alcoholism and finally murder—the case study of a woman named O'Donahue, gaolled for murder and finally reclaimed by the Salvation Army. Photo from the booklet *A Daughter of Ishmael*, courtesy of George Ellis, Salvation Army Archives, Melbourne.

Below: Perry's tri-unial lantern of July 1896 replaced his original outfit destroyed in New Zealand in May 1896. Mechanically-articulated slides, with the operating cranks visible at lower right, provided simple animation effects on the screen. From *War Cry* (Melbourne), 25 July 1896, p. 3, courtesy of George Ellis, Salvation Army Archives, Melbourne.

**Before Film**

Its shows typically included views of life in the slums juxtaposed with pictures of Salvation Army remedial activity, portraits of prominent Army personnel, a “lantern reading” (an illustrated moral tale, often told in rhyme) and perhaps a few kaleidoscopic effects slides (chromatropes) to amuse the children. Audience participation was encouraged through the singing of illustrated songs and hymns, accompanied by the usual Salvation Army brass and timbrel combinations. Imported slides initially predominated, but they were gradually supplemented by Perry's own photos taken on Australasian tours.

These presentations of visual narratives had already reached a surprising level of sophistication. Mechanical contrivances on the projectors permitted transitional effects later adopted in motion picture practice, including fades, wipes and dissolves. Rudimentary animation was provided by photographing successive phases of story action in front of an unchanging setpiece, then showing consecutive images with connecting dissolves. Mechanically articulated slides could animate the image more directly, showing a ship bobbing in a choppy sea or the rotating sails of a windmill. Superimposition was used to present falling snow over the death scene of *The Little Match Girl*, or lightning and floating angels in the *Jane Conquest* shipwreck. The dramatic effect of Christ's bleeding at the Crucifixion was produced by gradually superimposing a pattern of red stains onto the projected image. Many transparencies were hand-coloured to enhance their realism and impact.

Sets of “life model” slides with actors posing on studio sets were the stylistic antecedent of the narrative feature film. Perry exhibited many scriptural life-model series, and non-religious sets based on the 1870s ballads of George R. Sims, such as *Billy's Rose*. These had melodramatic images of the suffering poor with narration underscoring their pathos in rhyme. Perry produced a few narrative slide sets himself, including *Are the Colours Safe?* (c. 1896), and *A Daughter of Ishmael* (c. 1894), showing the Army’s reclamation of a murderess. Apart from “softening up” an audience before passing around the collection plate, these must have given Perry the grounding in visual narrative construction necessary for his later film work.

In 1893, Barritt returned to his native England. Control of the Limelight Department passed to Perry for the next 17 years. In the same year Perry remarried, this time to Captain Julia Lear, who bore him a further son and three daughters before 1906. Mrs Perry shared her husband's enthusiasm for the limelight venture, and in partnership their tours became more extensive. By the end of 1894, Perry had toured 30,000 miles, delivering more than 500 lectures in Salvation Army Halls and in the city streets around Australasia, returning £2000 profit to Army revenue. By 1896 he assembled a collection of 4,000 slides.

Slide lectures were common in Christian ministry during the 1890s, with a burgeoning British industry supplying sets and narration booklets. The unique aspect of Perry’s venture was its expanding scale. By the turn of the century, his outfit was unsurpassed, its tours ranging more widely and with more operators than anything similar in Australasia.

Three months into a New Zealand tour on 1 May 1896, Perry suffered a setback which proved to be a blessing in disguise. At Marton (near Wanganui in the North Island), a fire originating in a cabinet maker's shop spread to the Salvation Army barracks. Perry's entire limelight plant and projector outfit was destroyed. He returned to his Melbourne headquarters to re-
Above: “Commandant” Herbert Henry Booth (1862-1926), son of the Salvation Army’s founder and director of Australasian operations September 1896 – October 1901. The Commandant’s vision and literary ability expanded Limelight Department operations during his local administration. Photo courtesy of George Ellis, Salvation Army Archives, Melbourne.

Right: Perry’s first movie projector, purchased late in February 1897, was this Watson’s “Motorgraph” combined camera-projector. From Australian Photographic Journal, 20 February 1897, p. 47, courtesy of Meg Labrum, NFSA, Canberra.

Within two months, Perry was back on the road with a “tri-unial” lantern and gas retort, greatly superior to the original. The technology was rapidly improving, not only in gas retorts and slide projectors, but in the imminently commercial motion pictures. Right opposite the Limelight Department’s Bourke Street building, peepshow kinetoscopes introduced movies to Melbourne in March 1895. Journals rife with reports of movie projection induced Perry to include it in his refurbishment plans.

**Herbert Booth**

When Australasia’s new Salvation Army Commandant, Herbert Henry Booth (1862-1926), arrived in September 1896, he “saw at a glance that the living pictures, worked in conjunction with life-model slides, would provide a combination unfailing in its power of connecting narrative.” The charismatic Commandant, the headstrong youngest son of Salvation Army founder William Booth, enthusiastically used his personal power to give Perry staff and finance. With Commandant Booth’s literary ability linked to Perry’s lecture aids, the Limelight Department emerged as a powerful force for altruistic propaganda.

An anonymous Salvation Army writer stated in 1901 that “when the first kinematographe was shown in Melbourne, [Booth] sent for Major Perry, the operator, to make enquiries concerning it, the result being that, at a very early date, an up-to-date instrument was purchased [for the Army].” Until now, historians have taken this to imply that they saw Carl Hertz’s film shows at the Melbourne Opera House, but Perry was not in Melbourne during Hertz’s exhibitions. It is more likely that the passage relates to displays of the first film projector offered for sale in Melbourne. The earliest film projector advertised for sale ex-stock from an Australian supplier was the British “Motorgraph” from W. Watson and Sons of 78 Swanston Street, Melbourne, in February 1897. It was a small machine offered for 12 guineas and intended for amateur use. Accessories were available to convert it into a camera when required, and demonstrations of it were given on request at the Swanston Street depot by the photographic expert H. H. Baker.

On 20 February 1897, the War Cry gave the first indication that Perry had a movie projector which he soon intended to demonstrate. The earliest known photograph of Perry’s cine gear appeared in the War Cry on 21 August 1897, showing a Watson’s Motorgraph and a Wrench cinématographe. The latter was not advertised in Australia until 21 July 1897, so that the Motorgraph was almost certainly Perry’s first projector – an inexpensive machine on trial.

**Trial Tours with Film**

On a Friday evening in March 1897, the staff at the Salvation Army’s Melbourne headquarters were given a private exhibition of the “Motorgraph”, with about a dozen one-minute French films. While Perry projected Parisian street and railway scenes, military parades, river boat traffic, a seaside tableau and a “billposter’s dispute”, Booth announced plans for acquiring production and processing equipment. Exhibition tours delayed those plans for several months.

Salvation Army film exhibition was not confined to Australia. In England, Adjutant Henry Howse acquired a Lumière cinématographe for fund-raising purposes in March 1897, but he apparently had no production facilities until about 1903. Salvation Army missionaries in Java gave “limelight and kinematographe” exhibitions as early as 1901. Brigadier Edward J. Parker of the American Salvation Army made and exhibited films from about 1903. In the following year, Swedish Salvationists used film shows to raise social work funds. Australian...
Salvation Army films were shown in some of those countries and may survive there. However, none of those ventures approached the structured scale of Australia's Limelight Department, with its five-year lead in screen entertainment prior to its usage of film.

Perry's public movie screenings began at the start of a Western Australian trial tour at Albany on 4 April 1897. The French films, integrated with their usual slide entertainment, attracted capacity audiences simply through the novelty of the medium. Fremantle's Town Hall was packed on four consecutive April nights, adding £100 to Salvation Army revenue. Perry successfully continued through Perth, Geraldton and the Coolgardie goldfields before returning to Melbourne in June 1897. Booth, however, remained dissatisfied, feeling that film could only be fully useful in illustrating Army activities.

Back at headquarters during July and August, Perry built a continuous-contact film printer with an electric illuminant, but exhibition commitments in rural Victoria again delayed completion of processing facilities. Finally, on 9 October 1897, the War Cry announced Perry's first successful production, a Melbourne street scene filmed "after many exceedingly difficult experiments". Only a couple of films of Salvation Army activity were finished when, a week later, Perry left on a long exhibition tour of New South Wales and Queensland.

Christmas 1897 saw Perry recalled to Melbourne by Booth, the Queensland tour being completed by Adjutant James Dutton (1864-1942), on the first of his many Limelight Department assignments.

1898: Serious Production Begins

With Perry's ability to produce films confirmed, Booth threw his full weight behind the expansion of the enterprise. Perry was ordered to supervise the construction of a glass-walled studio on the flat roof between two stairwells behind their Melbourne headquarters. Inside the stairwell spaces on either side of it, he installed the Limelight Department's office and darkroom. By February 1898, the completed studio was equipped with Perry's first professional cine camera, a superb Lumière cinématographe. Two full-time assistants, Joe Williams and Walter Rumble, were assigned to prepare life-model slides and films, and to tour exhibiting them afterwards. Dutton and Edwin Bishop also occasionally served as projectionists. A scenic painter was kept busy working on the 30 or 40 studio backgrounds needed for each life-model slide set.

To record Army music and speeches, Perry acquired the first of nine wax cylinder phonographs in April 1898. It relieved touring projectionists from the need for incessant lecturing. Within a year, they had 250 records, mostly cut by Limelight Department staff.

In months, the value of Limelight Department plant rose from £100 to £1000, and the studio became Australia's production centre until 1907, when other producers caught up. Today, few people know the original function and significance of the glass-walled room on the top floor behind the Melbourne City Temple.

Social Salvation

Booth's studio development was motivated by his need for pictorial evidence of Salvation Army achievement to illustrate lectures. Mrs Booth chose to use only slides for her slab lectures, but Herbert Booth used the full "triple alliance" of slides, films and phonograph records. His social work lectures, written after consultation with Perry, was the first long film and slide presentation fully produced by the Salvation Army, and it included Australia's first acted narrative films.

The Lumière cinématographe used for this and for Booth's subsequent lecture, Soldiers of the Cross (1900), had an absolute maximum film capacity of about 100 feet, set by the size of its magazine and its lack of a feed sprocket. It could not shoot or project films longer than 90 seconds. Films and slides had to be alternated in presentation, with no continuous film action exceeding 90 seconds and no two film segments being shown without a break between them. This absolute restriction on the length of their films remained until Warwick Bioscopes replaced the Limelight Department's Lumière machines early in 1901. Booth's social work lecture and Soldiers of the Cross were both programmes of short films and slides, not continuous feature films.

Screenings of Salvation Army films were given by touring Limelight Department exhibitors from about February 1898. Booth's first showing of some of these was at the Musical Festival at the Melbourne Exhibition Building on 29 March 1898. However, Booth's full social work lecture, linking the half dozen films and 100 slides into a cogent whole, premiered at the Sydney Town Hall on 11 July 1898. It evolved as Perry shot new illustrations while touring as Booth's projectionist, the narration...
being modified accordingly. Scriptural subjects, illustrated hymns, songs and instrumental solos were interpolated to give the show variety. First shown as The Commandant’s Limelight Lecture, it was later called The Salvation Army’s Social Work in Australasia (September 1898 – July 1899), but most frequently it was known as Social Salvation (July 1899 – August 1901). In 1900, it was briefly called The Austral Underworld to match the title of Booth’s 1900 social work report, which reproduced some of the narration. By then, the two-and-a-half-hour lecture mixed 275 slides of social work buildings, personnel and plant with 25 one-minute films of activity within those institutions – and in the Salvation Army generally.¹

As the lecture evolved, it tended to use staged archetypal case studies like “Bayswater Bob”, a lad who falls in with bad company, commits petty crimes and lands in the Salvation Army’s Bayswater Boys’ Home.² There he trains as a farmer and re-enters society as a productive citizen. Another episode showed an unmarried mother attempting suicide and being sent to the Salvation Army Maternity Home.

Booth’s lecture differed from contemporary slide entertainments of “picturesque” slum life, which tended to assure audiences that the wretchedness of the poor was self-induced. They were left to feel appalled but not culpable.³ Booth, on the other hand, challenged his audience to assist in combating slum conditions, financially and spiritually. His work had a parallel in the better known slum photography of Jacob Riis, whose American book, How the Other Half Lives (1890), was a model of its type.⁴ Sadly, few of Booth’s social work lecture illustrations survive today. Until recently, only poorly reproduced stills in the War Cry and in Booth’s 1900 social work report, The Austral Underworld, were known. In 1985, Army archivist George Ellis achieved a breakthrough by finding albums of Perry’s social work photographs in London. These have since been returned to the Salvation Army Archives in Melbourne. A few short strips of three of the films were reproduced in the Salvation Army’s monthly magazine, The Victory, in August 1898.⁵ These were recently animated and included in the author’s NFSA video Federation Films (1991), which also includes a short version of a Salvation Army social work lecture recorded by founder William Booth in 1906.

Commandant Herbert Booth and Joe Perry used the lure of biograph entertainment to catch their audience off-guard when the serious usage of film was quite unexpected. It was a new departure in film usage, clever propaganda, incisive documentary, and completely unprecedented anywhere in the world. Booth’s social work lecture was the genesis of ambitious Salvation Army production, much more worthy of study than its successor Soldiers of the Cross.

Other 19th-Century Army Films

The Limelight Department shot film for propaganda, patronage and profit. Simple street scenes of Australian capital cities were filmed before 1900 and are vaguely mentioned in the surviving literature.⁶

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Perry personally did Salvation Army filming while they had only one Lumière camera. Williams, Dutton and Rumble mostly toured independently of Perry and appear to have shot no film. After 1899, Williams left the Limelight Department for a Townsville posting, and Rumble transferred to the Training Homes division. Limelight Department staff were augmented by Robert Sandali (who later wrote parts of the Army’s official history), Charles Bensley (who died in 1903), Sidney Cook (later a Queensland film pioneer), Walter Haworth and the woman lecturer Annie Hutchinson. Perry acquired a second Lumière camera and trained these operators in film production. Sandali, Dutton and particularly Sidney Cook shot film prolifically afterwards.

In January 1900, the Limelight Department began to accept commissions to shoot film for external organizations. Their first commission was coverage of Victoria’s Second Boer War Contingent departing for South Africa, the film being used at a Melbourne Town Hall patriotic concert to raise fighting funds.

When state governments wanted to have Australia’s Federation festivities filmed in 1901, commissions became a major source of Limelight Department revenue, allowing them to make Australia’s first feature-length documentaries.

Limelight Department Films Before ‘Soldiers of the Cross’

In January 1899, Perry claimed that he had “taken some seventy or eighty subjects for the kinematograph” but Booth’s social work lectures of the time advertised 12 or 15 films at the most. Confusion is further aggravated by press reviews mistaking films for narrative slide sequences, and by the lack of fixed Salvation Army film titles. Army literature sheds little light on the films, as it concentrated on religious matters and only reviewed religious productions like Soldiers of the Cross in detail. All of this has distorted the perception of Salvation Army production, with many accounts referring to Soldiers of the Cross as a “film” (which it never was), and ignoring everything else.

To rectify this matter systematically, Limelight Department tour itineraries were extracted from the War Cry, and these were used to locate advertisements and reviews of their shows in local newspapers. The resultant aggregate list of their early films is incomplete, but provides improved insights on the breadth of their activity. All of their pre-1901 films ran for less than two minutes:

1. Melbourne Street Scene

2. Club Drill (shot c. October 1897)

3. Collingwood Juniors (shot c. October 1897)

4. Salvation Army Musical Festival March (shot 29 March 1898)
   Herbert Booth leading the costumed choirs in parade outside the Melbourne Exhibition Building during the Salvation Army’s Intercolonial Congress. It was rushed through processing and shown at the Staff Councillors’ meeting which concluded the Congress. Nine frames reproduced in The Victory, August 1898, p. 301. Earliest known reference: War

5. Herbert Booth’s Visit to Bayswater Boys’ Home, Vic. (series, shot 13 April 1898)
A series of films showing aspects of work at Bayswater farm, “The Eden”, including:
- Booth with the children.
- The boys at gymnastic exercises.
- Boys in cross-cut saw competition.
- Sheep jumping over fences surrounding their pens.
Phonograph records of the boys were also cut during this visit. Earliest known reference: *War Cry* (Melbourne), 16 April 1898, p. 5.

6. Melbourne ‘Metropole’ Woodyard: the Unemployed Chopping Wood for their Keep
Staff Capt. Joe Williams (Limelight Department Officer and Metropole Manager) supervising unemployed “cadgers” earning their breakfast. The Metropole was the forerunner of the “People’s Palace” in King Street, Melbourne. A “still” of this scene survives in the Perry album of social institution photos, Salvation Army Archives, Melbourne. Earliest known reference: *War Cry* (Melbourne), 21 May 1898, p. 4.

7. Salvation Army Woman Cadets Setting Off to Sell the *War Cry* (c. May 1898)
Shot outside the Women’s Garrison in Erin Street, Richmond (present site of Epworth Hospital). Nine frames were reproduced in *The Victory*, August 1898, p. 303. Earliest known reference: *War Cry* (Melbourne), 21 May 1898, p. 4.

8. A Hungry Man Stealing Bread and His Arrest By Police (c. May 1898)

9. Prison Gate Brigade Welcoming Released Prisoner at the Gaol Gates (c. May 1898)
Films 8 and 9 were the first fictional narrative movies shot in Australia, and the first ‘multi reel’ production, intended for screening in succession. Earliest known reference: *War Cry* (Melbourne), 21 May 1898, p. 4.

10. The Masher’s Downfall (c. July 1898)
Young man in high-class garb ‘chats up’ a girl outside a pie-shop. Two Salvation Army women interrupt the seduction. One marches the girl away while the other “belabored the man with her umbrella and left him lying upon the footpath”. Earliest known reference: *The Age* (Melbourne), 2 August 1898.


A series of films showing activities of the girls at the Pakenham farm home, including:
- Girls doing drill exercises.
- Feeding poultry.
- Girls greeting the visit of Commandant Booth.
The last film was accompanied by songs and cheers recorded on a phonograph. See *South Australian Register*, 20 December 1898. Earliest known reference: *Albury Daily News*, 13 September 1898.

12. Maori Scenes (probably at Otaki), New Zealand (series, shot c. 2 December 1898)
“Two or three films” were shot by Perry and Booth touring New Zealand with the social work lecture. En route Wellington to New Plymouth by train, a stop was made at Otaki where they were met by a Maori Salvation Army contingent, probably the subject of the films. Only one film was made in New Zealand before this, *Opening of the Auckland Exhibition*, shot by A. H. Whitehouse on the previous day. Refer: *War Cry* (Melbourne), 10 December 1898, p. 9. Earliest known reference to Maori films: *Australasian Photographic Review*, 21 January 1899, p. 2.

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Le Giornate del Cinema Muto

12TH PORDENONE SILENT FILM FESTIVAL
9-16 OCTOBER 1993

GRAHAM SHIRLEY

For the film buff, archivist or historian whose primary interest is the silent cinema, Le Giornate del Cinema Muto (Pordenone Silent Film Festival) is sublime. Every October since 1982, five hundred or so people have converged on the Italian town of Pordenone in the Regione Friuli (Italy's north-east) to immerse themselves in seven days of cinema muto produced between the origins of cinema in the 1890s and the final days of the silent era in the late 1920s. Seated in the town's 1200-seat Cinema Verdi, they have been able to see beautifully printed and tinted restorations screened with piano or orchestral accompaniment, and with translations, if necessary, into their own language. Between sessions, they have swarmed into the surrounding cafés and bars to trade the kind of information that is unique to film buffs, historians, researchers and collectors. For, above all else, Pordenone is an enthusiast's festival, one in which a great proportion of the audience sits in rapt attention daily from 9 am to 1 am the next morning. Only in the final couple of days do faces start to look pasty and a shower of sneezes and colds have begun to spread in the air. Not everyone takes notes, and the audience note-taking experience is often interrupted by an odd quip, a smile, a giggle or a yawn - but the experience is an intoxicating one.

The Pordenone Silent Film Festival had its genesis in May 1976, when an earthquake devastated the Friuli region and levelled many small medieval towns including Venzone and Gemona. With many of the region's theatres destroyed and the local population living in tents, university students Livio Jacob and Piera Patat began their own film club, which subsequently became a library, La Cineteca del Friuli. In 1982, La Cineteca joined forces with the Pordenone film club Cinemazero (founded 1978) to screen a rich collection of Max Linder comedies at Pordenone's Verdi Cinema. Italian film historians attending this Festival suggested that it be run as an annual event, encouraging the new alliance to run a Mack Sennett retrospective the following year. The Pordenone Silent Film Festival was born, and from 1984 its organizers were joined by Paolo Cherchi Usai, a student volunteer at an archive in Gemona.1

The most visible presence in the town of Pordenone are the elegantly-gowned young people in their late teens and early twenties who pack the streets and shopping plazas each evening to promenade and socialize. And it was the young of Pordenone who were the most avid of the 1993 silent Festival's first-night audience when popular European new age/avant garde composer and pianist Wim Mertens accompanied Louis Delluc's La Femme De Nulle Part (France, 1922) and The Land Beyond the Sunset (Harold Shaw, U.S., 1912). As Mertens bounded from the orchestra pit to take bow after bow, my amazement grew at the realization that films 70 and 80 years old could play a central role in so much euphoria. There was to be plenty more evidence of this before the week was out.

While torches flickered glow-worm style as people jotted down their screening notes, there was a keen sense of a new generation of explorers choosing to rediscover what most of the 20th Century has chosen to ignore. The formula for this is an expert blend of themes and trends spanning the entire history of the silent cinema. In the words of David Shepherd, film teacher and film restoration specialist as well as co-winner (with Jonathan Dennis) of the Festival's 1993 Jean Mitry Award, Pordenone "takes the chains off the film bibles throughout the world. There are all kinds of films I had no idea were important until I saw them here."

Throughout Italy there are many reminders of an active film culture enabling a festival like Pordenone to flourish. At a bookshop in Milano's Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II, I lost count of the number of film books published exclusively in Italian. Nestling beside books on talents as different as Federico Fellini, Edgar G. Ulmer, Woody Allen and the Italian comedian/singer Toto was a new monograph on Jane Campion, while published screenplays - again entirely in Italian - packed the adjacent shelves. The Pordenone Festival's Paolo Cherchi Usai commented that what I saw was just the tip of the iceberg. Italy was famous until a few years ago as one of the world's most prolific publishers of film books, linked to the fact that reading about film was one of the country's most fashionable intellectual pursuits, particularly among students.

Pordenone began at a time of massive growth in Italian cinema clubs and art houses. In the early 1980s such growth was a by-product of an Italian television revolution when the almost 30-year monopoly of government television was broken by the appearance of private stations. Many regular cinemas closed but a continuing hunger for film brought an upsurge in the number of cinema art houses, clubs and festivals. In Genova alone, a population of 800,000 was able to sustain 13 art houses, 10 of which were second-run theatres. Because of factors including domestic video, audiences for this kind of outlet have since declined. Genova now only has two clubs presenting a more restricted fare.
In recent years the themes presented at Pordenone have included pre-Caligari German cinema, the output of the Eclair and Vitagraph studios, the Walt Disney silents, and a Frank Borzage retrospective. In this, the twelfth Pordenone Festival, the main themes were a celebration of the year 1913, a retrospective of the work of American silent director Rex Ingram, a profile of Australian and New Zealand silent cinema, and a tribute to the American comedian Charley Chase. According to Paolo Cherchi Usai, the Festival, guided by “naive curiosity”, always aims to show what they have never shown before. Eighty per cent of the films are chosen on the basis of print quality, innovative technique, innovative style and potential interest for a non-specialist audience. The audience, Cherchi Usai continued, now trusts the programmers “but five years ago they needed persuading”.

It was three years ago, in 1990, that Jonathan Dennis, silent-era film enthusiast and founding director of the New Zealand Film Archive, made his first visit to Pordenone. Watching the huge number of pre-Caligari German films screened that year, he was struck by the fact that New Zealand and Australian silent films had followed an interesting path in their own right. Reviewing the 1990 Festival for the FIAF (International Federation of Film Archives) bulletin, Dennis alluded to the fact that during the course of the Festival he had become tired of the dominance of North American and European cinema. He suggested that from now on Pordenone look at films from the rest of the world, especially Oceania and Asia. On the appearance of this review, Festival organizers contacted Dennis, with Cherchi Usai saying he wanted to start previewing a selection of Australian and New Zealand silents as soon as possible.

In 1991, Dennis established that the archives of Canberra and Wellington would be able to send films to Pordenone in 1993. Having been engaged by the Pordenone Festival as a consultant, he then began previewing with Cherchi Usai. Both were aware of the need to have the Australian choices balance what was being chosen from New Zealand, emphasizing the differences and similarities between the two countries without repeating themes.

Historically, of course, Australian silent features had been far more numerous than those of New Zealand – a reason for the balance between the Australian features and the New Zealand shorts screened in ’93 at Pordenone. But the main reason, according to Dennis, that New Zealand was represented entirely by “short local, regional, primarily actuality films” was because the estate of New Zealand’s pre-eminent silent director Rudall Hayward has not allowed his features to be preserved and restored or publicly screened for many years.

In Australia, Dennis and Cherchi Usai viewed across a span of six days. Dennis recalls the process: “We watched all the established classics, thumbed through the books and asked for films that hadn’t been suggested.” Australia’s National Film & Sound Archive (NFSA) began to express surprise at some of the programming selections and omissions. Dennis continues: “The process was one filled with many lively discussions on what should be shown, during which we tried to extend beyond the notion of showing only established classics.”

Among the Australian films traditionally given scant attention were the World War I animated cartoons made by Harry Julius for Australasian Gazette. Cherchi Usai, who likes Julius’ work, very much, comments on “a striking and almost eerie similarity” between the work of Julius and that of a World War I German cartoonist called Julius Pinschewer. “Extremely to the right” (a charge that can’t be levelled at Harry Julius), Pinschewer’s work was aimed at Germany’s wartime public and its armed forces. A selection of the Pinschewer cartoons was screened at Pordenone in 1990.

The Australian features programmed for Pordenone ’93 were a mixture of the expected – Longford’s The Woman Suffers (1918), The Sentimental Bloke (1919) and On Our Selection (1920) – and choices in line with the Festival’s reputation for avoiding the revered classics to discover films otherwise little known. Nevertheless, two in the latter category, Jungle Woman (Frank Hurley, 1926) and The Birth of White Australia (Phil K. Walsh, 1928), were the kind of films which the NFSA, and certainly this writer, would normally have thought twice about programming for an event like this. Paolo Cherchi Usai said he programmed Birth as a “racist testament chosen to represent the culture of Australia at that period” – certainly a provocative act as evidenced by the loud booing that followed the Pordenone screening. What I found personally challenging was the absence of a whole list of Australian silents usually regarded as key works – Franklyn Barrett’s The Breaking of the Drought (1920) and A Girl of the Bush (1921), the McDonagh sisters’ The Far Paradise (1928) and The Cheaters (1929), Tal Ordell’s The Kid Stakes (1927) and Norman Dawn’s For the Term of His Natural Life (1927). In response to questions about this, Cherchi Usai said that 1993 was simply the first year that Pordenone would run Australian films, and there is a good chance that The Breaking of the Drought will be programmed in the near future.

It was a curious, at times unnerving, experience to watch the NFSA’s newly-struck and beautifully-tinted prints of The Sentimental Bloke and On Our Selection with a non-Australian audience. If ever one’s feeling for the gut reaction of an audience was fine-tuned, it was here at Pordenone. I have seen both films work to their best capacity with Australian audiences, but while On Our Selection impressed some at Pordenone for its documentary impact, it left others cold by looking too detached and episodic. The Sentimental Bloke fared better, although again not in the unanimous way it usually does in Australia. It took a while for the audience to realize that this was indeed a comedy. The realization, helped by Neil Brand’s skilful accompaniment, clicked at the moment in which the love-smitten Bloke (Arthur Tauchert) daydreams of his girlfriend Doreen’s face over a freshly-hown pumpkin. The greatest mirth was reserved for the Bloke’s intertitles, widely appreciated despite fears that they would not be understood.

Surprisingly, since I’d been disappointed the first time I’d seen it, the Australian film that worked best at Pordenone was Longford’s The Woman Suffers. It proved to be closer in feeling to the well-upholstered European dramas that dominated the Festival; sustaining a strong emotional charge as it charted the plight of the film’s two seduced and abandoned women, played respectively by Evelyn Black and Lottie Lyell. The Woman Suffers shows a confident team of filmmakers – Longford, Lyell and cameraman Arthur Higgins – drawing the best from most of
wise the Festival wanted to minimize the number of introductions, letting the films, wherever possible, speak for themselves.

Another exception was made for the New Zealand films, which had the benefit of live introductions and commentaries. The two programmes of New Zealand films – the first being a diverse collection under the title *Aotearoa and the Sentimental Strine*, available at the Festival. Even so, Australian documentaries being screened tended to look rather lost without further contextualization. Two short extracts from Baldwin Spencer’s 1912 Aboriginal footage, along with Frank Hurley’s feature-length *Home of the Blizzard* (1913) and the Francis Birtles and Torrance McLaren *Coorab in the Island of Ghosts* (1929), were none of them exactly gripping as films, and would have been more accessible with an introductory word or two. Other films, including *The Sentimental Bloke*, had the advantage of a pre-screening talk, but other short films to features, and the last year that an equilibrium had existed between the five super-powers of film – the U.S., France, Italy, Denmark and, to a lesser extent, Germany. In 1913, Chaplin’s new contract with Mack Sennett led to the birth of his tramp character; Griffith left Biograph to plan *The Birth of a Nation*; and Victor Sjöström began the golden age of Swedish cinema with his first masterpiece, *Ingeborg Holm*. It was also the first year that France’s *Fantomas* ushered in a criminal genre that, with variations, is with us still.

The 1913 films screened at Pordenone differed in quality as far as could be imagined – from the sublime, as with *Ingeborg Holm* and Leonce Perret’s *L’Enfant De Paris* (France), through to the merely routine, with *Lotus the Temple Dancer* (L. A. Winkel, Germany). There was no shortage of generic diversity, from tales of criminal expose through to a plethora of wandering or murderously possessive husbands, resourceful heroines, and films with ponderous stage routines redeemed by cinematic trickery. At least a couple of the offerings had visual and editorial approaches timeless enough to inspire filmmakers today.

Foremost in innovation were two 1913 films from America, Phillips Smalley’s *Suspense*, and D. W. Griffith’s *The Mothering Heart*. The 12-minute *Suspense* is the more visually adventurous, showing a mother and baby in a remote house under threat from a prowler. Especially striking are a close-up of the prowler filmed from above as he stares defiantly up at the mother who’s spied him from a first floor window; a three-way split screen showing wife and husband on the phone as the prowler enters the house, and, after the husband has stolen a car to rush to the rescue, shots of a pursuing police car reflected in a jolting side mirror. *The Mothering Heart*, screened to celebrate Lillian Gish’s 100th birthday (the actress died, aged 99, in February 1993), shows the effect on a marriage of a husband’s brief affair with a woman that he and his wife (Gish) have seen for the first time in a crowded cabaret. Coverage of the initial flirtation, all looks and smiles in full view of Gish, is built up to with a succession of shots that make the seduction and Gish’s ensuing fury all the more palpable. Gish wrote in her memoirs how she fought to play the role, then became concerned that she was over-acting until Griffith convinced her otherwise. Indeed, it is her underplaying and emotional truth that helps to give the film much of its potency, and it proved to be a milestone in her career.

Another film with a wandering husband, the newly-restored Danish feature *Atlantis* (August Blom, 1913), was one of the most pedantic yet also most haunting and admired films screened at Pordenone in ’93. At 127 minutes, it was the longest and most expensive dramatized film made anywhere up to 1913, and its failure to penetrate the American market was a major blow to Nordisk, its producer. The first 25 minutes or so, with a doctor trapped at home looking after his young children and a mentally-disturbed wife, creates an impact that lingers. The wife in particular is unnervingly well played, adding fuel to the husband’s decision to follow a female dancer to America. When the dancer loses interest, the doctor drifts increasingly without purpose, almost dying after news of his wife’s death. In the final reel he is nursed back to health by another woman who, patiently and over a span of months, has taken the initiative to court him.

Among the other American offerings from 1913 were two films portraying that period’s white slave traffic. The first, George Loane Tucker’s *Traffic in Souls*, was, because of its huge success, one of the most influential of America’s early feature-length story films. Inspired by the Rockefeller White Slavery Report and New York District Attorney Whitman’s investigation into the Vice Trust, *Traffic in Souls* was, according to Terry Ramsaye, produced without the knowl-

JAMES MCDONALD’S ME PITO WHAKAATU I TE HUI I ROTORUA (SCENES AT THE ROTORUA HUI 1920).
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ARTICLES & INTERVIEWS BY SCOTT MURRAY
When discussing film in New Zealand, it is perhaps a surprise to many foreigners that Jane Campion's is not the name that most comes up – or even the first. Undoubtedly, the modern lexicon begins with Roger Donaldson and Geoff Murphy, moves on to Vincent Ward, and only recently takes in Campion and Peter Jackson. (If one looks at pre-1970s cinema, the two figures who tower largest are Rudall Hayward and John O'Shea.)

To understand the importance given to Donaldson’s and Murphy’s contributions, and the near reverence in which they are held, one has to go back to the first spark of the renascent New Zealand cinema. This is usually dated at 1977, the year Roger Donaldson’s *Sleeping Dogs* and Geoff Murphy’s *Wild Man* went into theatrical release.
**WILD MAN**

Originally a school teacher and member of the Acme Sausage Company rock band, Geoff Murphy started working as a director, of shorts and documentaries, at the New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation (NZBC). His first feature, *Wild Man*, was in fact commissioned as a 50-minute episode of the Blerta television series. In a 1980 interview, Murphy recalled:

> *Wild Man* was an opportunity seized. We had very little money and no time for script development, or any of those things necessary for making films. But we had a chance, so we went for it and got it. I think the film is remarkably successful within those parameters.²

Murphy writes in the excellent *Film in Aotearoa New Zealand* (1992):

> *Wild Man* was shot in 16mm and blown up to 35mm for release in 1977. [...] Film makers used all manner of deviousness and imagination to fund these films. *Wild Man* required very little. It was cheap, and it showed. It cost around $25,000 to make and about $30,000 to blow up to 35mm.³

John Barnett, the film’s executive producer, recalled:

> I looked at the rough cut and thought it was amusing, so we decided to stretch it out to 72 minutes [...] We then put a half-hour film [about] Fred Dagg⁴ in front of it, and put out [an] all-New Zealand film package.

I took *Wild Man* in its 16mm rough-cut form to Amalgamated Theatres, who said they’d give it a go [...] We hoped the thing would run two weeks in Queen St, Auckland, but to everyone’s surprise it ran six. The program also ran throughout the country.⁵

**SLEEPING DOGS**

Roger Donaldson is Australian-born, but went to New Zealand at age 19 to sidestep the Vietnam draft. He has preferred to be known as a New Zealander ever since.

At first a still photographer, then a director of television commercials and documentaries, Donaldson ventured into feature filmmaking with *Sleeping Dogs*, the story of totalitarian repression in a modern New Zealand. Just after production Donaldson said:

> I think *Sleeping Dogs* has something important to say. Civil liberties are declining fast in many parts of the world. Although they don’t all suffer from events as violent as those in the movie, there have been plenty of indications in the last few years that New Zealand is becoming a constricted democracy. If *Sleeping Dogs* has a lesson, it is that we should be aware of giving anyone too much power in the belief that he [or she] won’t abuse it.⁸

*Sleeping Dogs* was one of four New Zealand films widely and successfully released in 1977-78, along with Michael Firth’s Academy Award-nominated documen-
up our arguments and generally preparing to do battle for the establishment of a film commission for the funding of feature films.9

NEW ZEALAND FILM COMMISSION
All the lobbying paid off when, in October 1977, the Interim Film Commission was established by Arts Minister Alan Hight. One year later, the New Zealand Film Commission was formed by act of parliament, and opened its doors on 13 November. Bill Sheat, a lawyer and former Chairman of the Arts Council, was made the NZFC's first Chairman. The Commission’s legislated function was, and still is, to “encourage, and also to participate and assist in the making, promotion, distribution, and exhibition of film”.

Bill Sheat recalled in 1980:
Lots of people played a part in the long process of establishing the NZFC. I think we were very fortunate in having a sympathetic Minister for the Arts in Alan Hight, who was very receptive and was able to get the idea through on a Cabinet level. He was also instrumental in getting funding for the Commission from the Lottery Board. […]

We put up all the arguments [to government]. We certainly used the cultural one, and the whole question of national identity – the fact that our media were swamped with imported product and the need for New Zealanders to be able to identify with something of a New Zealand nature.

We also advanced economic arguments. Luckily, at that time Sleeping Dogs and Off the Edge had done surprisingly well at the box office, so we were able to talk in terms of import substitution, claiming that every seat that’s bought for a New Zealand film represents money that isn’t going out of the country. These are arguments that the government is very sensitive to in our current economic situation.10

This pivotal year, 1978, also saw the release of David Blyth’s Angel Mine, an erotic fantasy about an affluent couple and their wish-fulfilment world of black leather and punk music. (For a complete list of New Zealand features, see Chart 1, at end.)

The next year, three films went into release: Geoff Steven’s Skin Deep, John Reid’s Middle Age Spread and Paul Maunder’s Sons for the Return Home. All had NZFC financial involvement (about $400,000 each), to a maximum of 50 per cent.

Don Blakeney, the NZFC’s first executive director, said in 1980:
On average, the Commission’s involvement has been between 40 and 45 per cent of cash budgets. Around 30 per cent has come from private investors early on, and the rest normally comes from some form of producer input – either through his own services and facilities, a facility company, or community involvement, such as a city which has thrown its streets open.11

The NZFC gave private investors priority on returns (investors received 70 per cent till break even; the NZFC 30%), so that it was possible for the investors to recoup all their investment before the film went into profit. Even so, the future for long-term private investment was looking shaky. Blakeney:

[...] while private investment is increasing, it’s getting harder to obtain. The financial community has wised up to the risks involved in film investment and, unless there is some off-shore and possibly some pre-sale money, it’s going to be harder to talk them into it.12

This certainly proved to be the case.

John Barnett, for one, put down this late 1970s burst of features activity as “a direct result of frustration over not being able to get anything on local television […] the lack of activity in the television business led me into feature film production.”13

Television had been a minor investor in New Zealand films (such as Sleeping Dogs), but the NZFC’s inception was a convenient excuse for opting out totally. Barnett:

If anything, it made television feel more entrenched. In fact, the day the NZFC was set up, the chairman of the television corporation said, in effect, that private filmmakers now had a fund to which they could go and the NZBC was now absolved of any responsibility of giving them money. The NZFC commissioners lobbied to change that situation, but the television administrators had very cunningly fooled the politicians who didn’t really understand the way finances work inside television.14

On the NZFC’s attempts to intervene, Sheat said:

To say our approaches to broadcasting were disappointing is the most charitable way you could describe the situation. One of the earliest things the Commission did was to draw the attention of the stations to the fact that the number of programs they were commissioning from the film industry was virtually nil. The reaction was not positive at all.15
The 1980s began with great uncertainty, buoyed by the formation of the NZFC but disappointed by the attitude of the NZBC and the lack of any substantial private investment. But things would change, and rapidly. Lawyers and investment bankers discovered ways to maximize tax breaks through investment in films. As in Australia, there was a sudden mushrooming of product. In 1982, only five features were made, but in 1983 there were 12 and in 1984 it peaked at 17 (see Chart 2).

The New Zealand industry was also encouraged by the public success of such early 1980s films as John Laing’s *Beyond Reasonable Doubt* (1980), *Goodbye Pork Pie* (Geoff Murphy, 1981) and *Smash Palace* (Donaldson, 1982). There were fine films, too, that did less well, such as Mike Newell’s brooding, disturbing *Bad Blood* (1981). Others, like *Battletruck* (Harley Cokliss, 1982), were classic tax films and not overly memorable.

**BEYOND REASONABLE DOUBT**

John Laing’s film is an effective recreation of the Arthur Allan Thomas case, where a farmer was wrongly convicted of murder. Australian author David Yallop had written a best-seller about the case in 1978, while Thomas was still in gaol. Producer John Barnett decided to make a film and stir up the controversy (as is oft Barnett’s wont!). But just before filming Thomas was pardoned. Barnett recalled:

> It was an incredible feeling. Obviously it was highly desirable from [Thomas’] point of view, but we had developed a film [script] which was intended to leave people in an extremely angry state of mind. [...] I contacted Yallop, and a week later he was out here re-writing the film.16

John Laing added: “It was one of those things that made us make the film more a character study. No longer did the film have to be designed to get Thomas out of prison.”17

**GOODBYE PORK PIE**

Geoff Murphy’s second feature, *Goodbye Pork Pie*, is a fast-moving comedy about two adventurers who drive from one end of New Zealand to the other. When interviewed during production, writer-director Geoff Murphy said:

> I didn’t have much desire to make features [...] because I couldn’t see how it could be done and make a product worthy of a broad release. I knew it would cost more than the market could possibly realize, and I couldn’t see myself furiously telling lies to raise the money! It really only became a possibility with the establishment of the Film Commission.18

The idea for *Goodbye Pork Pie* came from Chris Thompson, a freelance film producer, who told Murphy a story about how he was hitchhiking one day and was picked up by two very odd people. Along the way, they stopped at various places and sold bits of the car. Eventually Thompson realized it was a rental car they were pawning off!
Murphy collaborated on the zany script with Ian Mune, an actor who would also become an important New Zealand director. The film was financed in the manner common at the time. Murphy:

The first thing we did was to form a consortium of private companies — an equipment hire company, my service company, and a sound production company — which put up $70,000 in the form of services and facilities. Then we went to the Commission, who agreed to invest. So we already had the film two-thirds financed before we started looking for a private investor. But it took a while. The script had a tremendously polarizing effect on people, because it’s anti-materialist, and financiers are very reverent about property.¹⁹ [...] Murphy also recalled:

With Goodbye Pork Pie, what I wanted to make was a film that would be very popular — which it was — but which also said things about an individual’s reaction to a terribly over-regulated society, and the desire for them to set their own goals, no matter how absurd they were. But I didn’t want to put that message in huge letters, so that the audience felt I was giving them a sermon.²⁰

The NZFC’s sales and marketing director Lindsay Shelton adds:

Goodbye Pork Pie held back its release for 12 months. During that time we inundated the New Zealand public with news of its international successes. By the time it was released, the people were orgasmic. They couldn’t hold back any more. Everybody went.²¹

Goodbye Pork Pie is the third top-grossing New Zealand movie in New Zealand, having just been overtaken by Jane Campion’s The Piano (1993), which had no New Zealand investment, and which is now the number one film, ahead of Footrot Flats: A Dog’s Tale (Murray Ball, 1986).

When one considers as well that Came a Hot Friday (Ian Mune, 1985) is still the number 4 top-grossing New Zealand film at home and Utu (Geoff Murphy, 1983) number 5, one senses the magnitude of these early 1980s successes. Not even the much-applauded An Angel at My Table (Jane Campion, 1990) has dislodged those early hits, climbing to number 6. (See Chart 3.)

Of course, if the box-office figures were translated into 1994 dollar values, the relative success of those early 1980s films would be even greater.

OTHER KEY FILMS
Roger Donaldson’s second feature, Smash Palace (1982; number 9), is the story of a racing driver’s marriage break-up. It dramatically confirmed Donaldson’s reputation as one of New Zealand’s best craftsmen and a filmmaker with a good sense of his audience. In 1987 Donaldson recalled:

[…] people pay their three bucks to go to see the movies, and they expect to see stuff that’s comparable to the best American, British – whatever – movies. If you can’t deliver Star Wars in terms of the special effects, you’ve at least got to deliver something that gets them going – something that’s controversial in some way or another. […]

I’m quite committed to the New Zealand film industry. Well, I’m committed to my own movies, really; the New Zealand film industry is something that’s just happened. There are real advantages here, though: Smash Palace is my movie, and I couldn’t have made it anywhere else. I definitely have more chance to make my movies here; in Los Angeles, I’d be just another hack director.²²

Despite these sentiments, Donaldson left for Hollywood almost immediately.

Utu (1983) is Geoff Murphy’s third feature, and his second major box-office success. It is the oft harrowing tale of a Europeanized Maori who, on seeing the senseless massacre of his tribe by the Pakeha (Europeans), turns on his former masters and enacts utu – retribution. At the time of the film’s release, Murphy said:

The real conflicts of this country have not changed at all. What Utu illustrates is that violence is part of the human social fabric. The same violence is here today, it is just that the nature of it has changed.²¹

As with Goodbye Pork Pie, Murphy tried to keep the message clear but subtle:

People go to a film for some sort of release and entertainment, and I feel an obligation to give them what they go for. The sort of films I admire most are the ones that succeed in doing that without short-changing the other side of things.²⁴

Utu cost $3 million, a long way from the poverty-level budget of Wild Man and an indication of how the industry (and costs) had grown.

Came a Hot Friday, based on the novel by Ronald Hugh Morrision, was the directorial debut of Ian Mune, writer of Sleeping Dogs, Smash Palace and several other films. It concerns a couple of con men running a racing scam in a small North Island town in the 1950s. Nick Roddick, a former editor of Cinema Papers, wrote:
More than any film since *Smash Palace*, it captures the spirit of rural New Zealand, though not in a nostalgic or condescending way. Mune’s style is definitely in the over-the-top category. But it is consistent, reaching its finest in the performance of Maori entertainer Billy T. James as the Tainuia Kid, a colourful lunatic.25

Lindsay Shelton adds:

The key element of *Came A Hot Friday*, apart from the fact that Ian Mune had made an extremely funny movie, was Billy T. James, who is now dead. He was a uniquely high-profile television comedy star. Although he only had a cameo role in the film, everybody was drawn in by Billy T. James.

As for Geoff Murphy, he continued his extraordinary run of success with the sci-fi adventure *The Quiet Earth* (1985; number 10). Zac (Bruno Lawrence) wakes up to find himself alone in the world: everyone else has vanished as a result of a dimensional experiment that got out of hand. Nick Roddick:

Murphy has perfected his ability to combine moments of anarchic humour with an edge-of-the-seat adventure movie. Whereas in *Goodbye Pork Pie*, the jokes and the stunts co-existed uneasily, and in *Utu* the virtuoso juggling with history and the audience’s expectations left many uncertain as to whether they were watching a New Zealand western or a serious slice of nineteenth-century history, in *The Quiet Earth* the tone is unified. [...] Like *Utu*, *The Quiet Earth* is clearly the work of a major filmmaker – of someone who cares about his craft and what he does.26

**THE TAIHUA KID (BILLY T. JAMES) AND WESLEY PENNINGTON (PETER BLAND): IAN MUNE’S *CAME A HOT FRIDAY* (1985).**

Vigil (1984), Vincent Ward’s first feature after several award-winning shorts, was not a local hit like these other films, but it was a remarkable critical success around the world. It was also the first New Zealand feature to be invited to Competition at Cannes, the start of a record that dwarfs that of countries many times New Zealand’s size and with far stronger industries commercially.


**THE TIDE TURNS**

Even though 1983-85 were the boom years in terms of production, things had begun to sour. There was growing concern within government that not all film business dealings were above board. Two initiatives were taken. First, government announced that the tax period would officially be brought to a close. Mladen Ivancic, the present finance director of the NZFC:

In 1983, the tax laws were changed in such a way that they discouraged private investment in film. All the loop-holes were closed and, from the magic date of 30 September 1984, no new film projects had the ability to attract private investment with the generous offer of a 150% write-off.

There was still a period, though, during which projects that had started before that date were entitled to complete production and post-production under the old regime. It took till 1986-87 before a large number of these projects were completed.27

Lawyer Bill Sheat feels, “The main contribution of the tax period was to cause the private investment sector, such as it was, to dry up completely.”28 John Barnett, now at South Pacific Pictures, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Television New Zealand, has a more positive view:

People still talk about the tax regime, but my own view has always been that the abundance of tax money enabled us to create the infrastructure we have today. We were able to get the equipment and to bring people in.

I recently did an analysis of films funded by tax money as opposed to films funded by the NZFC. I found that the percentage of hits, critical and box-office, was exactly the same.29

In fact, Antony I. Ginnane did the same exercise in Australia, analyzing FFC films and 10BA films. Ginnane found they too
came out the same. Barnett: “Exactly. Films are no respecters of where the monies come from.”

THE IRD REVIEW
The second government action was to have the Internal Revenue Department (IRD) review almost all the tax films. This had a disastrous effect on private investment in local films.

No charges have ever been laid, but the spectre of the IRD suspiciously inspecting one’s books looms large. As Ivancic says, “It resulted in a lot of bad publicity in the financial press and that has been enough to keep private investors on the sidelines.” Bill Sheat adds:

Once the tax benefits were finished and the IRD started its attack on virtually every film that was made, private investors simply didn’t want to invest at all. Why invest in a movie and buy a ticket to a tax investigation?

One of the major concerns, and it still has to be dealt with, is to create a climate where investors are prepared to take a risk. At the moment, not only do they risk losing their money, but they get done over by the tax department as well. That’s really more than most investors are prepared to take on.

Add to that the stock market collapse of October 1987, which wiped $8 billion off the value of shares, and things were looking grim. As Lindsay Shelton explains:

All the big companies which used to have spare cash were no longer willing to go into high-risk investment areas. The big companies all retreated back to their ‘core businesses’ and sold off all activities that seemed to be irrelevant to that core business. There is no way they can consider film any more because film isn’t their core business.

MIRAGE
As if to dramatize that spreading sense of doom came the 1988 crash of the Mirage Entertainment Corporation.

Larry Parr and Don Reynolds, two extremely experienced producers, formed Mirage in March 1987, seven months before the stock market crash. It became the first film company to be floated in New Zealand in 50 years. Within a year, it was in receivership with debts of $12.1 million. But matters didn’t stop there, as Mladen Ivancic recounts:

The accounting firm which audited the Mirage prospectus and checked the financial projections was successfully sued by the receivers. There was something like a $7m payment in damages made.

Mirage was before my time, but, from what I’ve read, its problems were in part to do with A Soldier’s Tale [Larry Parr, 1988]. It apparently went way over budget and sucked up the financial resources to the detriment of the rest of the company.

Lindsay Shelton adds:

A Soldier’s Tale was shot in France. The completion of the film was unhappily marked by the collapse of Mirage, and paralleled strangely the collapse of some of the biggest American distribution companies, including Atlantic Releasing, which had signed a $1m pre-sale for the film. In terms of visibility, it became a doomed film. It was almost not seen at all.

The whole catalogue of Mirage was eventually bought by a British investor, who passed on sales to the Overseas Film Group. All the productions that Larry Parr did, and he was the most prolific of any producer in New Zealand, are not available except from this company in Los Angeles. This has resulted in several of Larry’s films being unavailable in New Zealand – just the nature of the business, I guess.

Ivancic concludes:

All of these things taken together meant there is a negative investment climate in New Zealand towards feature films. That will only change very slowly with a track record of success. There has been the odd private investor, a relative or friend of a producer, but it’s not significant.

Ivancic does not envisage another attempt to float a company like Mirage: “I can’t see that happening in the foreseeable future. Mirage was a product of that frenzied speculative period just before the crash.”

FOOTROT FLATS: A DOG’S TALE
The first post-tax glimmer of hope was the private financing and release in 1986 of New Zealand’s second greatest-ever hit: Murray Ball’s animated Footrot Flats: A Dog’s Tale. It was based on the long-running newspaper cartoon strip which had not only been in every newspaper in the country for years, but had been an annual book. Shelton:

Each book had sold 40,000 or 50,000 copies, so everybody knew the farmer and his dog. As well, the producers did a brilliant job of marketing it with hit songs and music videos, such as few New Zealand producers have ever achieved before or since.

What Footrot Flats, Goodbye Pork Pie and Came a Hot Friday had in common was immense public awareness before they arrived in the theatres. The problem with some of the New Zealand movies which have failed to perform is that there hasn’t
been a satisfactory degree of public awareness. They have come and gone without enough people knowing about them.

In 1987, there was Barry Barclay’s important Ngati, the first feature directed by a Maori in New Zealand (see “Maori Cinema”, pp. 39–41).

The next positive sign for the New Zealand film industry was the emergence of a young filmmaker of singular passions and determination.

BAD TASTE
Peter Jackson began his directing career at the age of nine when he shot a World War II epic on Super 8. After two more Super 8 films, he began a 20-minute short, Roast of the Day, but this kept expanding into the hour-long and re-titled Giles’ Big Day. The NZFC then stepped in and helped the film develop even further to its final length of 93 minutes, retitled yet again as Bad Taste (1988). Jackson not only wrote, produced, directed, photographed and co-edited the film, he also played two parts in it.

One of the most dramatic debuts of the 1980s, the film instantly won international regard, winning the Special Jury Prize at the 17th Paris Festival of Fantasy and Science Fiction Films. Just before the film’s release, Jackson said:

The idea of making an outrageous, over-the-top movie had appealed to me since I used to watch Monty Python’s Flying Circus as a kid. I think of Bad Taste as a live-action Tom and Jerry cartoon – that’s all it really is.

The film has a strong New Zealand feel about it in the scenery and locations and so on, and thousands of people overseas are going to see it. It is important for the [New Zealand Film] Commission to be involved in a variety of movies, and Bad Taste is just as much a New Zealand movie as any other movie made here.

Two years later Jackson made the ‘X-rated’ puppet cult classic, Meet the Feebles.

NEVER SAY DIE
Three years after The Quiet Earth, Geoff Murphy returned to the screen with Never Say Die (1988; number 11). It is a spoof of the James Bond genre that has echoes of the action-chase style of an earlier Murphy film. Nic [Mike Nicolaidi] wrote in Variety:

Never Say Die is an upmarket version of Geoff Murphy’s 1981 road movie Goodbye Pork Pie and confirms his reputation as New Zealand’s foremost and most tantalizing director.

Never Say Die is long on stunts and car chases and short on cohesive story flow [...] Murphy is a filmmaker of serious concern who often seems overpowered by his delight in [technical] incendiary effects.

Never Say Die should do well on the home market [...] Offshore, it may need more careful handling.

Nicolaidi was correct. While not known outside New Zealand (the film appears not to be in any “Movies on TV” guide), at home it was a hit. Murphy was now in the extraordinary position of having directed four of the ten top-grossing New Zealand films of all time.23 Not counting the no-budget Wild Man, that is a 100 per cent record of hits. Shelton:

Geoff Murphy made, in quite rapid succession, four immensely popular New Zealand movies for New Zealand audiences. They also sold very well internationally and I thought Geoff was going to have a lifetime career as a populist New Zealand filmmaker. So I was quite surprised when he went off to Hollywood and did Young Guns II and his other Hollywood movies. He is still working very successfully in Hollywood, with Freejack and so on.

Alas, Murphy and Donaldson were not the only New Zealand filmmakers to move overseas. They were merely at the forefront of a talent drain that continues to this day (see discussion in “Issues”, pp. 32–33).

A BRIEF REVIYAL
Production picked up briefly in 1988. It was a very lively period with Vincent Ward’s The Navigator: A Medieval Odyssey (number 7) in Competition at Cannes and generally acclaimed. Peter Jackson, the same year, was discovered internationally with Bad Taste and Merata Mita became the second Maori filmmaker to complete a Maori feature with Maori.

Vincent Ward’s second feature was an even bigger critical success than Vigil and established Ward as a director of world standing. This stark tale of “five men and a boy tunnelling from a Middle Ages ravaged by Black Death to a present day of industrial horror and glass”33 is an at times brilliant analogy of two worlds, two sets of expectations and realizations – and the frightening parallels within.

Not that the film had been easy to set up. Ward moved to Australia when the money fell over temporarily. It was finally structured as an Australian-New Zealand co-production by producer John Maynard, who along with David Hannay and others has helped pioneer trans-Tasman productions. Unlike Vigil, however, it generated critical response and box office in New Zealand.

The 1988 revival which The Navigator: A Medieval Odyssey typified was, however, rather short-lived. Shelton:

The low point of the industry, as it were, was reached in 1988-89, when there was only one feature completed and on show at Cannes, Richard Riddiford’s unfortunately titled Zilch!

Judith McCann, who was appointed executive director of the NZFC in 1988 (and left in early 1994), recalls:

There were a number of projects that the Commission had, at various stages, made conditional commitments to portions of their financing, but they were unable to get the balance of the financing together. There was virtually no private investor prepared to take the risk, even on An Angel at My Table, which had pre-sales and minimum guarantees in place for just over 50% of its budget.34

Because of this situation, a change of policy was wrought at the NZFC. Shelton:

Things started to come right again when Judith McCann arrived at the Commission. She observed that there was virtually no production happening, and got the Board of the Commission to kick-start the industry back again.

McCann:

The Commission took the courageous step of 100% financing a number of films, including An Angel at My Table, to ensure that they went into production. That is virtually the only period when the NZFC fully financed features, though we have been the sole cash investor on some films by first-time feature directors.

Of late, there has been increasing amounts of money coming in from other sources. We are still the majority investor when films are fully financed in New Zealand, but encouragingly there have been co-productions with Australia like Alex [Megan Simpson, 1993]. There have also been substantial off-shore pre-sales in Peter Jackson’s new feature, Heavenly Creatures, and John Reid’s Taking Liberties. This is really encouraging.

AN ANGEL AT MY TABLE
An Angel at My Table, Jane Campion’s award-winning film on the life of Janet Frame, was shot in late 1989 and premiered at Venice in September 1990. Pierre Rissient, that indefatigable supporter of Australasian (and world) cinema, had in fact tried to convince Campion to enter part or all of An Angel at My Table at Cannes that year, but Campion insisted it was a mini-series and not a feature. Shelton:
In fact, we did have it on video at Cannes and surreptitiously showed it to a few people, including the director of Venice. That’s where he saw it and said he wanted it.

It was the Venice decision to invite it, plus the response from other theatrical people who looked at it in May 1990 in Cannes, that enabled us, after long discussion, to persuade Jane Campion and her producer, Bridget Ikin, to agree to allow what they had made as a television mini-series to be converted into a theatrical feature. There was quite a long-drawn-out discussion before they were willing to change their minds. The rest, of course, is history.

An Angel at my Table is the most successful film the Film Commission has ever invested in. We were the 100% investor. It’s also the most successful film we have ever invested in in terms of international awards, international acclaim and international distribution.

The decade could hardly have ended on a better note, or the new one begun.

The 1990s

New Zealand cinema was notably resurgent in 1990 with not only the release of Jane Campion’s film, but also Gaylene Preston’s Ruby and Rata, Martyn Sanderson’s Flying Fox in a Freedom Tree, based on an important Polynesian novel, Gregor Nicholas’ caper, User Friendly, and Peter Jackson’s Meet the Feebles, among others.

Unfortunately, 1991 was a bit of a low again. The highlight was Barry Barclay’s Te Rua, the third Maori feature. Other films included The Returning, John Day’s erotic ghost thriller, which overseas markets found a little underworked, and Dale Bradley’s Chunuk Bair.

1992 saw the release of Ian Mune’s The End of the Golden Weather. The film, scripted by Mune and Bruce Mason, is based on a much-loved classic of theatre.

Mason’s one-man play is the account of a boy’s coming to terms with the differences between expectation and reality, between social codes and private behaviour, in 1950s New Zealand.

Geoff (Stephen Fulford) is on holiday in a picturesque seaside town when he meets Firpo (Stephen Papps), a most unusual young man. His wealthy parents see him as mentally impaired and wish to keep him out of public view. But Geoff regards Firpo as a hero, especially when he shows dazzling speed at running. As the town has a New Zealand champion arrogantly running up and down the beach with (papier mâché) rocks in his extended hands, Geoff sees a way for Firpo to prove to the world how remarkable he is. But after a breathtaking start, Firpo falters.

The lack of overseas response to The End of the Golden Weather (it has been turned down at least twice by every Australian distributor, see “Lindsay Shelton”, p. 51) is puzzling as it is unquestionably one of the most interesting and successful New Zealand films of recent times. Perhaps the ending, which is about disillusionment, is too much a ‘downer’. Certainly, if the film were remade in America the resolution would be changed.

But the film is admirable for the tough choices it takes, for a realization that all forms of “specialness” are unique and cannot, should not, be judged by ‘normal’ criteria. Of course, everyone would like Firpo to win the race, but why should human competitiveness be a measure to evaluate the special of this world?

Also on release in 1992 was David Blyth’s Moonrise, one of several recent attempts to bring in an offshore name actor (in this case Al Lewis from The Munsters) and use him or her for the good of the movie. Lindsay Shelton:

Lewis proved to be of some value in getting video deals for the film and he certainly helped to get a video deal for the film in the States. It did quite a bit of business, which it might not have done without the useful name.

Concerns over imported actors have not invoked the controversy in New Zealand that they have in some other countries, such as Australia (see “Issues”, pp. 35–36).

In 1992, there was also The Footstep Man, the second feature by Leon Narbey, one of New Zealand’s most highly-regarded directors of photography, and Alison Maclean’s Crush. Selected for Competition at Cannes, Crush certainly helped confirm Maclean’s reputation as a director of talent, even though it was seen by most as a major disappointment after her striking short film, Kitchen Sink.

Meanwhile, goremeister Peter Jackson was back with Braindead, a black-comedy splatter movie, which sold worldwide and firmly
established Jackson’s reputation as a director of significant talent.
In his review of the film in Cinema Papers, Karl Quinn writes:

[W]hile Braindead is an enjoyable – on occasion, hilarious – romp (or wade) through tides of blood and fields of gore, there is
something quite unsettling about it at a sub-textual level. The Oedipal conflict between Lionel [Timothy Balme] and his grasping
Mother [Elizabeth Moody] is the most apparent example [...] The finale, in which Mother appears as a giant latex zombie with
womb agape ready to gobble Lionel up, is both the comic apotheosis of this theme, and the elaborate realization of an unstated gag
which has Lionel’s mum as the Mother of all Zombies.

[...] Splatter aside, Braindead shares much with Les Patterson Saves the World (George Miller, 1987), most notably an uninhibited
willingsness to transcend notions of political correctness and good taste when dealing with some undeniably delicate issues.
Whether we are to laud or loathe Jackson and Miller for boldly going where no-one has gone before remains one of the unresolved
questions of the 20th Century.3 5

1993
When future histories of New Zealand cinema are written, it is
certain1993 will be seen as a peak year, with three films in Official
Selection at Cannes – not counting the French-financed The Piano.

Jane Campion’s film has already been extensively discussed in Cinema Papers, and elsewhere, so it needs no additional comment
here, other than perhaps to suggest it is a quintessentially New Zealand film despite its origins and financing.

The dearth of New Zealand product on show in Australia has
led to a tendency to undervalue the uniquely New Zealand aspects
of Campion’s work – elements of composition and visualization,
of a quirkiness-cum-caricature in the characterization, of the
slightly off-centre tone – and simply label them as “Campionesque”,
when they are more complex and culturally specific than that.

Also released in 1993 was John Laing’s Absent Without Leave.
Largely an autobiographical tale of scriptwriter Jim Edwards, this
1940s story tells of a recruited man, Ed (Craig McLachlan), who
deserts the mobilizing Army to spend more time with his pregnant
wife (Katrina Hobbs). Director John Laing, who had come to
prominence with Beyond Reasonable Doubt, says:

What appears at first to be the romantic story of two innocents
adrift in a backwater of World War II becomes an epic journey
with a cast of two – a young man and woman cast headlong into
the minefield of love and marriage at a time when there was no
time for either, and in a society where the roles of men and women
were drastically changing.1 6

The film is rather more low key than how Laing describes it and
is essentially about the slow drift towards love and appreciation.
Ed has married not for love, but because he had to, and the real
journey is towards a true love and appreciation of his wife. The
film ends, as every member of the audience knows it will, with Ed
saying, “I love you.”

Because of its setting and story – a man chooses his wife above
duty to his country at war – the film raises some issues to do with
individual responsibility and conscience. Unfortunately, Ed is so
played as an unthinking simpleton that his decision to run seems
not arrived at through thought but impulse. This renders the
intended drama of conscience somewhat muted.

Also on show was Megan Simpson’s Alex (which will go
straight to television in Australia), a minor-key story of a girl’s
passion for swimming and the conflicts that causes with other
areas of her life (schoolwork, love interests). Some have criticized
the film for being yet another person-finds-strength-through-the-
death-of-someone-close, but such incidents may well be more
common in life than in cinema.

The film is so low key, though, that it almost fades
from view at times, and the characterization is rather predictable, but there are sufficient moments of warmth
and observation to make it enjoyable, if untaxing,
viewing.3 7

A bigger critical hit was Gaylene Preston’s Bread and Roses, a mini-series shot on 16mm which had a
successful theatrical release prior to its television screening.

The series is based on the autobiography of political and feminist activist Sonja Davies, a New Zealand
icon. It begins in the war year of 1940 and spans two
decades as Davies (Genevieve Picot) moves from nurse
to single parent to rewarded wife, from victim of
tuberculosis to a long life of struggle and achievement.
(See interview with Gaylene Preston, pp. 17–19.)

Stewart Main and Peter Wells’ Desperate Remedies, first shown in Un Certain Regard at Cannes in
1993, has since been theatrically released in New
Zealand and, a rare feat, in Australia. It has also been picked up in the U.S. by Miramax, a major independent distributor.

Desperate Remedies is a high-camp extravaganza of bright colour, verbal wit and sexual intrigue – or, as the directors describe it, “the commerce of love”. Will Dorothea Brook (Jennifer Ward-Lealand), successful draper, reject the sordid advances of the scheming William (Michael Hurst), succumb to the love of Lawrence (Kevin Smith) or recognize her true love and passion for her companion, Anne (Lisa Chappell)?

According to Main and Wells, “Each of the characters has a hidden agenda and the film is about the essential remedy everyone seeks in life: how to get what you want without destroying what you set out to get.”

As if mirroring the end of The Piano, where Ada (Holly Hunter) chooses the person who has degraded her through sexual manipulation, here Dorothea chooses Anne, who, acting out of lesbian jealousy, had pushed Dorothea into a ghastly marriage, which includes sexual revulsion and near bankruptcy. Happy romantic resolutions to New Zealand films certainly can be very unnerving.

Much has been made of the film’s use of sets and the striking sense of design. Main:

The world we set out to create in Desperate Remedies was deliberately without historical references, apart from references to other melodramas or costume dramas. When we were working with the actors we looked repeatedly at William Wyler’s The Heiress, Visconti’s Senso, Sirk’s Imitation of Life and Welles’ The Magnificent Ambersons. We were after the heightened reality of melodrama. And the great melodramas offer a kind of release – so much larger than life, so heroic in their own way. You start off laughing and then end up crying, deeply moved, almost ashamed in a way to be so seduced by something your logic resists. This is what makes melodrama so enjoyable. It works on a subconscious level, both as cartoon and song.

Wells adds:

We wanted to get away from the lie of colonial filmmaking, where everything is pretty, sun-baked and painted white. We were evoking a colony as a mind-set, as a psychological state. The town of Hope is more like Vichy France than colonial New Zealand – a world of informers, spies, of shortages and shameless luxury. People sell themselves and never let themselves be who they really are.

Garth Maxwell’s premier feature, Jack Be Nimble, released in November 1993, is equally a cinematic oddity, an extremely black look at the worst of all possible families. Inspiration came from a comment made to Maxwell many years before:

I was told of an incident when a young child was whipped with barbed-wire. The concept was so horrifying that the image stayed with me. I kept asking myself: how would something that brutal affect a child growing up and what would be the consequences?

Jack (Alexis Arquette) and Dora (Sarah Smuts-Kennedy), orphaned after their mother’s suicide, are separated by Welfare. Jack is brought up in the vilest of families on a remote farm. His only desire is to re-unite himself with Dora, and seek revenge on all those who have harmed him. Maxwell:

Jack and Dora are like two halves of one personality. Together they create a healthy mind, but individually they cannot survive.

In film, horror is a brilliant popular vehicle for testing the limits of contemporary morality. Characters such as Dr Hannibal Lecter

in *The Silence of the Lambs* [Jonathan Demme, 1992] inhabit a psychological world similar to Jack. We struggle to understand the logic which they rely on to justify themselves. It is our sympathy for the circumstances surrounding Jack which makes this film so compelling.

Some have found the film confusing in its style changes, but that seems more a mark of the unease the film generates in audiences by deliberately alternating moments of horror and comedy, splatter and true pathos. It is a striking debut, and the four sisters from hell are likely to remain as some of the most memorable characters in all New Zealand cinema.

UPCOMING

Already, 1994 is looking an important year for New Zealand film with several interesting and eagerly-awaited films.

Lee Tamahori’s *Once Were Warriors*, adapted from Alan Duff’s best-selling novel by playwright Riwia Brown, concerns the struggle and eventual triumph of Beth (Rena Owen) over her marriage to the violent Jake Heke (Temuera Morrison). Producer Robin Scholes says:

> It’s first and foremost a powerful woman’s story. Beth, in the beginning of the film, is caught in a relationship which began with love but has turned violent. Beth eventually realizes that the violence is destroying her and, more importantly, her children’s futures.

*Once Were Warriors* is the story of Beth’s triumphs over the greatest odds. It is full of warmth, humour and hope, which is all the more poignant because it emerges from a world filled with violence and drink. That world is hugely energetic and a passionate part of our culture.40

Being a tough look at urban and marital violence, and set in the Maori community, it is inevitably going to be a highly controversial film. (See fuller discussion in “Maori Cinema”, pp. 39—41.)

Peter Jackson’s *Heavenly Creatures* is based on the famous Parker-Hulme case, where two schoolgirls murdered one of their mothers in Christchurch in 1954. Scripted by Peter Jackson and Frances Walsh (who co-scripted *Braindead* and *Meet the Feebles*), the film is produced by the late Jim Booth. (A full discussion on the film appears in the interview with Peter Jackson, pp. 20—24, 29—30.)

Jane Campion’s sister, Anna, is making her first feature in the UK, *Bloody Weekend*, a co-production with New Zealand. The producers are Bridget Ikin and John Maynard.

Finally, there is John Reid’s provisionally-titled *The Last Tattoo*, a romantic thriller set in 1943, when 100,000 Marines were shipped to New Zealand to defend against Japanese invasion and prepare for the Pacific campaign. Marine Captain Mike Starwood (Tony Goldwyn) is assigned to investigate the murder of Sergeant O’Rourke. The dead marine’s girlfriend, and a vital witness, has vanished. Starwood must find her, and he invokes the help of health nurse Kelly Towne (Kerry Fox). John Reid:

I’ve been interested in that particular period for some time. [...] The sailors were made to feel very welcome and a telephone number was advertised in the paper, so you could call up and offer the sailors local hospitality. [...] I knew there was a story there and over quite a long period of time I gathered bits and pieces of information.

At first, I couldn’t find a way of treating it, but then [...] I discovered that during the war a nurse was employed by the Health Department specifically to track down and treat local women who may have caught a venereal disease from the marines. The marines being treated would give the nurse a bit of paper saying “Her name was Mary, she wore a green dress” and that sort of thing. It was then her job to go and find these women and make sure they were okay.

So, I started the storyline from there.41

*The Last Tattoo* was filmed on location in and around Wellington and Dunedin, and at the Avalon/NFU Studios. It is Reid’s fourth feature, coming after *Middle Age Spread* (1979), *Carry Me Back* (1982) and *Leave All Fair* (1985). A pioneer of the revival in New Zealand cinema, Reid is, in the 1990s, finding himself working alongside the newer talents of Jackson, Tahamori and others.

The New Zealand film industry has achieved far more than anyone could have expected. If it can find and maintain a balance between experience and youth (something Australia has not), then its best days are still ahead.

ANNAM CAMPION’S BLOODY WEEKEND: CHARLOTTE (BIDDY HODSON), NEIL (OLIVER MIBURNE), ZITA (THANDIE NEWTON), ROSE (CATHARINE MCCORMICK), AND LIONEL (MATTHEW EGGLETON).
**CHART 1**

FEATURE FILMS MADE IN NEW ZEALAND SINCE 1940

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<th>Year</th>
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<td>1940</td>
<td>Peter Jackson: Director</td>
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<td>1941</td>
<td>The End of the Beginning</td>
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<td>1942</td>
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<td>1943</td>
<td>The Navigator: A Medieval Odyssey</td>
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<td>The Man Who Never Was</td>
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<td>1954</td>
<td>The Country Girl</td>
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<td>1955</td>
<td>John Laing: Director, an interview by Scott Murray, New Zeal</td>
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<td>1956</td>
<td>The Secret Life of Walter Mitty</td>
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<td>The Best Years of Our Lives</td>
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<td>1959</td>
<td>The Light's Last Gleam</td>
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<td>1960</td>
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**NOTES**

1 For those interested in a short history of New Zealand cinema up to the 1970s revival, consult Clive Sorwry, "Filmmaking in New Zealand: A Brief Historical Survey", in the New Zealand Supplement, pp. 6-8, in Cinema Papers, No. 27, May-June 1980. For information on Rudall Hayward, who made seven features from 1922 to 1972, see Sorwry; on John O'Shea, see "John O'Shea", an interview by Mike Nicolaidi, Cinema Papers, No. 28, August-September 1980, pp. 238-61.

2 "Goodbye Pork Pie" is Geoff Murphy: Director, an interview by Peter Beilby, in the New Zealand Supplement, op. cit., p. 17.


4 A character played and written by John Clarke, a humorist, actor and scriptwriter now resident in Australia.


7 "Goodbye Pork Pie: Geoff Murphy: Director", op. cit., p. 17.

8 Taken from an uncredited interview with Donaldson in a Sleeping Dogs press kit.

9 "Murphy, The End of the Beginning", op. cit., p. 134.

10 "Bill Sheehan, An interview by Peter Beilby and Robert Le Tet, New Zealand Supplement, op. cit., p. 22.

11 "Don Blackeney: Executive Director", an interview by Peter Beilby and Robert Le Tet, New Zealand Supplement, op. cit., p. 25.


14 Ibid, p. 38.

15 "Bill Sheehan: Chairman", op. cit., p. 23.


19 Ibid, p. 18.


21 All quotes from Lindsay Shelton, unless otherwise noted, are from an interview conducted with Shelton by the author in Wellington, November 1993.

22 Quoted in Nick Roddick, op. cit, p. 25.


24 Quoted in Nick Roddick, op. cit, p. 28.

25 Quote taken from press material.

26 Ibid, p. 28.

27 All quotes from Mladen Ivancic are from an interview conducted by the author in Wellington, November 1993.

28 All future quotes from Bill Sheehan, unless otherwise noted, are from an interview conducted by the author in Wellington, November 1993.

29 All future quotes from John Barnett, unless otherwise noted, are from an interview conducted by the author in Wellington, November 1993.

30 Quote taken from a press book for Bad Taste.

31 The arrival of two Jane Campion films now means Murphy has four in the top 12.


33 All quotes from Judith McCann are from an interview conducted with McCann by author in Wellington, November 1993.


35 Quote taken from a press book for the film.

36 See interview with director Megan Simpson in Cinema Papers, No. 92, April 1993, pp 20-4

37 All quotes from Main and Wells from press book for the film.

38 Maxwell quotes taken from press book for the film.

39 Quote from press material.

40 Quote taken from press material.

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Gaylene Preston and Robin Laing congratulate
Genenvieve Picot
on her remarkable portrayal
of Sonja Davies in
BREAD AND ROSES

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Apart from remaining “a committed documentary filmmaker” throughout her multi-faceted career, Gaylene Preston has also directed the quirky features Mr Wrong (1985) and Ruby and Rata (1990), and the acclaimed mini-series Bread and Roses (1993), about Sonja Davies, the political activist, feminist and politician. Preston is currently developing several projects which will continue her vibrant interest in and exploration of issues of particular importance to women, but which equally affect men. What did you do in the War, Mummy? will be a feature documentary about women’s experiences in World War II, told by the people who were there. Arohata is a planned one-hour documentary on a women’s prison (for Ninox Films), while Ophelia is an entirely new slant on Hamlet, written by Jean Betts and William Shakespeare (for Preston*Laing).

Preston: I started working in film by accident, when I was doing a drama therapy project in a psychiatric hospital near Cambridge in the early 1970s. The project was for severely institutionalized people, who thought that they were rehearsing for a play. It became fairly obvious that they needed an end product that didn’t involve them repeating themselves all the time, so a friend of mine said, “Oh, I could shoot a film.” She had an 8mm camera.

I then came home one day from the hospital to find a little pile of film cans on the table with an 8mm editing machine and a note that said “Have eloped. Gone to Devon with Tony, love Suzanne.” I didn’t know the first thing about editing.

So, how did you fare by yourself?

I was really delighted and loved every minute of it.

Are you, in fact, glad that you started in film by being hands-on, rather than by going through a film school or taking an academic approach?

Yes, though I often feel a bit uneducated. I feel I’ve had a good education, but it lacks the classical edge, if you like.

Like most people who feel a lack of education one way or another, I would love to take a sabbatical and really immerse myself in the classics of both literature and film. I’m really in the mood to do that now, and I’m glad I didn’t try to do that any earlier. You do have to find your own way.

What did you do next in film?

I made several 8mm films, continuing to use film as a part of drama therapy. It was mainly with the deaf and with the disabled, and at Brixton College of Further Education, with Western Indian kids. I had a ball.

Then, in 1977, I came back to New Zealand and got a job – again by accident I feel – with John O’Shea at Pacific Films. I became the art director there, not knowing the first thing about it.

Pacific Films in those days was a wonderful anachronism. There it was on the edge of the world and like Walt Disney’s garage in about 1938. It was a little creative group of full-time practitioners making quite a wide range of products, from commercials to documentaries for television. I felt very fortunate to be a part of it.

At that time, the new freelance industry was blossoming and it was obvious Pacific’s way of working would become impossible to sustain. And I did become redundant about six months later.

I continued to work as an art director, while directing my own independent projects. I was a freelance cartoonist and photographer, so I sort of managed to make ends meet while I was making my films.

I started making documentaries, one at a time, very slowly. After a few years of that, I went to the markets at Cannes and MIP-TV to find out why my films were getting critical acclaim but not
selling particularly well, with the exception of *All The Way Up There*, which was about a spastic man, Bruce Bergess, climbing Mount Ruapehu. I was completely swamped by Cannes and MIP-TV. I felt really silly, like a little kid with a tiny bag of lollies in a supermarket where everything is being sold in bulk. That was a salutary experience.

I decided then that I didn’t want to be an ‘ex’ independent filmmaker, so I looked for the best project I could find. And that was *Mr Wrong*, a low-budget feature.

At that time, I met Robin Laing and she produced *Mr Wrong* with me in 1984. Since then, we have just sort of paddled a fairly odd canoe, making the films that we want to make, the way that we want to make them. And so far, so good. Whether you like the work or not, I stand by every frame of it. It’s definitely mine.

There was quite a gap between *Mr Wrong* and your next feature, *Ruby and Rata*.

One of the reasons was that I had a child in 1987. But in that period, I did make other films and commercials, including a documentary about the writer Kerrie Hume which Thames Television commissioned me to make.

Actually, the funding for *Ruby and Rata* was held up. We had the money committed a year before we were able to make it, which was absolutely fantastic. We were able to do a lot of work in the locations that we were going to use and I was able to storyboard 70 per cent of the film, for example. So, *Ruby and Rata* was made under very good circumstances.

The inevitable question is how easily did you and Robin Laing, as women, enter the film industry as director and producer? Were there any difficulties particular to your being women?

That was a problem when we first started working together. Even though Robin was new to producing, I thought she had all the right qualifications, and was exactly the right sort of person for me to work with.

I had worked as a producer-director up till then, so there was a certain amount of the ropes that I knew. It also wasn’t the advanced bureaucratic task that it is now to make a low-budget local feature.

Robin had done quite a lot of peripheral work on crews and she, most importantly, was married to a film director [John Laing] and had supported him through several features. I thought she really knew quite a lot about what was involved. However, she didn’t have a track record as a producer.

I was a first-time feature director and the concern expressed by [the late] John Booth at the time was that the Commission felt that Robin wasn’t strong enough for me. He said something like, “We’re afraid that she won’t be strong enough to pull pages out of the script.” And I said, “It’s not a telephone directory, John. You don’t need muscles. When it comes for pages to come out of the script, Robin and I will sit down and talk about it—together.” And that’s exactly what we did.

I must say that when we walked into rooms, we’d sit down in front of desks and the person behind the desk would still be looking at the door. It gradually dawned on us that they were waiting for the man to come in. And we had to say, “Well, there isn’t one. You’ll have to talk to us.” It’s hard to imagine that it was like that then, because things have changed so much.

There are no problems today?

The problems today are different, as they should be. I don’t think people raise their eyebrows at female producer-director teams; I mean, that would be really silly. There are so many successful teams out there. New Zealand and Australia have a deservedly good reputation in this area.

However, there are virtually no women directing commercials and very few seem to become experienced film technicians in the traditional male areas: cinematography, gaffering, gripping and sound recording. For the few who do make it, there are many who try and fail. They seem to drop out after about 18 months or gravitate towards more female areas such as tracklaying, and so on.

The only time I have worked with an almost completely female crew was in Sydney when I was shooting a music clip. I just rang a crew service place and booked a crew, which turned out to be mainly women. That wouldn’t happen here.
Was reading Sonja Davies’ autobiography the starting-point for making the mini-series?

Well, I actually knew Sonja because I’d drawn cartoons for union rags. So when I read the book, I was particularly interested. I also continue to be very interested in that period, particularly around World War II.

At that time, Robin and I had just finished Mr Wrong and we were thinking that we might do a fiction based around some stories of the time. And then I read Sonja’s book and I thought, “Well, why think them up?” A lot of the qualities of the stories we were wanting to tell were reflected in this book.

We then thought more than three times before we proceeded because Sonja’s a bit of a national icon in New Zealand. She calls a spade a spade and doesn’t hide what she thinks publicly, so it’s quite a daunting task to take on someone like her. But we sort of closed our eyes and jumped, and, with the help of Genevieve Picot, we managed to pull it off.

I think Genevieve Picot is just so good, and she totally dominates the film. I can’t imagine having done it without her.

She just claimed that rôle, which was a very demanding thing for her to take on. Apart from playing an icon, she was working with a huge range of New Zealand actors who could have chosen to be a bit unhappy about the rôle being given to an Australian. After all, it’s one of the best female rôles to be written lately. And I have to say that, due to Genevieve’s generosity and that of the New Zealand actors, we got through with flying colours.

Did Davies have any involvement?

Yes. She and Graeme Tetley, when he was writing the scripts, had an arrangement where he’d ring her once a week to check on things.

When I was doing the last couple of drafts, I would take them out and read them to Sonja – the “Are you sitting comfortably? Then I’ll begin” way. Sonja was by that time a very busy MP and it was the only way I could be sure that she’d really read them.

It was quite good doing that because I could look at her body language. I’d know if we’d got near the truth of the matter by her reactions. She’d either laugh and add a pithy comment that I could then put in, or she’d cry, in which case I knew that it must be working about right. If she started sort of twitching, I knew there was something there that I had to find out more about.

The World War II period seems to be of great interest to New Zealand filmmakers. Along with your film, there is John Laing’s Absence Without Leave and John Reid’s The Last Tattoo. Why do you think that is so?

I can only speak for myself, but I think it’s a mixture of 40-year old people going back to their roots. I was born in 1947 and I grew up in the aftermath of the war, and the stories that I heard around my mother’s skirts were stories of the war. So, it’s a way of sort of making sense.

An unexpected pleasure of shooting Bread and Roses was feeling really familiar with the period. There were times when I felt like you could almost bathe in it. It was a very enriching thing to be able to explore that period in such detail.

You do show a great love for the detail, as in noting the birthing procedures of the day and the preference for bottle feeding.

That’s right. I always felt the way Sonja tells her story is to illuminate those social changes that have made such a difference, particularly for women. For example, the way that Sonja had to have her baby was the same for thousands of women at that time. And it certainly isn’t the way that institutions were approaching childbirth when I had my baby in 1987. That’s very interesting to me.

Is there a chance Bread and Roses will be screened theatrically in Australia?

Yes, and we’re absolutely delighted. Bread and Roses is three-and-a-half-hours long and was made for television. However, after successful screenings at the New Zealand Film Festival, we distributed into cinemas here, where it had a very successful release.

In Australia, Natalie Miller [Sharmill Films] has bitten the bullet, as we might say, and we’re delighted about that, because we think Natalie’s the right distributor for the film. If anyone can make a success of it, she can.
Peter Jackson is well-known around the world for his audacious first three films, *Bad Taste*, *Meet the Feebles* and *Braindead*. His next film, *Heavenly Creatures*, is anticipated by many to be a major departure for this acknowledged goremeister. *Heavenly Creatures*, scripted by Jackson and his oft co-scriptwriter Fran Walsh, is based on a famous 1954 New Zealand murder case. Two teenage girls, Pauline Parker and Juliet Hulme, who were friends, killed one of their mothers.
What appealed to you about this particular murder case?

It's a very interesting story and ultimately the stuff of which good films can be made. I had long been interested in the case and well before Fran and I began the script.

In the 1950s, Pauline Parker and Juliet Hume were branded as possibly the most evil people on earth. What they had done seemed without rational explanation, and people could only assume that there was something terribly wrong with their minds.

That is how the case has been regarded over the past 40 years. But once we started to research it, we got beneath the very sensational headlines of the day: “Lesbian Schoolgirl Killers” and so on. We had access to a lot of interviews and files that no one had seen for 40 years. As we began to uncover what was actually a very human story, we gradually came to understand what was going through their minds at the time.

Pauline and Juliet were both incredibly intelligent. When they became friends, they had the ambition of being writers and going to Hollywood. They started to write intricate stories that were usually set around a mediæval fantasy kingdom called Borovnia. They wrote about 12 or 13 novels in handwriting in their exercise books. Some of those survived and we have used extracts to create sequences in which the girls go into this fantasy world of Borovnia.

Sometimes, too, the characters from Borovnia come into the real world. As the film progresses, and as the girls start to lose control on what is happening, things become very muddy between these two worlds.

The girls, in fact, invented their own form of “Dragons and Dungeons”?

Yes. They invented whole royal families with very intricate relationships between queens and kings and sons. They knew who married whom, and who divorced whom, and who killed whom.

Ultimately, the girls' aim was to turn all these stories into big Hollywood movies with James Mason, Mario Lanza and all their idols. The irony is that is what we have done, 40 years later. We have filmed Pauline and Juliet's fantasy for them, and they are both still alive, somewhere in the world. It's a very strange experience for us.

A lot of the people who were involved at the time are still alive, and I have had all sorts of anguish over whether we should have done it. Ultimately, there is no justification. I do feel bad about having done it, and in a sense I shouldn't have. The only justification, and it is not real justification, is that if I hadn't made the film other people would have. There were two or three other features lined up to go based on the same case.

Soon after Braindead was screened at Cannes, we started getting faxes from a guy in New York called Tim Meyers, who was Dustin Hoffman's assistant at Punch Productions, Hoffman's development company. Tim said they had heard a lot about Braindead and wanted to see it. At that stage we didn't have a print in U.S., so we said we would get back to them.

After a couple of inquiries, they eventually rang Lindsay Shelton [NZFC Marketing Director] and said they were trying to get a look at Braindead. They also asked whether the Film Commission would be prepared to invest in an American movie shot in New Zealand. Lindsay asked what it was about, and they said it was based on the true story of two girls who murdered one of their mothers. Dustin had already had a script developed in the U.S. by an American writer. They then told Lindsay they were thinking about asking me to direct it, which is why they wanted to see Braindead. It was then Lindsay told them, “Well, actually, Peter is doing his own film based on the same story.”

Two or three other New Zealand filmmakers also had scripts. One was a tele-movie based on a play that came out about a year or so ago in New Zealand. It was unsympathetic towards the girls and basically just dramatized the sensational headlines of 1950s without having any regard to their being a couple of human beings. The girls must have had a reason for doing what they did – they weren't just mad – but the play portrayed them as psychos.

So, it was a story that was going to be made. And we felt that
MELANIE LYNSBY AND DIRECTOR PETER JACKSON.

if it had to be done by somebody, we should do it properly ourselves. We knew we could do a good job of it, and that we had uncovered facts about the case which no one else had.

I do feel that we have treated the whole thing with a lot of humanity. I certainly don't feel bad about the way we are portraying it. But I do feel bad that there are people alive who don't want it made. For them, it's a very real tragedy. For the rest of the world, it's a story which is rather horrible. That is why, if we had been the only people developing the film, maybe we wouldn't have made it.

Have you kept the actual names?

Yes, because Pauline Parker and Juliet Hume changed their names in 1959. In a sense, they ceased to exist and for the past 30 odd years have had totally different identities.

We have been extremely careful never to do or say anything about where they might be now, and we won't. We will do anything to protect their whereabouts. The last thing I want to happen is for them to be found and exposed.

But isn't it possible the film will encourage others to find them?

There is that possibility; I have to be honest about that. But it would be very difficult and I hope it never happens. They both deserve to be left alone.

They probably deserve not to have a film made about them, too, but that's just one of those things.

Do you see Heavenly Creatures as a major departure for yourself?

It's a kind of departure and certainly everyone is going to see it as one. But I have no set plan for my career. To me it was simply that I was interested in making this film. It's something new, and that is good. But I have always seen my other films as being different from each other in certain ways. This is obviously a greater leap, however. It is much more of a mainstream film; there is no doubt about that.

It's interesting that people whom I have never met have all these assumptions about my career. People immediately assume that filmmakers do things because of a grand plan. People are no doubt saying, “Oh, Jackson wants to be taken as a serious filmmaker now. He's sick of being branded as splatter filmmaker and he wants to do arty mainstream films.” That's not true. I do intend to do other splatter films. I have intentions of doing all sorts of films.

I have no interest in a ‘career’ as such. If I were really career-oriented, I'd be in Hollywood now, making Hollywood films and earning lots of money. I choose to stay in New Zealand earning a fraction of what I could make in Los Angeles because I want to do whatever I feel like doing.

One hears a lot of analysis of Jane Campion’s career from hindsight, as if it were perfectly structured and engineered from day one. Maybe the speculation reflects a hope that careers can be that controllable.

It depends on what the person wants to do. It all comes down to individuals. I made heavenly Creatures not to lead onto anything I just wanted to make that movie. All I want, by the end of my life, is to have made a bunch of films of which I am proud and which I had wanted to do. I don't regard myself as a director for hire. I never have and I don’t think I ever will.

I have, at odd times, flirted with the idea of going to make a film in America, but the quality of material hasn’t been up to it, and I always feel, “Hell, do I really want to lose control of the film at the vital stage? Do I want other people to have final cut? Do I want to feel like I am an employee for a studio which says, ‘We are just going to pay you to make this and then you must go away while we will finish it as we see fit? You’re just the director; you are no one else.’”
I don’t want to be a director as such; I want to be a filmmaker. The freedom that I have in New Zealand is worth millions of dollars to me. It is worth more than what I could earn in Hollywood.

A common discussion in New Zealand concerns the talent drain to America and Australia. Why do you think so many people leave? Is it as simple as money?

I don’t think it’s fair to say that everyone who has left wants to end up with more money. It’s just a question of opportunities and what they want to do with their careers. You can easily get to the stage in New Zealand where you feel as though your career cannot advance any more. That hasn’t actually happened to me, but it possibly has to other people.

Ultimately, it’s an individual choice. Everybody who has left New Zealand has probably done so for totally different reasons, known only to themselves.

Of the many Australians who have worked overseas, most have retained their individuality as filmmakers: George Miller, Peter Weir, Fred Schepisi and Simon Wincer, and so on. This doesn’t seem as much the case with New Zealand directors. Obviously Jane Campion is an exception, but Roger Donaldson’s and Geoff Murphy’s American work is rather impersonal.

Again I think it’s up to the individual. Phillip Noyce has become a fairly mainstream director – and he is actually quite good at it, too!

One problem the New Zealand film industry will always face, and I’m sure it is similar in Australia, is that when filmmakers have done their second or third features – and it’s not till you get to your second or third film that I believe you actually start to get the confidence you need and begin to learn from your mistakes – they leave to go overseas. This means the film industry is perpetually new; its infancy is never ending. There never seems to be an established base of experienced directors who stay in the country, making better and better movies, which is what should happen.

That highlights the unrealistic and ever-present expectation one finds in New Zealand and Australia for better box-office results. If a country is dependent on new people all the time, how can one expect instant results? After all, while The Piano is a hit, Sweetie hasn’t recouped its budget.

You’re absolutely right. People do expect too much from first-time filmmakers.

There is a lot of very exciting young directors in New Zealand – particularly of short films. The New Zealand film industry will ultimately be great when all these young directors get to make three, four or five movies in New Zealand. But will it ever happen? The pattern that is so entrenched is that people will cut their teeth here by making their first movie, with all its mistakes, then making a second film, which will be kind of good and a moderate success, and then, wham, leaving for overseas to make art films in America. We are then back to square one. That’s the pattern and I don’t know what we can do about it.

Do you think you can afford to remain based in New Zealand?

I don’t see why not. I just want to get to a stage where people in the States, or wherever, genuinely want me to make movies for them. I want to be in the position where I can say, “Okay, I will do a bigger budget film, but I want to shoot it in New Zealand and I want to retain control.”

What I imagine might happen is that I carry on as I’m now, but have access to money in excess of what the Film Commission could ever supply. Heavenly Creatures was more than half-financed by German money [the Film Commission put up the rest]. We are now talking to that same German company about other films in the future.

It is a distinct advantage if the Film Commission can help films get made by only having to put up half or less of the budget. That will allow many more films to be made. That is why what is happening with me at the moment is so encouraging.

Having seen some ten New Zealand films in as many days, the first thing that strikes one is their absolute distinctiveness from Australian films. Clearly New Zealanders are very different from Australians, and in some positive ways.

[Laughs.] Yes, okay. Go on.

The most striking thing about New Zealand films is the number of eccentric, if not insane, characters. One thinks of your own work, The End of the Golden Weather, Jack Be Nimble, Desperate Remedies, The Piano, et al. Why is there this streak of insanity? Is it out there in real life as well?

I have absolutely no idea. I know what you mean, but I have no idea.
PAULINE.

HEAVENLY CREATURES.

We are not really good at making very down-to-earth, realistic drama films. What we call dramas are usually off-beat, eccentric and slightly larger-than-life. Since I like making films that are slightly larger-than-life, I tend to use larger-than-life characters.

Is there a strain of social realism out there?

Well, people have attempted it, but not very successfully. It’s just something we are not very good at. I don’t know why.

I personally think the greatest weakness in New Zealand films is the scripting. There are good directors, but whether or not we are ever going to get proficient at writing scripts I don’t know. A lot of New Zealand filmmakers, including scriptwriters, don’t seem very well versed in the basics of the craft of writing a story structure. That, more than anything, drags New Zealand films down and makes them non-competitive.

We have a terrible insecurity about our culture. We are terribly protective of it and feel we shouldn’t be making American movies. That somehow gets perverted into a sense we shouldn’t be using American story structure techniques, because they would threaten our cultural identity. That is a load of rubbish.

My biggest break in learning about writing came five years ago when the Film Commission brought out an American, Robert McKee, for a three-day seminar. Robert is a story structure expert and he lectures on this around the world. I’ve never looked back since in terms of writing. I’m learning all the time, and I’m not saying I know what I’m doing yet, but I certainly have a lot more understanding of what I’m supposed to do. Attending his conference was a major change for me and I personally think he should be brought out every year. There are a whole lot of people who have entered the film industry who weren’t around back then. They haven’t had that opportunity I had.

People just think that you sit down and write a feature; that if you get down a hundred pages and muddle through the story, then it’s going to make a good movie. But it won’t. It has to be a very, very carefully-structured document. People in New Zealand just don’t understand that.

With some exceptions, the film industry in New Zealand is run by individuals. Often they’re directors and sometimes they write the scripts themselves, or they have a friend who is a scriptwriter write them. It’s all just individuals with the idea that they want to write a film. Very rarely is there a writer who knows how to write screenplays, who actually writes one and sends it off to a producer, who then gets a director and says, “Read this.”

I don’t think our feature film industry is an industry at all. Four features a year is a cottage industry. It’s run by people who are doing the very best they can, but without any of the formal structure that a real industry has.

Ultimately, though, that could be the strength of the New Zealand cinema. We can’t compete with what the Americans are doing and perhaps our strength lies in the fact that ours are individual movies made by people who really badly want to make films. But somewhere along the line people should learn a little bit more about the structure of storytelling.

Could that lack of the industry structure be one reason why directors are so easily tempted away? Alison Maclean made one feature, Crush, and then it was off to America.

Yes, there is a certain excitement and pace in Los Angeles, where films are being made all the time. If you have success, you can be starting another film the minute you finish the previous one. If all you want to do is just direct movies, then L.A. is a great place to be. You will work with big stars, with big publicity machines, and it will be all terribly exciting.

In New Zealand, there is none of that. Here you make a film and there is a tremendous amount of doubt whether you are ever going to make another one. It is entirely possible in New Zealand that once you finish a film it could be two or more years before you do another one; that’s just how long the process can take.

What I’m trying to do is overlap things. I’m trying to prepare my next film while I’m still cutting this. I don’t want to be in a situation where it takes me so long to get a film off the ground that I’m hanging around doing nothing.

New Zealand hasn’t the adrenalin and excitement that L.A. has. Maybe that is the answer to your earlier question. Maybe what does appeal to people about America is the fact that you can get films made without any problem.

SPECIAL EFFECTS

Peter Jackson is vitally interested in being at the forefront of technology. While not being, as he says, especially computer-literate, he has sought out and bought (with others) the latest hardware and software so that he can use the most up-to-date computer-generated special effects.

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The film is transferred to video at a staggeringly slow three minutes per frame (that’s 12 hours for a ten-second shot!) on an Oxberry Cinescan 6300. The frame is uniformly lit by a mass of fibre optics.

The video image is sent to a Silicon Graphics computer running Renderman, Soft Image and Matador software. Here, George Port, who works with Jackson, does what manipulation is required — be it matting in a different fragment of image, correcting a flaw (a television aerial in a period image), or morphing from a rock to a statue.

Once finished, the video image is projected onto a cathode-ray tube and filmed (by a MGI Solitaire with an Oxberry movie back) at the much faster rate of three seconds a frame. Having gone so precisely from film and back again, it has little to no video ‘look’, except in some areas of retouching. That in itself is not necessarily a defect for the slight artificiality can be used to noticeable effect (as in the very obviously painted lighthouse in *The Age of Innocence*) or inconspicuously, as when the fantastic edge blends imperceptibly with the fantasy of the film itself (as appears the case in *Heavenly Creatures*).

Jackson: While there is some morphing and a whole range of special effects in *Heavenly Creatures*, it’s not a special-effects movie. Certainly the other films I’ve made have been effects films and everybody talks about the effects in them. But I imagine most reviews of *Heavenly Creatures* won’t even mention the effects. They are not that ostentatious or prominent. Most people won’t even realize they are effects.

About a year ago, I was in Los Angeles visiting some friends and I got to look at some computer things that were happening there. *Jurassic Park* (Stephen Spielberg, 1993) was being made at the time. I didn’t see any of that, but I spoke to people who had seen some shots from it and were going on about it. I began to realize that for someone like myself, who obviously enjoys special-effects movies, has to at some point get into all this stuff. I’m the least computer-oriented person in the world. I can manage to turn on my laptop and press the Save button, but I can’t really go beyond that. I’m utterly hopeless. But I felt I had to investigate this further. We used *Heavenly Creatures* as an opportunity to actually use some digital effects. We got equipment and set up a small operation in the next room.

One of the things we have done in *Heavenly Creatures* is have a character who is black and white, while the rest of the people and the backgrounds are in colour. That is a digital effect; we painted him black and white, frame by frame.

There are a lot of situations where we fiddled with locations as well. We were shooting in a house that was part of the real story in the 1950s, but in the meantime its large open balcony had been glassed in. There was no way the owner was going to let us rip the balcony out, so we shot a separate balcony that we built in a studio and matted the two together on the computer.

People won’t realize these and others are effects shots. They are seamless.

Australia and New Zealand make films at the low end of the market because local filmmakers can’t afford to make the more advanced, expensive films. But the technology you are talking about will change that. Expensive opticals will no longer hold people back.

Absolutely. It is much easier to do effects with computers. Everybody gets frightened and says, " *Jurassic Park* cost $60m. How could we ever do that?" But films like *Jurassic Park* are going to bring the costs right down because of all that research and development, which is where they spent their money. In the next few years, all the gear and the software is going to drop right down in price and be available to everybody.

As you say, this stuff is much simpler to use and much easier and cheaper than optical effects ever were. Anyway, I don’t think there is any lab in Australasia that can do decent blue-screen matting. You have to go to L.A. or London. But we can do perfect blue screens in the room next door at a press of a button. We have all that at our fingertips now.

I don’t see the new technology as meaning everybody is going to make big effects movies. It just means filmmaking has become a lot easier.

In that it removes some of the restrictions?

Yes. It removes all the restrictions. There is nothing that you can’t do. I really believe that.

The simplest way that it can be used is if you are shooting a period movie in the street and there is a bunch of TV aerials in shot. You can just shoot and then digitally remove the TV aerials later. You can remove a skyscraper or a car — you can even remove actors if you want to. It’s a total 100% manipulation of a frame of film. It’s a tool and people will be able to use it for drama films as much as you could use it for effects films.

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*NEW ZEALAND SUPPLEMENT - 99*
This was clearly demonstrated at a series of workshops Jackson gave during the Conference. With ten or so people crammed into the computer room at WingNut, Jackson and George Port went through several shots from Heavenly Creatures. First up was the balcony. Jackson showed a still frame of the balcony as shot in the studio, with an actress in frame. This was then mashed over an external shot of the real house with the glassed-in balcony. The same lens was used at exactly the same distance.

Interestingly, when the studio balcony was mashed in, it was noted that there was no shadow thrown by the eaves (the shadow having fallen on that part of the old balcony which was mashed out; no one had thought to recreate it in the studio). No problem: Port simply painted in the shadow to make it look realistic.

The image manipulation was simple, but it solved a very real problem: the impossibility of structurally changing a pre-determined location to what one needed. It was a real pity, then, that on the bus back to the IPDG Conference one New Zealand filmmaker complained about computer technology, adding, "There will always be a need for real films with real people." Of course, and computer technology will simply make them easier, and often cheaper, to make. This is not an area to fear (save for the ethics of replacing Vivien Leigh with Julia Roberts in Gone with the Wind — all one needs is one frame of Roberts' face — but that is a separate issue.)

After showing some more complex mattes (a church interior where a small number of extras were placed in various positions, filmed, and the separate shots invisibly melded into one), Jackson moved on to some more 'traditional' effects. One involved a character from the fantasy world of Borovnia. A "plasticine man", as he was referred to, was caught by the falling gate to the castle. This was a model shot done frame by frame. To keep the head of the plasticine man above the ground, a metal rod was used. Now, in the computer, that rod was being removed. By dragging the mouse's pointer over small sections of the rod at a time, the computer melded a fraction of image from the left of the rod with some from the right, then blurred where they join.

Jackson then showed a model castle matted realistically into a New Zealand field or, even more striking, a rose garden (with actors) from the central business district of Christchurch relocated to a remote and grassy hill overlooking the sea.

The final sample was the morphing (that invisible progression) of fun made him a pleasure to work with and a delightful friend.

Jim Booth's work in the film industry was the culmination of a long career in the arts field. In 1977, he was one of the people instrumental in setting up the Film Commission, and was its first interim Director.

Booth then took up the position of Deputy Director of the Arts Council, where he was responsible for the development of community Arts programmes. In 1983, he was appointed Executive Director of the NZFC, a position he held till 1988. During this time, some 27 feature films were produced in New Zealand and sweeping changes were made to both the production and financial environment in which the film industry operated. The Short Film Fund was established, including the programme of Bonzai epics. Training schemes, the POPS development programme, script and project development were introduced.

In 1987, Booth by-passed the cautious NZFC bureaucracy and ensured that a young filmmaker, Peter Jackson, was given financial support to complete his first film, Bad Taste. Booth's risk paid off when the film went to Cannes, created a stir, and made a profit within three days of Cannes sales. The following year Booth left the NZFC and began the partnership with Peter Jackson that created the controversial cult films Meet the Feebles and Braindead. Their latest collaboration is Heavenly Creatures, due to be released in New Zealand in July. It is already a commercial success, having been acquired for international distribution by the major U.S. company, Miramax. "Jim and I have created an internationally well-known filmmaking team, which will continue to benefit the New Zealand film industry for many years to come", comments Jackson.

"Jim's commitment to New Zealand cinema was total", said Peter Jackson. "He was first and foremost a friend, and was wonderful to work with. The movies we made helped a lot of people wake up to the fact that New Zealand is producing original, uncompromising and high-quality professional entertainment."

Booth was highly regarded by his peers and colleagues, and tributes to his work and character have poured into his office in Wellington, where post-production on Heavenly Creatures continues. "Jim was a remarkable man, full of quick, lively ideas, always alert to what might be possible", said David Gasgoine, former Chairman of the NZFC. "He was an encouragement, carrying people forward on a wave of enthusiasm and good humour." Executive Director of NZ On Air, Ruth Harley, said, "His energy, integrity, vision and subversive sense of fun made him a pleasure to work with and a delightful friend."

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THERE IS A WIDESPREAD VIEW IN THE NEW ZEALAND FILM INDUSTRY THAT THE PUBLIC NO LONGER HAS THE SAME INTEREST IN ITS INDIGENOUS CINEMA. IN MOST CASES, THE RESPONSIBILITY IS LAID AT THE FILMMAKERS' FEET. AS SOUTH PACIFIC PICTURES' JOHN BARNETT SAYS, "WITH SOME EXCEPTIONS, WE HAVENT MADE MANY FILMS THAT PEOPLE HAVE WANTED TO SEE." 1

WELL, WHAT IS THE SITUATION? CERTAINLY THE FOLLOWING CHART OF "HIT" FILMS SUGGESTS A RETHINK. 2


Given the facts (11 hit years out of 16), it is quite clear there is a remarkable evenness about the spread of hits, with a slight peaking in 1985-88 and a reassuring steadiness in 1990-93. Certainly one cannot say the filmmakers have lost the sense of what makes a hit.

What is also clear, however, is that the box-office takings vary greatly. Taking the total box-office of only the hits in each year, one can see that the best years were 1981 ($1.6 million), '85 ($1.45m), '86 ($2.2m) and '93 ($1.7m). See Chart 2.

Clearly, the peaks and valleys are quite significant. But it still doesn't quite explain the view that filmmakers have lost their audience.

As it happens, this criticism has been widely and consistently stated for more than a decade. In 1980, for example, the then Chairman of the New Zealand Film Commission (NZFC), Bill Sheat, said:

One of the things we have to do [...] is to think in much more commercial terms. [...] New Zealand filmmakers should make films for people who come to the cinema with no prior knowledge or understanding of New Zealand. I don't think that is necessarily going to harm their integrity; it's just a question of making sure that you are getting your message across. 3

In 1993, when asked why he was outspoken about the standard of recent New Zealand cinema, Sheat replied:

The answer is demonstrated by their lack of success in the cinemas.

There have been exceptions – An Angel at My Table is one, but it didn’t start out as a theatrical movie. I can’t recall a recent success that equals those of Sleeping Dogs [Roger Donaldson, 1977] and Goodbye Pork Pie [Geoff Murphy, 1981].

The pictures we made in the early days of the NZFC had good, solid runs in the cinemas. We haven’t had anything like that for a long time. Somehow or other the filmmakers have missed the audience. We really ought to go back and find out what the audience really wants to see.

When asked whether there was a greater catering to audiences during the tax period than in the public-funding era, Sheat replied, “No, the majority of the films made during the tax period were pretty terrible.”

Taking a similar view is the new NZFC Chairman Phil Pryke, who feels a need to return to basics. A film’s audience must be considered from the very outset and made an integral part of every package and presentation from script treatment on. Thinking about marketing only when a film is finished, as can be the case, is far too late.

In his speech at the November 1993 Independent Producers and Directors Guild Conference in Wellington, Pryke said:

Another key area the Film Commission is considering is audience development – in particular, the value and interest that each film project has for the domestic market.
We want to bolt down quite securely ways that production companies, distributors and exhibitors can ensure an optimum level of audience and public awareness of their project – during the production process and when it comes to distribution.

I, for my part, would like to see clear and detailed marketing plans attached to each project, at the time of application.

The Commission already commits money within the production budget to publicity and materials, but I think we need to look a lot more closely at how that is tagged, and also at whether the funds we make available for theatrical release are adequate or appropriate in the highly competitive domestic distribution environment in which the industry now operates.

CULTURE VERSUS COMMERCE

Whenever the failure of New Zealand films at the box office is mentioned, there is usually widespread criticism of the quality of the films. But Pryke does not agree:

We have every reason to be proud of our product. And I’m sick and tired of the automatic put-down of New Zealand films by some domestic critics. We have no reason for any form of cultural cringe. [...] 

The NZFC’s director of marketing and sales, Lindsay Shelton, adds:

When, as always, the debate goes on about whether we should make commercial films or cultural films, and someone says you shouldn’t make cultural films because they don’t make money, you should only make commercial films because they make money, you can say, ‘Excuse me, the records show that the most profitable film that the Film Commission has ever invested in was in fact a cultural film: Jane Campion’s life of Janet Frame [An Angel at My Table, 1990].’ This is a very useful point to be able to make, although the debate will always go on.

How much, though, do New Zealand films contribute culturally at home and how much to a understanding of New Zealand around the world? Many would argue a great deal, but Bill Sheat differs:

If nobody goes to see them at the cinemas, then they are not contributing anything towards the culture of New Zealand. You have to make pictures that people want to see.

I know what the culture argument is, and I believe in it, but you can’t just give somebody a couple of million dollars to make a picture that nobody wants to see. That’s not a contribution of any significant value.

But benefits are very hard to measure. Jane Campion’s Sweetie (1989), for example, has still not broken even but it was clearly a necessary step in a development that led to An Angel at My Table and then the runaway worldwide success of The Piano (1993). How can anyone begrudge a loss on Sweetie when one has The Piano? Sheat:

Oh, sure. But Sweetie probably didn’t cost a couple of million dollars. There has to be those, but maybe only one to a customer.

Phil Pryke is certainly clear in his mind:

To be absolutely blunt, I want it to be very clear that the cultural obligations of the Commission rank equally in my mind with its commercial and organizational responsibilities. And when I say cultural, I mean embracing all aspects of the cultural diversity of New Zealand.

THE TALENT DRAIN

One commonly cited factor for the perceived downturn in interest in New Zealand films is the talent drain. The departure overseas of many top New Zealand directors and actors has long been one of the top industry issues.

It all began with Roger Donaldson, as Lindsay Shelton recounts: Roger left New Zealand quite suddenly. The New York reviews of Smash Palace [1982] were so fantastic that they were enough to draw him to the attention of the Hollywood hierarchy, who very quickly took him over to Los Angeles, which is something Roger always wanted to do. His career has been immensely successful.

Donaldson was followed overseas by Geoff Murphy, Sam Pillsbury, David Blyth, Vincent Ward, Jane Campion, Alison Maclean and others. Shelton:

Initially, I imagined that everybody in the film industry would be like Ingmar Bergman and would have extraordinary life-time careers making New Zealand movies in New Zealand. I wasn’t really cognisant of the realities of the international movie business. It now is something which I understand and accept, because each time someone moves on, there is more opportunity for a newcomer to emerge and be discovered and make films here.

John Barnett adds:

The talent drain has undoubtedly had an impact. The real problem
is that we've never had the infrastructure to keep them here. You are never going to be able to fight the lure of Hollywood, which has always been one of the most cosmopolitan towns in the world. It has always encouraged people from around the world, right from the 1920s. If you are successful, they want you to come and be successful on their patch. And why should a filmmaker remain barefoot and pregnant at home when somebody is offering them a lot of money to go somewhere else?

Or, as Bill Sheat says, “How are you going to keep them down on the farm once they have seen Hollywood? It's an insoluble problem.”

Phil Pryke argues:

At the end of the day, you can't bond people, and you shouldn't. If you can produce talent that goes on to bigger and better things offshore, they are still carrying the flag of New Zealand. You can still take an enormous amount of pride in what they produce. Jane Campion is the classic example. Sure she got most of her training in Australia, and she is resident there, but she came back to make a movie in New Zealand, and does it with French funding. That's great as far as I'm concerned.

Bill Sheat disagrees:

Sure, but having developed Jane Campion we let her get away. Once the success of An Angel at My Table was obvious, why didn't the Film Commission say to her, ‘Here is a cheque. You fill in the amount and make a picture here in New Zealand.’ How did she get away? Why did she get away? Those are real questions. Even if Jane didn't want to work with financial support from New Zealand, at least it should have been offered.

When it is suggested that would have taken the entire NZFC budget for the year, Sheat replies:

Yes, and we would have got it back again twice over. We could have made that many more pictures the next time. But when you are in a situation where the Film Commission believes it has some general obligation to support as many people as it can, taking that kind of gamble is not considered appropriate.

As the man who has to sell New Zealand films to the world, would Lindsay Shelton find it easier if the best directors worked at home? Shelton:

Yes, but even if they were continuing to make movies in New Zealand, as their reputations grow, it's likely that the finance for their movies will come from other sources. The best example is Jane Campion's finance on The Piano all coming from France.

So, when movies are being financed from elsewhere than New Zealand, that is the stage where the selling of the movies will move into the hands of the offshore people who finance them. At that point, we can rest happy in the knowledge the directors are clearly recognized internationally as New Zealand directors.

On that subject, it was curious to note that Vincent Ward's four-country co-production, Map of the Human Heart (1993), which has not an ounce of New Zealand content apart from a tiny bit of initial development from us, is clearly identified in its international release as being by a New Zealand director. I rest my case.

Barnett agrees:

The New Zealand industry is best known for Jane Campion, who has not done a New Zealand project apart from An Angel at My Table, Vincent Ward, Roger Donaldson and Geoff Murphy, none of whom live in New Zealand. Then there are the actors: Russell Crowe, who has never made a picture in New Zealand, and Sam Neill, who has only made two.

NEW TALENT

This talent drain means that New Zealand is in the constant situation of having to renew itself. While the industry would be unquestionably stronger if the experienced directors worked at home, there are new talents coming on. Judith McCann, executive director of the NZFC until January 1994, explains:

There were ten short films in Competition at Cannes in 1993 and two of them were from New Zealand. That's representative of the extraordinary talent that comes out of this small population – and there's more on the way. That is one of the reasons that New Zealand, for a very small country, has established such a high international profile for feature films.

It's been a process of maintaining the level of feature film production, encouraging both new directors and the more experienced directors like Peter Jackson, who wants to continue making films here.

There is a view worldwide, though, that the primary function of public funding is to help launch young filmmakers onto the international stage, after which they should be able to fend for themselves. Film bodies are not necessarily there as a lifetime support mechanism. When this was put to Lindsay Shelton, he replied:

If you look at the records of NZFC investment, you will certainly find that if someone has demonstrated some talent with their first feature, we will undoubtedly participate in their second and in some cases their third and their fourth.
FINANCING
NEW ZEALAND FILMS


It can only be done by sterilizing the tax situation. And the only way to do that is for tax implications of film investment to be clearly spelt out in the Income Tax Act. I'm not suggesting greater concessions – in today's climate, that's not on – but we should retain whatever concessions exist now for one-year write-offs. We must create a regime that says, 'Structure the finances of your film in accordance with this formula and you will be clean.' If the investors could be assured of that, maybe some of them can be enticed back into the industry.

Of course, the other way to achieve this is for the New Zealand film industry to have a runaway hit. Then everyone will want to invest in films. But I don't know which is the more difficult: creating this stupendous hit or amending the tax system?

With whom does Sheat believe the responsibility for changing things around rests: the filmmakers or the NZFC?

It's very difficult to say. The Commission has said that it wants to invest in films that are commercially successful, but that's a contradiction because it is very hard to make very commercial films for less than $15m or $20m. We are not providing that kind of funding for filmmaking in New Zealand.

So, how are we ever going to make commercial films? The answer to the problem is for the Film Commission to somehow get better at picking winners.

Here one again runs into the effects of the talent drain. It is hard to find winners with $1-2m features by first-time directors. Sheat:

I was reminded yesterday of something I said when I finished up at the Film Commission: 'At least I won't have to read all those dreadful scripts.' I guess that is the problem really: the quality of the material coming forward.

How do you improve it? Obviously, you have to be very tough on selecting projects, and, if there aren't any really worth doing, don't do them. Don't just have movies made for the sake of having a couple of films to take to Cannes next year.

This desire to spend to the limit of its budget is probably true of public film bodies the world over. Perhaps they fear government will take unspent monies back. As a result, they sometimes go into films about which they have significant doubts. Sheat:

Exactly. But they should be brave enough to say, 'We are only going to invest in one film this year', or even braver and say, 'We are not going to invest in any this year, because there is nothing that is really good enough.'

What are Judith McCann's views on a turnaround in private financing? McCann:

We made a couple of quite formal attempts four and a half years ago, when interest rates were still high, to combine private investment and Film Commission support, because the Film Commission is non-taxable.

I think it will take a few more seriously strong commercial successes before private investors see there is the potential to make money. There is always the potential for blue sky [enormous profits]. There was Strictly Ballroom [Baz Luhrmann, 1993] and The Piano in Australia. We have to get a couple of our own, and we will. An Angel at My Table is in profit, and there are others which are very close to breaking even. But it's taken a long time, the risks are high and it's a fortuitous financing market out there.

John Barnett takes a quite optimistic view:

At the moment, if you have a $1.5m picture, the Commission is putting all the money up. In reality, it may only get $300,000 back. So it costs $1.2m.

Maybe you are better off to go to the Commission and say, 'Just put $1.2m in and let the private investor take the first $300,000.' The Commission is no worse off, and we have started to encourage a private investor. He gets his money back and he starts to think about going bigger.

The other obvious thing about this scenario is that the Commission has been putting out $1.5m and waiting 18 months to get that $300,000 back. Now it only needs put up $1.2m. If it has $6m to invest a year, it can now make five films instead of four.

If these realities are presented to the Commission, you'll find that private investment will come in. There is a bit of interest at present. We are finding people who are interested in putting money back into film.

What might then become a sustainable level of production? Barnett:

Geoff Murphy used to say we can only make four or five films a year. I reckon we can make eight or nine. I don't think there is any limit to television, because we have Australian technicians to draw on.

South Pacific [a wholly-owned subsidiary of Television New Zealand] turned over $30m this year. I don't think it's impossible for us to turn over $50m next year.

LOCAL INVESTMENT (TELEVISION)

If one can't get interest from private investors, what about from television? The NZFC has continued to encourage film producers to seek investment from sources other than itself, because it has...
always thought it unhealthy to be a 100% investor. Lindsay Shelton believes producers have succeeded at this, though not from private investors in New Zealand, for two reasons:

Their first success was in persuading television that it was relevant for television money to be invested in feature films. Television had been holding out against that for many years. For most of the 1980s, television was reluctant to invest in features because it said features were features and television was television, and never the two should meet.

The first one I can think of was *The End of the Golden Weather* [Ian Mune, 1991], where the television investment came in fact through South Pacific Pictures.

South Pacific Pictures is really the inheritor of the old TVNZ drama department, in the days now long gone when drama was all done in-house. TVNZ closed down the drama department and set up its own free-standing, wholly-owned subsidiary. Shelton:

South Pacific has done an immense amount of television drama production, much of it in co-production with Canadian companies. The then head of production at South Pacific, Don Reynolds, who had been Larry Parr’s partner in Mirage, and who always had a predilection toward features, was able to persuade them that *The End of the Golden Weather* was a worthy feature to get involved in.

South Pacific put up quite a large chunk of the budget, with the NZFC as a big investor. The third amount of investment money came from New Zealand On Air, which used to be known as The Broadcasting Commission, but retitled itself so that it could improve its public image.

A television licence fee has been collected in New Zealand since the beginnings of television, and used to be handed over to the State monopoly. Once private television started, apparently no one could decide how the licence fee should be divided between private and the State, so the Broadcasting Commission was handed the entire licence fee and given the responsibility of spending it on local programming. It will understandably only invest in something which has a committed broadcaster, so the *End of the Golden Weather* was a worthy feature to get involved in.

South Pacific put up quite a large chunk of the budget, with the NZFC as a big investor. The third amount of investment money came from New Zealand On Air, which used to be known as The Broadcasting Commission, but retitled itself so that it could improve its public image.

So, it is possible to finance a movie with Film Commission money, with TV New Zealand money through South Pacific, and with NZ On Air money triggered if there is a committed broadcaster. There have now been a number of films structured like this.

As the multitude of logos on many recent New Zealand films attests.

### OFFSHORE INVESTMENT

If private investment, except from television, has dried up in New Zealand, then producers must look offshore for some financing. Lindsay Shelton:

Producers continued from the late 1980s to seek offshore investment. Many people failed to find it, and many people, including me, thought maybe they are never going to find it. But suddenly in the current period two producers succeeded in breaking through. [The late] Jim Booth got a substantial amount of investment from Senator in Germany, run by a guy called Hanno Huth, for Peter Jackson’s fourth movie, *Heavenly Creatures*. Peter had established an immense cult following with his three gore/horror comedies, but that following was restricted by the nature of the films: the audiences would go so far and no further. At the same time, everybody in the international film industry could see that this was a director of immense talent as a cinematic storyteller.

So Peter and Jim made the decision for Peter’s fourth film that Peter would do an amazing career switch. And it was the talent of Peter, plus a very good script, that brought in the money from Germany, and which sat alongside the NZFC’s money.

The second film is *The Last Tattoo*, directed by John Reid, which attracted minority investment from an American company called Capella. It is of German origins, I understand.

*The Last Tattoo* attracted the investment on the basis of the script, plus a cast of four names who were acceptable to the American money as making the film attractive in the international market place. Three of the names are American: Tony Goldwyn, Rod Steiger and Robert Loggia. The fourth name, Shelton adds, “is, very happily, Kerry Fox. The American investors were willing to accept her as a draw.”

At the moment, non-NZFC money is essentially via pre-sales and co-productions. As in Australia, there is no discounting by banks of distribution guarantees, a situation the recently-formed Project Blue Sky (see below) is actively addressing. Shelton:

The largest portion of outside investment has been coming either through co-productions from overseas investors, as in the case of *Alex* [Megan Simpson, 1993] and the Australian Film Finance Corporation, or *Bloody Weekend*, which is the Anna Campion feature film which is being done with finance from British Screen, the British Film Institute and Channel 4.

For the most part, though, a lot of the films coming out of New Zealand have been by first-feature directors. They are unlikely to attract pre-sales. It is the ones by experienced directors which have already attracted pre-sales or funding from off-shore.

It is also a process of cementing the business standards within the industry, so that producers are able to go out and negotiate, are able to bring in off-shore money successfully. New Zealand no longer has a cottage industry of producers operating out of their back bedrooms.

### EQUITY ISSUES

An inevitable question is whether bringing in foreign actors is a controversial issue in New Zealand. Shelton:

No. The Commission has always remained flexible. It has not wanted to write hard-and-fast rules on such subjects and has always been willing to work around things. The arrival of Al Lewis to be the star of *Moonrise* [David Blyth, 1991], which was financed largely by us, wasn’t a problem for anybody. Nor was *Alexis Arquette in Jack Be Nimble* [Garth Maxwell, 1993]. If anything, it was an advantage, because both are useful names.

When John Maynard cast several Australians in *The Footstep Man* [Leon Narby, 1992], again it didn’t turn out to be a problem. Nor when Bridget Ikin cast an American actress in *Crush* [Alison Maclean, 1992].

Surely there was an outcry, though, when an Australian actor, Genevieve Picot, was cast as a New Zealand icon in Gaylene Preston’s 1993 mini-series, *Bread and Roses*? Shelton:

No, these issues don’t cause uproar any more.
In the first half of the 1980s, the people in the industry who had struggled through the '70s to get established didn't want anybody coming onto their turf. There was a really aggressive mood from all the workers, crews and actors, saying, 'We don't want offshore people.'

By the end of the 1980s, however, people having worked for 10 years could see that a balance was great. They could get more work, more experience, by participating in offshore productions.

We talk about Australia restrictive and off-putting, with Equity and the rest. In comparison, we talk about ourselves as being totally free and open, which we are. There is no gate keeper. One can come and go.

When asked why New Zealanders are more open-minded on these issues than Australians, John Barnett replied:

I believe the whole industry has matured enormously. We have not only matured in age, but also in attitude.

We just had a conference session on Project Blue Sky and it occurred to me that in 1981-82, just after Race for the Yankee Zephyr [David Hemmings, 1981], if you had started a meeting by saying, 'We were thinking about bringing people here to shoot films', there would have been lynchings. Yet everyone feels quite comfortable with that situation now.

Perhaps it is also because we have always been such a small market. People realized early on that you can't live like that. Some people are going to make educational films, some people will do corporate commercials or television comedy, some will make features or bring people in from offshore. I'm happy doing my bit and let's not create impositions on each other.

Barnett went on to describe a co-production he had tried to set up between Endeavour Tucker, where he was working till recently, and a Canadian partner. The plot: five beauty queens are taken hostage, but fight back and win. Barnett:

We had a two-thirds pre-sale and the Film Commission committed the remaining third based on the foreign sales estimates. For a number of reasons the deal didn't quite cut together, so we didn't access the Commission's money. But it would have been inconceivable to think of the Commission coming to the party with that subject matter five years ago.

Also, when we were discussing second unit on the film, I went to a young woman who has a real reputation for making political short films. I asked her, 'Are you interested in doing second-unit direction on this action picture?' 'Absolutely. Put me in.' This was for her a learning experience. 'Give me a go. I'd really like to do something like that. Fantastic.' Six or seven years ago, people might have been stuck in that old crevice of saying, 'I'm not working on a picture like that.' There is much more freedom of thought now.

Judith McCann adds:

There is probably a real psychological difference [from Australia] in that New Zealand is a deregulated environment. We don't have a quota [unlike Australia]; there is no guarantee of New Zealand content on New Zealand television. Independent producers here are much more confident because they have had to sell within their own market ideas for programmes and films. They are competing with the best from the rest of the world and have been successful. There is certainly no lack of confidence, and they are not easily intimidated.

McCann is another who is not concerned about pre-sales determining the nature of New Zealand films:

They haven't had that effect so far. But it is always a concern and, if it weren't for the strength of the public financing, the Film Commission's financing, that might happen.

What has attracted the pre-sales is the quality of the stories, and the quality and professionalism of the creative team. Plus, they obviously feel that they can make some money on it.

**OFFSHORE PRODUCTIONS**

New Zealand has long been a location for offshore productions using the country as a location. But there appears to have been a slight shift to Queensland of late. Shelton:

That's because Queensland has aggressively gone out and sought it. No one from New Zealand has done an international campaign to persuade people to come here.

But people do come. For example, there are four American tele-movies currently being shot in Auckland, all about Hercules. They came here, they said, because they had seen The Piano and thought the location looked exactly like ancient Greece, can you believe? They started to rebuild the lost City of Troy, but discovered they were on Maori land and the Maori owners wouldn't give them permission. So they had to stop and go somewhere else.

John Barnett:

Queensland clearly has a lot of benefits in its [Movie World] Studios, and an infrastructure that can put them in and out. The budgets on those pictures must be quite a bit bigger than here. They are prepared to go to Queensland, spend the money on the Studios and get the best.

We had features coming here for two reasons: we were cheap, and we had money ourselves. Now that the money isn't available for features, the same people aren't coming here.

We are also not making features for $1m, so you wouldn't necessarily come here. You'd go somewhere where it's cheaper, like South Africa.

Judith McCann adds:

A lot of commercials come in here to shoot and there are a lot of people who, through personal contacts, service those. The reason overseas films come here is the level of crews and services, in addition obviously to the scenery.

But if we can't sustain our own base to provide that continuity, the industry will go back to some sort of fly-by-night existence. In between foreign productions here, it will be back to waiting on tables or living on the dole.

Things may change dramatically on the "selling" of New Zealand locations, however, because in the irony of corporate musical chairs the NZFC's new executive director is Film Queensland former director, Richard Stewart. *(Judith McCann has gone to the South Australian Film Corporation.)*
The aim of Project Blue Sky is to create an environment to encourage the profitable growth of the New Zealand film and television industry.

It was initiated by a TRADENZ (New Zealand Trade Development Board) audit of the film industry which indicated that the industry would earn $100m in foreign exchange in 1992-93. TRADENZ’s brief in life is to increase New Zealand’s foreign exchange earnings. The film industry comes to it obviously with the need for more investment. (TRADENZ has just successfully worked in tandem with the clothing industry.)

At its 1992 Conference, the Independent Producers and Directors Guild co-opted a committed group of producers to work with TRADENZ to see if there was any scope for the industry to work together to develop its foreign exchange potential.

The advisory board (Dorothée Pinfold, an executive producer; Dave Gibson, producer, Gibson Group; and John Miles, project manager at of TRADENZ) decided that it had to devise a strategy that:

1. Helps develop and maintain a strong, viable, and stable domestic base of production; and
2. Increases the amount of foreign exchange being invested and earned by the industry.

To do this, it developed a model of the industry and formulated six recommendations that are the basis of Project Blue Sky.

**THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF PROJECT BLUE SKY**

1. Develop a strategy that enables New Zealand companies to attract private finance/equity for internationally orientated productions.
2. a) Encourage New Zealand On Air and New Zealand Film Commission to widen funding criteria for New Zealand ideas aimed at the international market; and
   b) Encourage broadcasters to support major mini-series, dramas and long run series with overseas income potential.
3. Develop New Zealand and Australia as one economic market for television and film.
4. Develop a plan with the existing funding and training organizations to improve the quality of creative ideas/talent for the international markets.
5. Develop an industry infrastructure plan that ensures that:
   a) The industry is training and retaining sufficient high quality personnel;
   b) That there are sufficient facilities and equipment to meet increased demand; and
   c) Current ‘roadblocks’ to infrastructure growth are reviewed
6. Develop a sales and marketing plan in consultation with all the industry bodies to develop both domestic and international revenue

**PROJECT BLUE SKY DELIVERY MECHANISM**

- Project that will run for three years.
- Set up Industry Joint Action Group (JAG) with TRADENZ. Industry participates by joining JAG.
- Appoint a chief executive whose terms of reference are to achieve the six recommendations.
- The chief executive reports to an appointed board. The board will comprise the initial advisory group plus two others to be announced.

The costs and funding were estimated at:

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*Dependent on industry support*

Project Blue Sky expects film and television foreign exchange earnings to increase from $66 million in 1992/93 to $200 million a year by 2000. Dave Gibson:

The Joint Action Group mechanism allows major players in the industry to come together and work collectively on specific projects that are part of an agreed strategic plan.

We’re not asking the government for more money, but instead asking them to help us create an environment so we can attract more foreign investment into our productions and to develop an infrastructure that can compete with the world’s best.

If we can develop and maintain a strong, viable, and stable domestic base of production, it means we can increase the amount of foreign exchange being invested and earned by the industry.

We have the full support of producers, TVNZ, the Film Commission, TV3 and New Zealand On Air. Our next step is to employ the chief executive and to start working on implementing the strategies.

It is difficult not to be greatly impressed by Project Blue Sky. It has been handled extremely efficiently, with a positive attitude by people with enormous industry experience. The whole Project is very much indicative of the New Zealand film industry’s forward-looking and consensus-seeking approach. John Barnett is one of the many who is impressed:

It is another example of our maturity. The small group of people behind Project Blue Sky represented a real diversity of thought twelve months ago. There was a lot of soul searching as to whether this was the right way to go. But those people sat down and very successfully cobbled it into something.

Dave Gibson told me they hadn’t had a single negative response. Now when you put six proposals up, you would expect people to disagree on one thing or another. TVNZ might not be happy about access to Canada, or whatever. But it has always been
explained on the basis, “Look, you’re not going to go for all six of these. Four wouldn’t be bad.”

Everybody has kind of agreed then to the meat of it. That’s a real mark of where we are today. They have been to New Zealand On Air, Television New Zealand, TV1, TVNZ, TV3 and all the bigger production companies, and no one has kept their hand in their pocket. They have all written a cheque. They all think it’s great. They all found some common ground. And that’s something I don’t believe you could get in Australia at the moment. In New Zealand, there is much more appreciation of everybody else’s position. I just hope it continues.

One initiative, as mentioned earlier, is to try and solve the problem of discounting distribution guarantees. At the moment, as in Australia, no bank will discount these (i.e., turn a guarantee into cash up front, minus a fee). Given TRADENZ’s recent success in convincing a New Zealand bank to give special treatment to the clothing industry (thus becoming in essence the industry’s bank), it is hoped a similar approach by Project Blue Sky will convince a bank to be the official discounter. If Project Blue Sky achieves only this, then it is a major success. But one can’t help feeling its successes will be far more varied and greater.

**TRANS-TASMAN**

While most Australians assume the two countries are very similar, the only differences being what make New Zealand jokes so funny, New Zealanders realize the differences are far greater.

For one, New Zealand is a totally deregulated economy; Australia’s is not. New Zealanders seem to work harmoniously together within their film industry; Australians are much more disparate and off-confrontational in theirs.

At a seminar at the Independent Producers and Directors Guild Conference, Australian director David Caesar gave gruesome accounts of backbiting and lack of co-operation among filmmakers. When he said, “I’m sure it’s exactly the same here”, there were at first quiet mumblings of “No.” When Caesar continued, various members of the audience became more vocal and two finally spoke out saying this backbiting was most certainly not the case in New Zealand.

Perhaps the only time one does hear sparks fly is when discussing their trans-Tasman counterparts. Certainly a mumbled “Australian...Australian” is inevitably heard when one born across the Tasman dares rise to speak, as Phil Pryke discovered at the IPDG Conference dinner.

Is this banter purely on a joke level or is it a barrier to trans-Tasman relations? John Barnett:

It’s entirely at the joke level. We always take the view that if it’s between us and Australia, it’s a scrap; if it’s between us and Australia and the rest of the world, we are in this together.

You will constantly hear reference here to what the Australian film industry has achieved, and there is very much a respect for that. There are certain things about your industry that we wanted, like the television quota. If we’d had a quota, New Zealand would be a different place.

The geographical closeness of Australia and New Zealand has resulted in much movement of creative talent between the countries. There have never been barriers on Australian technicians working here, or New Zealand technicians working there.

Several producers (including David Hannay, John Maynard and Bridget Ikin), too, have been skillfully working both markets and structuring various co-productions. Barnett:

What John Maynard has done in having an office in Australia, and an office here, is jump to the trans-Tasman reality a lot faster than most other people. John has worked it out and he is making it work for him.

We say as an industry that we want a trans-Tasman market and maybe it will come if a whole lot of people do what John has. When you see Concept Fremantle, Pro Image, Atlab and all those people working here, making shows that are going to television every night, accessing New Zealand On Air money, there are certain realities regardless of what movies you make on a global scale. On a micro scale, there are people who are effectively achieving it.

Notably, the resultant co-productions have been among the best made in either country in a given year: *The Navigator: A Medieval Odyssey* (Vincent Ward, 1988), *An Angel at My Table* (1990), which New Zealanders consider a totally New Zealand production, but director Jane Campion does not; *The Piano* (1993), the same; and so on.

### NOTES

1. All quotes in this article are, unless otherwise noted, from interviews conducted by the author in Wellington, November 1993.
2. Based on figures supplied by the New Zealand Film Commission.
4. See interview with Stewart, conducted by Scott Murray, *Cinema Papers*, No. 96, December 1993, pp. 16-20, 58.
5. What follows is largely taken from press notes handed out by Dave Gibson at the Conference.
At the start of the 1993 Independent Producers and Directors Guild Conference, there was a 45-minute welcoming ceremony conducted in Maori. The whites, most of who knew but a few words of Maori, stood without impatience and full of interest and respect.

At the conclusion, this writer was told that such Maori welcomes occur before all major government or quasi-government functions. The reason was simple: "New Zealand is their country. We are just guests here."

One cannot imagine such an attitude in Australia, let alone a SPAA conference opening with a 45-minute ceremony in an Aboriginal dialect. New Zealand is often jokingly described as "Australia ten years ago", but in matters such as respect for the indigenous people, it is many, many years ahead.

Given this, it is no surprise that Maori have directed feature films in New Zealand long before Tracey Moffatt became the first Aborigine to do so in Australia. It also explains the treatment of Maoridom in New Zealand films, which, from an outsider's inevitably-limited perspective, appears far less tokenistic and cautious than (until very recently) the treatment of Aborigines in many Australian films – or, worse, on television.

New Zealand filmmakers have been dealing with Maori issues since the birth of local cinema. As early as 1907, there were actuality shorts about Maori, shot by James McDonald for the New Zealand Government Tourist Board. From 1918 to 1923, McDonald even made a concentrated effort to collect and record film and photographic information on Maori tribal lore, arts and crafts, food gathering and preparation, and skills relating to a dying way of life. By now there was an awareness by some Maori elders and scholars of the need to record and preserve, and McDonald's work was regarded as a matter of considerable importance.  

Drama films about Maori people commenced in 1912, when a Frenchman, Gaston Méliès, made several one- and two-reelers: Hinemoa, How Chief Te Ponga Won His Bride and Loved by a Maori Chieftess.

The Hinemoa story was filmed again in 1914 by producer George Tarr and became what New Zealanders consider to be their first feature film.

However, the major figure in this period is Rudall Hayward, who made several silent films with Maori stories, including *The Te Kooti Trail* (1927). In 1925, Hayward filmed for the first time the story of Rewi's great battle in 1864 with the British, the silent *Rewi's Last Stand*. Thirteen years later he remade it as a sound film with the same title.

Maori director and historian Merata Mita writes in *Film in Aotearoa New Zealand* that *Rewi's Last Stand* was made as an independent production by a white New Zealander, but it approached its Maori theme and story with respect for Maori courage and integrity. It "is an engaging, high-spirited film [...] The outrage that Hayward, and other historians since, felt about the injustice of the British advance is clearly evident in the film."2

Also in *Film in Aotearoa New Zealand*, veteran producer-director John O'Shea writes: "Hayward set a tone of benevolent paternalism in his dramatic films about the Maori settler and loyal soldier fighting the brave and often chivalrous Maori."3 Hayward's films are "noble, clear-cut, and sympathetic glimpses of pioneer times with characters and events viewed through a Pakeha prism".4

In 1952, O'Shea himself, and Roger Mirams, made an inter-racial story, *Broken Barrier* (1952). Merata Mita argues: *Broken Barrier* travels a route of covert racism in Aotearoa's society, exposed only when a Pakeha man forms a relationship with a Maori woman. It successfully broke new ground, as the multicultural harmonious society that white New Zealanders had bought into was exposed as a myth.5

O'Shea sees the film as a shift in the representation of Maori: The post-War *Broken Barrier* was clearly less sympathetic towards the Pakeha, taxing him with bigotry and intolerance, while portraying its Maori characters with respect and some understanding. That it also came from a Pakeha viewpoint was quite evident.6

The Maori viewpoint was first to make its appearance in documentaries. Many see the six-part television series, *Tangata Whenua - The People of the Land* (1974), by Maori director Barry Barclay, as a key work in bringing Maori opinions to the fore with a minimum of Pakeha filtering. Barclay:

People from all walks of life could talk about their own lives as they saw them and, if they wished, in their own language. That approach was a revolution here in the early seventies, and is perhaps uncommon still.7

Barclay followed this with *Autumn Fires*, a one-hour attempt to portray Pakeha culture (as represented by Martyn Sanderson's family's life) from a Maori perspective (Barclay's).

The feature-film breakthroughs came in the late 1980s and early '90s with the so-called Maori trilogy: *Ngati* (Barry Barclay, 1987), *Maori* (Merata Mita, 1988) and *Te Rua* (Barclay, 1991). O'Shea writes:

*Ngati* had more of a bicultural stance than *Maori* and the more recent *Te Rua*. In *Ngati* both races were treated with affection, though the one bad-tempered and exploitative character was Pakeha. In both *Maori* and *Te Rua*, however, the Pakeha and European characters are generally regarded with long-suffering disdain, contempt, or that distaste one would feel for a mad dog.8

Merata Mita:

*Mauri* [...] is really a parable about the schizophrenic existence of so many Maori in Pakeha society. Our psychological prisons are sometimes worse than jail, and only by breaking free of colonial repression and asserting our true identity can we ever regain real freedom.9

Barry Barclay:

*Te Rua* tells a tale that explicitly has to do with cultural sovereignty. In the fiction, a group of rural Maori set off for Berlin to recover three carvings which last century were stolen from their ancestral home by a German and one of their relations. The carvings are now stored - or so the story has it - in the basement of a Berlin museum. I wrote the screenplay. It's inevitable that personal experiences on racial matters - the angry ideological debates, the other cheek turned on occasion, the insights coming from opponents - will have found their way into the film. Just what is it like to demand cultural sovereignty in the face of the might of the majority culture? What friends do you make or lose? Will the outcome be recognition ... or prison.10

O'Shea concludes:

Both films were made under the control of their Maori directors [...] who had both expressed forcibly and clearly that Maori images and drama should be under Maori control.

In such circumstance, Pakeha film makers have virtually been given notice by some of their Maori colleagues that being white means you shouldn't have much to say about or show the Maori in New Zealand because the Maori wants to control their own image. Few film makers are likely to accept this, The Maori presence in the country is an essential and valuable ingredient in many dramas about living in New Zealand.11

That is a debate that exists in many countries today (Australia, the U.S.), where indigenous peoples are wishing to take hold of the discussion about issues affecting their lives and cultures. The right of outsiders to participate in discussing these issues is often debated with emotion and is not exactly close to being resolved. Merata Mita takes a wide view:

Maori film makers have to address several issues not of their choosing when they decide on a project of fiction. They have to...
satisfy the demands of the cinema, the demands of their own people, the criteria of a white-dominated value and funding structure, and somehow be accountable to all [...] Worse still is the knowledge that the Maori film maker carries the burden of having to correct the past and will therefore be concerned with demystifying and decolonising the screen.12

**ONCE WERE WARRIORS**

The important new Maori film is Lee Tamahori's 1994 *Once Were Warriors*, based on Alan Duff's raw novel of urban life in a poor community. This bold and confronting film looks at a Maori family gripped by domestic violence, alcohol abuse and dependence on social welfare.

Beth (Rena Brown) is the wife and mother of the Heke family. Her husband is Jake (Temuera Morrison), a kingpin at the local pub who never loses a fight but whose violent lifestyle is tearing his family apart. One son has joined a gang, the other has been taken into welfare. The daughter, Grace, seeks solace in her stories, as she tries to shield her brothers from the ugliness. When Grace's innocence is sacrificed, Beth is forced to make a choice: her family or her husband.

Director Lee Tamahori feels "The violence and the drink which batter the Heke family will be recognized by people everywhere. It is a universal story."13

Bringing the novel to the screen was something many in New Zealand felt would prove impossible. Tamahori:

Communicado [the production company] had Alan Duff break it into a first draft – that showed potential. I could see it fitted into the genre I am particularly interested in – modern urban New Zealand drama. [But] it soon became obvious that some serious reworking would be required. Alan's very close to the original material. [...] It needed a fresh perspective and I was sure that perspective had to be a woman's. [...] So we brought in Riwia Brown, a Maori playwright from Wellington. She's done a magnificent job. [...]14

When Alan Duff's novel first appeared in 1991, there was criticism of portraying Maori in a bad light, especially from whites. This does not concern lead actress Rena Owen:

Personally, I can relate foremost to the children's point of view in the story. I know what it is like to grow up in a violent alcohol-induced environment.

There will be a lot of political flack around the film, as there was around the book. A lot of people do not think a Maori should be portrayed this way. But until you can acknowledge the ugliness in your race, you can't move on. We are all good and bad, we are human, and can't pretend we are perfect.

I think it is important, especially for Maori, that this story be told. These situations do exist, they are destructive and, if the story can change one person's life, to me it has served its purpose.

Reni Owen concludes:

I believe the South Pacific will be the happening place of the future. It's going to become a major force in the world. We haven't burnt ourselves out yet, but we have got to learn from the mistakes countries like the US and England have made, and learn to preserve our own culture.

Maori, like every other indigenous people, have a voice and to me it is an exciting voice. We have the only stories left untold.17

**NOTES**


2 Ibid, p. 43.

3 John O’Shea, “A Charmed Life: Fragments of Memory ... and Extracts from Conversations”, *Film in Aotearoa New Zealand*, op cit, p. 17.


5 Mita, op cit, p. 44.


7 Barry Barclay, “Amongst Landscapes”, *Film in Aotearoa New Zealand*, op cit, p. 119.

8 O’Shea, op cit, p. 19.

9 Mita, op cit, p. 49.

10 Barclay, op cit, pp. 127-8.

11 O’Shea, op cit, p. 19.

12 Mita, op cit, p. 49.

13 Quote taken from press kit.

14 From an article by Bruce Sheridan supplied by the NZFC.


16 Ibid, p. 32.

17 Ibid, p. 32.
BUDGET

Established in 1978, the New Zealand Film Commission (NZFC) is supported to the tune of approximately NZ$8 million a year. The structure of that funding has changed over the years, the NZFC being increasingly dependent on money from the Lottery Board and less on direct government grant.

In the 12 months to June 1994, the NZFC income from government grants is $889,000 (having dropped from $3.6m in 1988-89), while Lottery Board support has increased to $7.4m (from $3.7m in 1988-89). This gives a total of $8.3m, somewhat lower than 1990-91's peak of $10.8m.

Mladen Ivancic, the NZFC's finance director, explains:

The government grant has dropped dramatically because of general financial pressures on government spending in all areas. Like other cultural bodies and government departments – like everyone – we have shared in the pain.

The government saw the increase in Lottery profits as a way of getting around direct payments to us and replacing them with a share of Lottery profits. And that worked really well until this new financial year, when the Lottery profits started declining.

Lottery Board profits had increased dramatically with the introduction of Lotto, but the recession reversed that trend a little. As the NZFC is tied to a fixed percentage of profits, there is inevitably a variation in total year by year.

Is the fluctuating nature of the NZFC's annual funding a problem? Ivancic:

Any amount of money is manageable. Whether it's always sufficient for the film industry is debatable. To some extent, the industry expands or contracts to the level of funding that is available.

At the same time, I'd like to think the fluctuations are in single-digit percentages. I hope we are at a plateau, a base which won't go up or down too much.

NZFC REVIEW

When Phil Pryke became the new Chairman of the NZFC, several review procedures were put in place. In his speech at the November 1993 Independent Producers and Directors Guild Conference, Pryke announced that:

One thing I've learned [...] as I've met with industry groups around the country, is that there is definitely a mood of change in the New Zealand film industry – maybe after last Saturday [the November 1993 New Zealand election] this can be seen as a reflection of the country as a whole. But let's make sure it does not descend into the miasma we see in the political area.

We must make sure that any change is looking forward not backwards. And the impetus for change is not just coming from the Film Commission. The industry itself has reached a natural turning point, a period of reassessment and review.

One thing Pryke has argued for is a change in the procedures by which people apply to the NZFC:

[Since] taking the Chair, and talking extensively with industry participants, I found that, as often as not, applicants for Commission support were confused about our expectations and the signals we were sending.

In addition, I have a personal obsession with making sure that we are absolutely explicit about the reasons for our decisions, when conveying them to applicants. This is especially important when we say, 'No.'

The result is a more streamlined process – and one in which the uncertainty for applicants has been removed as much as possible.

For producers, that means no more waiting anxiously beside the phone on a Friday night, wondering if your application has been successful.

For the Commission, it means, now that you have a very clear indication of how to give your application your best shot, we do expect you to get it right the first time. And we'd really prefer not to consider applications more than once.

While the industry has generally embraced Pryke's call, lawyer and former Chairman Bill Sheat sees dangers in a once-only approach to considering applications:

I don't think that is wise, because you are going to throw out something that is brilliant.

Smash Palace was very successful and took Roger Donaldson to Hollywood. But the first time it came up before the Commission, it wasn't right. It just didn't hang together, and we said, 'Roger go away and do some more work on it.' I guess the resultant anger in Roger may have released some creative juices and really helped him achieve the final result. If we let him make it when it was originally put up, it wouldn't have been the success it became. Of that I'm absolutely sure. That was one clear-cut case of the worth in saying, 'Go away and come back again.'

What I think a lot of the filmmakers here fail to realize is that this process actually happens in Hollywood. You read of countless situations where established filmmakers have horrendous troubles getting through the studios films which end up being hugely successful. Nobody wanted to do them at first, so they just kept battling away, did more versions, and came back.

Two other areas Phil Pryke and the NZFC are currently examining are training (not just new talent, but of industry practitioners so they can best marshal their talents, entrepreneurially and creatively) and marketing/sales. Both areas are discussed in the following interview with Pryke.
The biggest change in NZFC policy in recent years was the introduction of Producer Operated Development Schemes. The aim was to partially devolve the development of projects from the NZFC, which tends to view projects on a one-off basis, to established producers/production companies. The schemes are worth $50,000 to $150,000 to the recipient.

The success of this trial led to a grander plan: the Super Producer Operated Development Schemes (Super Pods). John Barnett of South Pacific Pictures explains:

Effectively, the NZFC gives four [now five] companies underwriting to the tune of $500,000 over a three-year period. You don’t just get access to $500,000; it’s on scheduled draw-downs against the business plan. This enables you to go out and acquire product, to get scripts developed, to run your overhead. It is a recognition at last that being a producer is not much fun between gigs.

In Wellington, the Super Pods are:
- The Gibson Group (Dave Gibson);
- Preston*Laing (Gaylene Preston and Robin Laing);
- Midnight Films (the late Jim Booth) with WingNut Films (Peter Jackson).

In Auckland:
- The Movie Partners (John Maynard and Bridget Ikin); and
- Endeavour Tucker (Murray Newey and John Barnett), since disbanded.

John Barnett:
I think the net results are going to be really significant. While the Commission is still going to do a lot of one-off development, each of these Super Pods has eight to ten projects moving along. And because they have been fast-tracked in a sense, the producer feels sufficiently detached to be able to stand back and say, ‘This is a better one to go than the other.’ I think the end result is going to be pictures which have a high degree of off-shore investment.

At Endeavour Tucker, we spent two years on one of our three projects. If we had been dependent on one-off funding from the Film Commission, the process would have been much harder. The Commission wouldn’t have been tougher about it, it’s just that you’d be locked into the Commission’s time-table of meetings, rather then our ability to keep things moving along.

In many ways, the Super Pods reflect a difference in attitude about where responsibility lies. As Phil Pryke said at the Conference:

In the industry itself, you, the practitioners, are asserting more control over your own future.

Where before change tended to be ad hoc and at the mercy of external agencies – especially government – it is now being regarded strategically by the industry, and moves are afoot, though vehicles such as the Joint Action Groups [Project Blue Sky] for the industry to actively manage its future. I must say that I fully support such initiatives. [...]

I know there were times when the Film Commission was accused of thinking it was the industry in New Zealand. If that was ever the case, it certainly is not so now. The Film Commission today sees itself as an investor in, and supporter of, the industry.

The days of hand-holding the industry are gone – and I hope that is accepted by all participants.

Judith McCann, the NZFC’s executive director until January 1994, believes the Super Pods have already had an impact:

The industry has been more stable over the past few years because the Super Pods enable companies with track records to have a slate of projects in development. That has contributed significantly to a greater stability.

That may well be true, but where are the films to prove the worth of the scheme? “Near-go” projects are hard to find and McCann does express some concern:

We are [in November 1993] almost halfway through the current financial year and, surprisingly, the Commission has made production finance commitment to only one feature. It’s been slower than we anticipated.

One possible reason is that we are looking more critically at the quality of the projects. We have developed more detailed criteria by which projects are evaluated by the Commission. Producers are getting the message quite clearly that we are looking for a higher level of quality in the package they present to the Commission. They are not coming in as frequently at an early stage as they might have done in the past.

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At the same time, there is growing concern that Super Pods money has been overly used to keep production companies alive – to “run the overhead”. Like everything else at the NZFC, though, the Super Pods are under review. It is possible that the scheme’s gains may be evaluated as too expensively bought.
PHIL PRYKE WAS APPOINTED CHAIRMAN OF THE NEW ZEALAND FILM COMMISSION ON 1 APRIL 1993, FOLLOWING ON FROM DAVID GASGOINE. AUSTRALIAN-BORN PRYKE HAS HAD A NOTABLE CAREER IN INVESTMENT BANKING AND HAS SERVED ON SEVERAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSIONS, ADVISING THE GOVERNMENT ON THE SALE OF TELECOM, THE COAL CORPORATION AND POSTBANK. UNTIL RECENTLY HE WAS WITH BUTTLE WILSON.

Did you come as Chairman with a specific brief, or have you progressively evolved one?

I sat on the Film Commission for a year previous to my appointment, sort of feeling my feet. That year showed me how little I knew. So, I decided I’d better go out and find out how all these people and their businesses operate. I spent quite a lot of time going around the country asking in particular producers how they saw the Commission and the industry, and, equally important – partly given my own bias – how their businesses worked.

The first thing I found out was that most of these businesses operate very tenuously. None the less, it was a bit of a surprise to discover 10 or 12 quite viable, robust businesses had survived through the terrible times of the tax schemes and their subsequent withdrawal. It was out of that that I developed a view about what I’d like to try and achieve in the three years that my current appointment lasts.

What are they?

Basically there are three things.

One is I discovered that many of the people who came before the Commission were extremely confused about the signals we were sending. The instinct of the Commission, particularly when we decided not to back things, was to let people down gently and not deliver harsh judgements. But deciding whether someone gets $1m or $2m is an on/off switch. You do have to take quite harsh judgements about the quality of the project and the people working on it, on whether or not they can deliver it and whether it has a market.

What we were tending to do was pull our punches. But I believe quite strongly that the Commission has an absolute obligation not to pull any punches. In this very complex and myriad world of making movies, which is certainly the weirdest business I’ve ever been involved in, people should know as clearly as possible how you are operating and what your expectations are, particularly in terms of the packaging of projects.
To fix that was largely a procedural thing, and I think that we have made good progress. Certainly the feedback we have been getting is that people are appreciative of the fact we are not prepared to waste our time or theirs on projects that in the long run we don’t think have legs. We might as well turn them off and let people get on with other things.

The second area that has been concerning me more and more is whether it is appropriate for a funding agency like the Commission, which is essentially a bank, to be involved in non-banking areas. Is it appropriate to sell specific pieces of product, in addition to promoting the industry as a whole?

Quite a few people in New Zealand said to me the Commission should get out of the sales agency role altogether and leave it to others, the professionals. Others said the Commission actually does a very good job with some projects.

So what I have done is initiate a series of discussions, first with producers, to try and get that spectrum of views out into the open. At the end of the day, we are there to serve them; we are not here to tell them how to do it right. And if the consensus develops that there is a better model for the selling of New Zealand product, then let’s go for it. We will find out how to do it and we’ll support it.

I would like to get to the point where we are very clear about what we are getting out of our expenditures on marketing, that generic promotion and facilitation of the industry, and what we are getting out of sales, which is the selling of individual products. Being specific about that will help in terms of running the Commission and making sure that our clients know what our role in life is.

The third area that really does concern me quite deeply is the development of creative talent. We have developed technical talent in New Zealand very well over the years, by hook or by crook, through the broadcasters, through people like Gibsons and Preston*Laing, and so on. But we seem to be facing a shortage not so much of ideas but of the creativity that is required to actually package those ideas with all the other bits. It is the script, the vision, the perception of casting and how all the bits bolt together.

We do have lots of work to do on scripts, too – it’s very hard finding good scripts – but it’s that whole package of elements in the creative body of work called a film where we have to do a lot of work.

I find it a little bit remarkable that when proponents come before us for funding for a project, whether it’s development funding or production funding, the pitches they put in front of us are, by and large, pretty poor. I come from a background where, if you like to put it crudely, I’ve been quite successful in lifting large fees out of various clients’ pockets for major projects. And the way we have done that is by very highly-developed presentation skills. I found it a bit surprising, frankly, that people involved in the communications industry actually don’t communicate their ideas at the front end particularly well. Now, whether that is because of a failure of the idea and the package, or a failure in ability to present, I’m not quite sure, but I suspect it’s the former.

We tend to put a lot of emphasis on script, but it’s the idea that lies behind the script that is really important, as is the vision of the people who are going to put it together. I would like a lot more thought put into that. Paul Thomson said at the Conference’s character session that a lot more thought should be put into the idea itself, into how people are actually going to deliver that idea and what’s it going to look like.

We have quite a lot of work to do in trying to find the mechanisms for identifying talent, for putting them into a position where they can learn the on-the-ground skills that are required besides just having the specialist creative talent, the creativity of thinking how to pull the deal together, of conceptualizing what it will look like at the end. Whether that means some form of formalized training, and participating in some of the courses at the Australian Film Television & Radio School or the British film school, we need to find out. We have to plug people into very specialized hot-house environments where they can absorb a whole pile of skills.
I'm not a specialist in film. I'm a specialist in organizations and that sort of thing. It's the people at this Conference who have collectively in their heads the answers to how to deliver these things in a much more efficient way. What I'm trying to do is to be very clear with the participants in the industry about what the Commission's rôle is, how it is making its decisions, and push them into a position where they are being very explicit about what they expect. That's not to say that they will all agree and we'll end up with this wonderful consensus developing. At some point the Commission is going to have to take some judgements in amongst that. But I want the Commission to be in the absolutely best position to take those judgements and, through that process, bring the industry with us. There is far more chance that the industry will support us if they feel everybody has been consulted and that we take them seriously.

Have you been at the Commission long enough to have witnessed the realization of projects you backed? If so, have you seen great differences between what was pitched and the finished result?

Oh yeah, and I've been very surprised. If you take Desperate Remedies [Stewart Main and Peter Wells, 1993], which I think is just the most magnificent thing that has been produced here, I was startled to think we could have produced such a film. At the presentation where the decision to go with it was made, I did not in any way get the message as to what it would look like. It happens to be a type of movie that appeals to me, so you have to be a bit careful of that sort of influence, but it is far more startling than I had any reason to believe it would be.

I haven't seen The Last Tattoo [John Reid, 1994] yet, but I've seen a cut of it. It looks pretty much how I thought it would look. On Monday, I'm going along to see Once Were Warriors [Lee Tamahori] in final cut. I'm quite interested to see what that looks like. I have a very large involvement with Maoridom and am fairly close to a lot of the issues the film is dealing with.

As in any endeavour, if we can encourage people to be as clear as possible at the inward end, our chances of realizing good product are going to be that much higher. It is, if you like, the forcing of a discipline.

It probably makes the assessment of projects easier, too.

Oh, yeah.

One of the best presentations I have come across was given by Peter Jackson not so long ago. I came away thinking, "Yeah, not only do I think I know what it might actually look like in the end, but I'm absolutely convinced that Peter knows what it's going to look like."

There is no question that film is a living process, and one must expect things to change, but you have a much better chance of developing a product if you have a very clear view of what it is that you are trying to produce. Equally, if you are forced into the position — not forced but encouraged — where you have to articulate that vision, your chances of applying a range of disciplines that will achieve it have to be much higher.

The most common complaint, though, is that New Zealanders don't make enough films that New Zealanders want to see. But if you are continually relying on new and untested talent, doing that is just so much more difficult. How, in fact, do you evaluate the success of the NZFC?

That's a quite difficult one. Perhaps this is the bias of my own background, but I evaluate it by looking out there and seeing that there are 10 or 12 patently viable businesses and more coming through. Sure they are involved in every now and then doing television work, some commercials and maybe a bit of corporate work, but that is contributing quite significantly to the fabric of the industry. And sure people have to go overseas to get experience elsewhere, because that's how it is for all of us.

I'm an Australian but I live in New Zealand. My skills have been rounded by quite extensive overseas work. I could have continued working in Washington or Rome where I spent 10 years. But I didn't want to. I wanted to come back here. And hopefully I have contributed something in coming back.

People do come back. Roger Donaldson hasn't told me, but he's told many other people, that he would love to come back here and make movies. He's just waiting for the right one that grabs his interest and away you go.

One initiative of the NZFC has been the Super Pods. You seem very interested in strengthening the structure of the industry. One criticism of Australian funding bodies is they are very one-off in terms of backing lone individuals. The NZFC, on the other hand, seems to be arguing that, if there are ten or 15 healthy organizations, a continuing film industry is almost guaranteed.

Absolutely, and it has to be encouraged. We are not the industry, we are a funder and a supporter of that industry. We are not a studio and we have to avoid being a studio. We don't have the skills and shouldn't, in my view, attempt to develop them.

I am really interested in industry structures. It's akin to my background. The stronger the industry is, the stronger the contribution of that industry. Whether it's film, fish, electricity, computing or any of the other areas I'm involved in, the stronger that industry is the more this country gets out of that industry — in a myriad of ways that are not always measurable. The very fact that people are marching forward and trying new ideas is what we have to have in this country.

Do you think the turn-around in private investment will come out of that superstructure as well?

It's the best chance, without a doubt. I'm a businessman. Success breeds success. If you can say to me as somebody who advises lots of people who have lots of loot that a business over there has a track record, the chance of attracting private capital into that business has to be that much higher. It will take a long time, but the investor will say, "Well, here is a business that I can understand. Here is a business that has a track record. Here's a business the proponents of which are trustworthy in a business sense. Here is a business that is disciplined in the way it operates." If it produces the goods, the chances of getting funding from private sources are going to increase. And already I know of one or two people around New Zealand — and they are in very short supply — who are at least amenable to being seduced into investing in various projects. It will be a hard job getting the first few — I think we are little distance from that at the moment — but it will come.
Lindsay Shelton has been selling and promoting
New Zealand films for 14 years, since he joined the
New Zealand Film Commission (NZFC) as its first
Marketing Director in 1979. He introduced New
Zealand movies to international buyers at the
Cannes Film Festival in 1980, and has handled the
sales and promotion of more than 50 New Zealand
feature films at all the major international festivals
and markets.

Before he joined the NZFC, Shelton was a journalist
who worked on various newspapers (including The
Sydney Morning Herald) in Sydney and London,
and with New Zealand television, where he was
network editor of New Zealand's top-rating news
show for ten years.

During his time as President of the Wellington Film
Society, Shelton founded the Wellington Film Fes-
tival in 1972 and directed it for its first ten years.
He has also been Chairman of the New Zealand
Federation of Film Societies.
Is there a major difference in the perception and status of New Zealand films overseas to that in New Zealand?

Yes. The industry is more admired and recognized outside New Zealand than inside.

If you look at the overall list of productions since 1978 [see Chart 1, p. 15], it's quite extraordinary that a country that did almost nothing has suddenly done all of this. And I think recognition of that overall achievement is far more wide-ranging overseas.

When I'm in other countries, so many people come and ask, "How does New Zealand do it? How does a country with a small population base produce all these great movies, all these great directors?" And when you say, "What do you mean by that?", they know the whole history.

People overseas see the fact the New Zealand has had so many films in Official Selection at Cannes as something genuinely extraordinary. They point to many other countries with similar population bases which might have a film selected for Cannes once every 10 years, whereas New Zealand has had seven.

Inside New Zealand, people are much less willing to accept any kind of New Zealand success. New Zealanders haven't changed as much as I had thought they had; the same old national characteristics still keep coming through.

There is a change, though, if I look at my kids. They now live in a country where films are made all the time, and, even if they are not seeing that many, they are aware that films are happening. And that is an absolutely different environment for people to live in than in the 1970s and earlier, when almost no films were made in New Zealand and films could only come from somewhere else. We no longer have that kind of inferiority complex.

How concerned would New Zealanders be if the film industry came under threat?

The surveys which the Commission carries out in the marketplace from time to time indicate that people would be quite concerned if the film industry died out. They see it as an activity of national importance and value.

I was overseas at the time, but I am assured by everybody that when The Piano [Jane Campion, 1993] swept the field in Cannes1, there was a mood of national euphoria for 48 hours which was similar to that when the All Blacks win an international sporting event. That seems to indicate that, even though a disturbing number of New Zealand films have failed to perform at the local box office, the population at large knows that there is something happening here and looks upon it as a positive thing.

In aesthetic terms, rather than in export dollar terms?

Aesthetic terms?

The concern is in having a film culture, rather than another successful free-market enterprise.

The word culture still sits very uneasily with New Zealanders, though they are starting to adapt to its real meaning.
I think your average New Zealander, if questioned, would talk about the value of the achievements of people in the film industry. Even though you could more or less correctly say they are talking about cultural value, they talk about the achievements of some actor in winning a prize or of a filmmaker in getting a film into some big event, or of a New Zealand movie getting well reviewed in Paris, the States or wherever. But you still have to deal with a media which, given a choice of reviews of New Zealand films from another country, has a tendency to pick up on the negative ones and leave out the positive.

**SALES AND MARKETING**

What does your rôle as Sales and Marketing Director mean in terms of handling New Zealand films?

Though we do a very small amount of generic promotion and advertising, almost all the promotion is to do with specific new titles. For ten years or more we placed a big New Zealand message at the top of all the ads we took. But we have had recognition now, so we focus almost entirely on the films and the quotes that they earn. The New Zealand connection is conveyed by our name at the bottom.

We launch all the films as New Zealand movies. We don’t try to pretend that they are anything different from that. Many of them have not only benefited from that, but gained far more international acclaim than if they had been launched as a one-off movie in the huge, cruel international marketplace.

The Commission is currently selling two-thirds of New Zealand films. My belief is that the successes we have had largely come from our achievement in positioning the New Zealand movie industry as something larger and more substantial than the reality of our four or five features a year. And we have had the opportunity to do that because we have had hands-on sales control of a majority of the titles. That marketing would be much more difficult if we didn’t have hands-on involvement, because the marketing message and our ability to deliver it would suddenly become amorphous as opposed to our being able to say, “Here is the film. You can actually buy it from us and we will work with you on the release.”

If your only handle two-thirds, then some films you obviously don’t.

The system by which the Commission handles the bulk of movies has always been flexible. Again, like every other area in which the Commission works, we don’t have hard-and-fast, black-and-white rules. When John Maynard and Bridget Ikin wanted their two films, *Crush* and *The Footstep Man* [Leon Narbey, 1992], handled by a British seller, even though the British seller wasn’t financially involved with the films, the Commission agreeably went along with their wish, which was part of their international strategy.

Where offshore investors bring substantial amounts of money into a film, and share the investment with us, if that offshore money wants sales rights, then that’s a perfectly good negotiating point.

When we are challenged by people who claim that the Commission doesn’t get prices as good as an independent, outside seller would get, the answer is in the statistics. We believe we do.

The difference between the gross and the net accounted for by costs is also much less with the films we handle than with offshore sellers. Much of our costs are covered by the overall generic marketing that we do. Investors tend to get a larger proportion of the money we collect in comparison to the offshore sales agents.

Be that as it may, the subject is now being debated and our Chairman, Phil Pryke, is getting a report on different ways of selling. He is investigating whether the Commission should still be selling. He says he has an open mind and there will be a decision sometime next year. [See interview with Pryke, pp. 44-46.]

What remains to be seen with the various options, which are going to be explored in the next six months, is whether such flexibility, which many people think is desirable, can be maintained by another system or whether alternative systems might become more rigid and give New Zealand producers less choice rather than more.

At the moment, do you also sell New Zealand films within New Zealand?

The Commission demands that New Zealand distribution is contracted before a film goes into production. So, while we participate in this with the producers, by the time the film is into production that is generally tied down.

Our involvement in New Zealand is generally restricted to talking with the New Zealand distributors about their campaigns and their release patterns, and monitoring as time allows how things are going. We encourage the distributors to find ways of
keeping movies in release, rather than letting them disappear. Our success rate on that varies according to the success of the movie.

I've been talking with one distributor this morning. Their previous release didn't get into as many New Zealand cities as we wanted or they wanted. The reason I was given was that the film failed to perform in Auckland and Wellington. As a result, there was difficulty in getting it out into the provincial cities.

However, the current New Zealand release of this distributor is having a long life in Auckland and therefore will be easily booked elsewhere. A disappointing New Zealand theatrical release may only be seen in eight or ten cities. An effective New Zealand release will be seen in as many as 50 or 60 different venues.

INTERNATIONAL

Does the international market consider New Zealand films purely art-house?

Not entirely. The art-house definition is really only relevant in North America, where films from a place like us are most likely to find their outlet initially through art houses. The only exceptions are films such as Peter Jackson’s, which can go straight into genre houses.

In the rest of the world, it’s just a matter of releasing a good movie and finding the best places to do it in. Even in the States, if a film is going to have art-house success, it’s going to be a success which is being designed by the distributor as the foundation on which a much wider release will happen.

Maybe in New Zealand there is a perception among some people that New Zealand filmmakers are more interested in making art-house than general-appeal movies. That perception is held by some people in the film exhibition and distribution business, rightly or wrongly. It is a misconception which producers are now actively working to overcome. The message which the new Chairman is delivering, about each producer needing to find a ready market for genre movies, be they horror, gore, or action. Every little achievement that you can muster is very rigorously independent in being able to make up their mind on the basis of what they see and on what they know of their own audience. From that point on, awards will be seen by a potential buyer as a useful marketing tool in their particular territory. They will not be the difference between saying, “Yes, I'll buy it” or “No, I won’t.”

I'd like to be able to say that international awards will help all films make it in the domestic market place. But I can’t always say that.

Festival and markets tied together. Cannes remains the number one festival and market for us. We still continue to launch the majority of New Zealand movies there. We’ve only had one film [Jane Campion’s An Angel at My Table, 1990] in Venice, and we’ve never had a film in Competition in Berlin.

From the launch at Cannes, either in Official Selection or just in the market, we then go wider, participating in events such as Toronto and Montréal, which are very user friendly to New Zealand movies — also London.

The annual participation at events is the absolutely base activity. We are always at the AFM, at Cannes, at Mifed. We do an immense amount of direct mail, in terms of any kind of festival success or award. We are forever writing to all potential distributors drawing their attention to titles, sending out copies of reviews and awards and so on.

There have not been as many New Zealand films in Sydney and Melbourne as we would have liked, which is largely a timing thing. If something is not going to be ready till May, for Cannes, it’s probably not going to be available for Sydney or Melbourne to preview within their time frames, which are earlier. So, new films which might have been expected to turn up in Sydney and Melbourne in June aren’t there. I’m trying to address that problem with Paul Byrnes [in Sydney].

How do you rate the value of festival participation and festival awards in securing sales? Is it far better to be in Competition in Cannes than in the market? Does an award help a negotiation?

Everything that you are doing is aimed at getting the buyer’s initial attention, trying to give the potential buyer a reason to come to see the film, as opposed to all those films that the buyer doesn’t have time to see. Every little achievement that you can muster is part of that initial aim.

Once you get the buyer to see the movie, then most buyers are pretty rigorously independent in being able to make up their mind on the basis of what they see and on what they know of their own audience. From that point on, awards will be seen by a potential buyer as a useful marketing tool in their particular territory. They will not be the difference between saying, “Yes, I'll buy it” or “No, I won’t.”

I’d like to be able to say that international awards will help all films make it in the domestic market place. But I can’t always say that.

Australian distributor Andrew Pike recently said that to most distributors a film which didn’t either get significant festival participation or an award was most likely a dead film.2

I’m surprised Andrew said that. It’s not my view.

I have no hesitation in launching a film just in the market at Cannes. If you do that right, and if the film has a potential to entertain people, then that’s no problem at all.

Most people I know didn’t realize that Strictly Ballroom [Baz Luhrmann, 1992] was in Official Selection at Cannes. I first heard of it in terms of having been a film that was discovered in the market.
Right back at our beginnings, Smash Palace [Roger Donaldson, 1982] was discovered in the market when we were using a very obscure screen in Cannes. It didn’t matter a damn. The film created word of mouth and everything carried on from there.

We have continuing arguments about whether New Zealand films which are considered “small” are helped or endangered by getting selection in the Cannes Competition. Vigil [Vincent Ward, 1984] was the first; Vigil is a “small” film. Crush [Alison Maclean, 1992] is more recent; Crush is a “small” film.

My considered opinion is that there are more benefits for the film than there are negatives. There are some negatives, agreed. But the benefits are in terms of the basic visibility of the film. The fact that it has been chosen, that it is there, helps get people to focus on it. The issue of whether it appears on the screen to be something “small”, as opposed to the huge things which seem more and more to dominate Cannes, is not enough of a problem to destroy the film’s potential.

Basically, if you get Official Selection offered at any level, you are most likely to say “Yes”, even if it isn’t quite the section that you would have chosen.

SUCCESSES AND SETBACKS

Are there certain territories which are very receptive to New Zealand films and where you have good track records?

The Americans certainly consider everything, while the UK theatrical area continues to be largely supported by television decisions. Fortunately for us, our films rate very well on Channel 4 and BBC. The bulk of our films have sold either to BBC or Channel 4, and the majority of those titles have had theatrical releases as well, with theatrical distributors partly underwritten by the British television system.

In Germany, it can be hot and cold. Initially we sold almost everything to German television in the days when it was looking for alternatives to American product. Fortunately for us, our films rate very well on Channel 4 and BBC. The bulk of our films have sold either to BBC or Channel 4, and the majority of those titles have had theatrical releases as well, with theatrical distributors partly underwritten by the British television system.

In Japan, we sold nothing for five or six years, until we did all the right things in terms of what you are supposed to do in every new market. We went to Tokyo and presented a New Zealand film season. We gave a reception with the New Zealand Ambassador, we invited people, we met people, we paid all the right courtesies. It was a copy-book exercise, and after that we started selling to Japan. From selling nothing, we now sell quite a lot.

In France, the French industry ignored us for a number of years, until the mid-1980s when Gaumont took on Utu [Geoff Murphy, 1983]. Again it was our continuity of participation, and being seen to do the right thing in Cannes, that eventually drew us to the attention of the French distributors. But France still remains a very difficult territory.

In Italy, we had initially nothing; more recently, we’ve sold quite a lot.

Overall, one must say that each new film needs a whole new set of decisions in each territory. The fact that you are known in a territory means that you can guarantee the film will get to be seen. The problem in our initial years was in building credibility for New Zealand as a source, so people would actually come and see our films. We are way beyond that now. We can guarantee that people will come and see films, but it’s still a decision title by title.

Desperate Remedies has sold very well and is continuing to sell very well. I think it will sell almost everywhere. Nevertheless, I had a few shocks. For example, a distributor in Italy, whom I’d been dealing with for years and who had good success with New Zealand movies, said no. I thought he would immediately take this one. “Too weird” is what he said.

What are the main problem territories in selling New Zealand films around the world? An obvious one is Australia. There are fewer New Zealand films distributed there than one might expect.

Yes. The most recent example, and one which is of the greatest concern to us, is The End of the Golden Weather [Ian Mune, 1992], which won Best Film and Best Director in New Zealand, and did very well in local release. It got lots of prizes all over the place, not just in New Zealand, and was viewed by every distributor in Australia. Some of them looked at it twice, and yet no Australian distributor was willing to believe that they could attract an Australian audience to that movie. So it’s going straight to video. They all knew of its success here, they all saw it, and everybody passed on it. I can’t comment any more than that...

Actually, I was going to answer your question in a different way. I was going to say that if, from time to time, New Zealand films have had trouble getting theatrical releases around the world, the basic reason must go back to the decision to invest in those films in the first place.

Given that New Zealand population is only 3.3 million, 90 per cent of the responsibility of breaking even rests with the marketing division of NZFC.

Correct.

What rôle, then, does the Sales and Marketing Director at the NZFC have in decisions about which films to invest in?

I advise the Commission Board, in terms of both domestic and international markets, what I believe the potential of each production application is. History shows that successive Boards have sometimes taken note of this advice and sometimes they haven’t.

NOTES

1 The Piano shared the Palme d’Or, and Holly Hunter won Best Actress.

2 In an interview with Pike, conducted by Peter Castaldi, in November 1993 on ABC television.
NEW ZEALAND'S 1994 PREMIERE FEATURES

HEAVENLY CREATURES
From Peter Jackson, the amazing (and true) story of an extraordinary, exhilarating friendship which gets out of control and ends in murder. International sales: Miramax

ONCE WERE WARRIORS
Lee Tamahori's powerful first feature, based on Alan Duff's best-seller, stars Rena Owen as a woman who has to save her family from the violent man she loves. International sales: NZFC.

COPS AND ROBBERS
Murray Reece's comedy about a bankrupt suicidal maniac who kidnaps a cute cop (Rima Te Wiata) and then accidentally gets involved in a bungled bank robbery. International sales: NZFC and Total.

THE LAST TATTOO
John Reid's romantic thriller stars Kerry Fox and Tony Goldwyn as lovers who uncover a top-level conspiracy in wartime Wellington. International sales: Capella and Bill Gavin.

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edge of Universal studios boss Carl Laemmle, who up until then had produced a staple output of one- and two-reelers. In its opening week in New York, the film played to 30,000 spectators, and its gross receipts eventually totalled US$450,000. Today the film begins with too much exposition and too many characters, but it soon improves with the help of an intricate plot and documentary verisimilitude, particularly with its use of New York inner-city locations. The climax, cross-cutting between the heroine's sister under threat and a rooftop police raid, is impressive by the standards of any era.

Frank Beat's The Inside of the White Slave Traffic (U.S., 1913), running 28 minutes, while less cinematically dazzling, draws more power from the documentary approach. Bypassing Souls' simplicity of girls incarcerated in rooms by sheer force of terror, it gives probing insight into the more complex system of criminal networks and deceptions that tied single, frequently impoverished women into the traffic. Produced by interests associated with the promotional activities of Samuel H. London, a former government inspector, it begins with a lengthy list of endorsements by experts from one side of America to the other which, according to Terry Ramsaye, placed this film at the start of the testimonial and endorsement method of motion picture exploitation.

Judging by the evidence of 1913, independent women were far more prevalent in films of that era than history has told us. In Traffic in Souls, the heroine risks her life to make secret sound recordings of the slave traders. In Vittoria O Morte (Italy), the heroine renews a new identity to pursue a thief through several countries by plane, ship and come-what-may. Alexander Butler's The Tube of Death (UK) takes it out on a queue of men in revenge for her mother having sold her to a womanizer. As she continues to ruin lives, the action alternates with vignettes of the woman hovering with-claw-like fingers over successive men. The influence of Victorian spirit photography is strong in these scenes, just as it is in the closing sequence where the heroine drinks poison and wafts away in phantom form.

The influence of spirit photography also invests The Tempter (F. Martin Thornton, UK) with an implacable, if hilarious, power it otherwise would lack. An audacious piece of ham dressed up with clever opticals, it supers a fish-like 'tempter' (a Robert Helpmann-type in a wittily rubber suit, complete with antennae) over the anti-hero every time he's tempted to perform a less-than-wholesome deed - like blowing all his money or his brains out. Another British offering from 1913, The Mystic Mat (J. H. Martin), combines early 1900s vaudeville with stop-the-camera gimmickry in the story of a man given a mat with the power to make unwanted people disappear - until his girlfriend vanishes also.

The 1913 film with the strongest cinematic naturalism to come was Victor Sjöström's brother, enlists him in the army. Endlessly inventive and full of wonderful comic touches, Bud's Recruit is surprising for the directorial talent Vidor was able to show so early in his career. Like so many directors of the silent period, the American director Rex Ingram's earliest work survives only in fragmentary form. Of the 27 features Ingram made between 1916 and 1932, only nine survive in their entirety and two in part. Gathered from around the world, all these films were screened in '93 at Pordenone, coinciding with the appearance of a new edition of Liam O'Leary's book, Rex Ingram: Master of the Silent Cinema. By coincidence I had just been reading Michael Powell's A Life in Movies, and both this and the O'Leary book give excellent complementary accounts of the life and work of a now forgotten director who more than half a century ago influenced the work of Powell, Erich von Stroheim, Josef von Sternberg and David Lean. Regarded by Powell as 'the greatest stylist of his time', Ingram had trained as a sculptor, film actor and scriptwriter before embarking on his directorial career at Universal and Metro. In league with cameraman John Seitz (who shot twelve of his films), Ingram almost literally sculpted with light to create some of the most luminously beautiful images of the silent cinema. Attending Pordenone, film historian Kevin Brownlow told me that Ingram tends to come across as too aristocratic and detached for most modern audiences, but in his time his visual achievements were watched and copied by the best of his peers. Erich von Stroheim was one of Ingram's greatest admirers, and Michael Powell was to write that both directors "shared a taste for the bizarre and the erotic, the morbid and the perverse". Impressed with Ingram's images of the corrupting, hallucinatory force of gold in The Conquering Power (1921), Stroheim made even more vivid use of...
the theme in *Greed* (1923).

It is the allegorical flights of fantasy in Ingram’s films – the gold monster in *The Conquering Power*, the horsemen in *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (1921), the goddess Amphitrite in *Mare Nostrum* (1926) – that provide his most enduring images, along with such hideous sights as Louis XVI sipping liqueur with orgasmic delight in *Scaramouche* (1921). At least half of the surviving Ingram films are uneven, highlighting some of theworst of early sound conventions.

Terry, while her sideways glances and sharp intakes of breath become too familiar from one

Mised hybrid between the best of silent and the worst of early sound conventions.

But he and Alice Terry show

about airing their problems. Similarly disappointing are those

piece, and the *Orphans of the Storm* (1921) and predating Gance’s *Napoleon* (1927), are far more stirring than the action in *Four Horsemen*, while Alice Terry, as she had in *Zenda*, plays a woman prepared to give up love for social advancement.

Music was an essential component of screenings at Pordenone, with eight pianists taking their turn to play cleverly improvised or composed scores. A couple of newly-restored films had orchestral accompaniment, and on the final night English composer-conductor Carl Davis appeared for the fourth time at Pordenone to conduct his arrangement of Louis Gottschalk’s original score for D. W. Griffith’s *Broken Blossoms* (1919).

*Broken Blossoms*, which is today, according to Russell Merritt, widely and rightly regarded as the richest and most nuanced of Griffith’s films, was in its time a real risk for Griffith, reproaching racial bigotry rather than condoning it as he had in some of his earlier films. Casting the normally-spirited Lillian Gish as Lucy, a pathetic, physically-abused waif and Casting the normally-spirited Lillian Gish as Lucy, a pathetic, physically-abused waif and


casting the normally-spirited Lillian Gish as Lucy, a pathetic, physically-abused waif and


13 Pianists who played on a rotational basis for the WASPish Richard Barthelmess as the Chi

struggling to tired cynicism while making the rôle endlessly interesting. Similarly disappointing are those

music. Griffith’s new tinting process which employs, of all things, food colouring. New 35mm prints were made of all the Australian films sent to Pordenone, including *Sunshine Sally*, which was blown up from a 16mm dupe neg, the only surviving preservation material for that film. The *Woman Suffers* was the only Australian feature able to be screened with its original tinting intact. Recently-found fragments of footage and freshly-filmed intertitles to bridge the gaps were cut into *The Woman Suffers* print for Pordenone by NFSA staff Marilyn Dooley.

With far more of the story being told through its images than through its words, *Cocor in the Island of Ghosts* is a very loose stringing-together of anthropological footage and minimal drama scenes. According to film historian Chris Long, the *Blizzard*, which covered the 1911-13 Douglas Mawson expedition to Antarctica, may no longer exist in its original form. The version screened at Pordenone lacks main and intertitles (where Long once saw a collector’s reel of the film with intertitles), and its construction fails to follow the known chronology of the Mawson expedition.

4 The Pordenone Festival will continue in 1994 by exploring Indian silent cinema.


6 In the *Atlantis* restoration’s one genuine moment of hilarity, the happy ending is followed by an alternative, the hero dying of a heart attack in order to satisfy the liking of the Russian market for unhappy endings. We are told, however, that this version was screened only in Siberia – assumed to be far enough from the watchful eyes of the *Atlantis* novel’s author.


8 Ibid., p. 618.

9 See Bram Dykstra, *Idols of Perversity*, Oxford University Press, 1986. *As In a Looking Glass* was released one year before Theda Bara’s vampish femme fatale – ‘the woman who did not care’ – burst onto screens with *A Fool There Was*.


13 Pianists who played on a rotational basis for Pordenone were Neil Brand, Matti Bye, Phil Carli, Antonio Coppola, Robert Israel, Fernand Schirren, Donald Sozin and Gabriel Thibaudau.

David Bridie and John Phillips are co-founders of the acclaimed band not drowning, waving (as well as their own projects my friend the chocolate cake and screwtape respectively), together they have created an impressive body of work including the soundtracks for labor in power (tv series), greenkeeping & hungry heart (films), and south east (theatre) as well as 30 other creations.

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FILM REVIEWS

BAWANG BIE JI (FAREWELL MY CONCUBINE)
STEPHEN TEO

In the style of a romantic epic, Farewell My Concubine (Bawang Bie Ji) traverses a long period in the history of China in the 20th Century. Beginning in the 1920s and stretching into the 1970s, the period was marked by a continuous succession of political convulsions and human conflict: the era of the warlords, the anti-Japanese war, the civil war between the Nationalists and the Communists, and the Cultural Revolution.

That the film’s setting is the stage of the Peking opera, and that its central characters two male opera actors, with one a huadan (an actor specializing in female rôles), increase the theatricality of its narrative. Director Chen Kaige seizes the opportunity to present Chinese grand opera to world audiences, and, on the whole, does not disappoint. He loses no chance in introducing the odd operatic flourish, the grand gesture, and the sort of symbolic stylization which is peculiar to Chinese opera.

Chen’s efforts crystallize in one powerful scene set during the Cultural Revolution, where Red Guards drag the opera actors out into the open, forcing them to confess their “crimes”. This cathartic scene is composed so that the victims are seen through a fire burning in the foreground. They pour out their emotions like irate souls burning in hell, throwing mutual accusations at each other with the grotesque body movements required of operatic performances. The power of their emotions is palpable, but that does not reduce one’s impression that the whole scene is eerily staged and stylized – the fire even appearing like symbolic strips of paper fluttering before the stage. The sensation of emotional conflagration is beautifully sustained throughout the film, and we are consequently moved by the many grand occasions when style and emotion merge in perfect fruition.

Farewell My Concubine is a melodramatic tale of love, jealousy and betrayal which transcends melodrama by its inexorable thrust towards tragedy. It is a film about two actors, Cheng Dieyi (Leslie Cheung) and Duan Xiaolou (Zhang Fengyi), who are forced to grow up in the world of make-believe. Their world is one populated with visages of painted faces peeking through heavy, elaborate costumes; people act and move in ritualized manner, knowing that fate pre-destines all. The two actors undergo strict training as young interns in an opera school run like a virtual Borstal institution, and become stars who acquire both celebrity and notoriety as time and political circumstances go by.

The special forte of Cheng Dieyi and Duan Xiaolou are the rôles for which they have been trained: the Emperor and his Concubine in the play Bawang Bie Ji (or The Emperor Bids Farewell to His Concubine). These rôles are the most representative of the performing styles of Cheng (playing the Concubine) and Duan (the Emperor). The themes of love, jealousy and betrayal are culled from the text of the opera which revolves around love but actually deals with honour and loyalty.

The screenplay, adapted and expanded from a novel by Hong Kong writer Lilian Lee (or Li Pik-wah, previously best known for Rouge Yanzhi Kou, her novel which provided the basis for Stanley Kwan’s 1989 film), looks at life as the inverse side of the stage: what actually prevails when the characters, thoroughly caught up with their parts on the stage, enter the real theatre of life. Jealousy and betrayal are the tragic and ironic opposites of honour and loyalty, results of Cheng’s and Duan’s inability to be true to their parts in life as on stage. Cheng sees their on-stage relationship as the ideal, for the Emperor and his Concubine were a perfect union. In real life, Cheng suffers an unrequited homosexual love for Duan, who rejects Cheng’s assertions that life and opera must be one.

Since its first release in Hong Kong over a year ago, a certain controversy has emerged about the portrayal of the homosexual Cheng Dieyi, with critics accusing the director of nothing short of homophobia. Chen is probably the first major Chinese film director to deal with homosexuality, a subject that is taboo in Chinese cinema. With no precedents to guide him, it has been said that he has relied on stereotypes.

There is, indeed, a foppish, fey-like quality to Leslie Cheung’s depiction of Cheng Dieyi, but it is not a shallow performance. The characterization serves to offset Duan Xiaolou’s callousness and insensitivity towards his partner; Cheng’s dilettantism hides an element of self-doubt and it is consistent with his training as an opera actor, one who must play female rôles. It is a performance full of nuances of denial and tragedy, traits which the character possesses all along and on which the childhood scenes are based. The scenes of the child Douzi (the boyhood name of Cheng Dieyi, which in turn is an assumed stage name) undergoing exacting and cruel training to become a female impersonator by suppressing his male side (as in his inability to master the line “I am by nature a woman”) are so poignant that Cheng’s growth into a homosexual adult assumes a psychological dimension largely missing in the original story.

These scenes are, in fact, additions to the book. Chen Kaige’s own contributions to the screenplay, which include the potent scene of a symbolic castration when Douzi’s extra finger on his right hand is cut off by his mother before
he can be accepted as a student in the opera school. Further additions include the character of Gong Li's prostitute, Ju Xian.

If Chen Kaige has offered audiences a stereotype, Leslie Cheung subverts it with an incredible performance, one which is totally effective in imparting Cheng Dieyi's private agony and the character's withdrawal into his own private realm. (Cheung, in fact, worked hard to win the role, having had to take over from John Lone who was originally hired to play Cheng Dieyi. Lone left to play the huadan in David Cronenberg's film version of *M. Butterfly*.) Still, even if Chen had failed to depict a homosexual character in his full human dimensions, he never loses his central theme.

The two stage partners are ersetz lovers who are able to consummate a relationship. The ultimate point of betrayal — and the cause of Cheng's jealousy — comes when Duan marries the prostitute Ju Xian. However, Chen shows us that it is the suppressive force of Chinese society that determines the betrayal; such an understanding leads us to the extraordinary dialectics of the condemnation scene during the Cultural Revolution, with the dramatic fire in the foreground, where both political and private recriminations are tossed into the same pot (all in all, one sees that the fate of Cheng Dieyi is a complex brew cooked up of political and abstract karmac ingredients). As someone who has lived through the Cultural Revolution and joined in its excesses (as a Red Guard, Chen criticized his own father, film director Chen Kaige, who has a credit as a producer), Chen has first-hand knowledge of personal betrayal in the context of social tyranny. The director has, in all his films, pitted his characters — who are classic idealists living in a private world of their own — against the might of concrete social forces, as well as abstract historical ones. Chen's distinguishing feature, which in fact he shares with his Fifth Generation directors, is his tendency to deal with a clash of destinies — private destiny against a social one.

In one other film, 1987's *King of the Children* (*Haisi Wang*), perhaps his masterpiece to date, Chen deals with the devastating spiritual and social effects of the Cultural Revolution. *Farewell My Concubine* looks at the Cultural Revolution from a more historical perspective, but the effect of its tragedy on the private person is unmistakable. The gloss and operatic grandeur makes it Chen's most accessible and commercial film so far. This by no means detracts from Chen's thematic cycle, his visual eye, his mastery of detail and pacing. On the contrary, Chen's grand seigneurial style points up his humanist preoccupations and his lofty ambitions to place Chinese cinema in a kind of philosophical master plan, the likes of which have not been seen since the heyday of D. W. Griffith, Erich Von Stroheim, Carl Dreyer and Akira Kurosawa. (J. Hoberman in *The Village Voice* has likened Chen Kaige to Irving Thalberg. Perhaps meant as a put-down, the comparison is not entirely inappropriate — Thalberg was similarly touched by grand ambitions.) With *Farewell My Concubine*, Chen Kaige has at last convinced Western audiences to go along with his master plan.

Further Reading


**BROKEN HIGHWAY**

*Broken Highway* is a tale about a release from the past. Perhaps the most idiosyncratic reference of all is to American art cinema of the 1950s (*East of Eden*, *The Night of the Iguana*, *Hud*, etc) through a certain literariness, not only in the sense of the considerable extent of the dialogue, but also as a function of the enigma of the characters themselves. Collectively weighted to a past heavy with the melancholia of a 1970s Fassbinder, exactly how they came to belong to that past remains something of a mystery, and there is no pay-off for putting it out. These characters are the evocation of the past that is Honeyfield. They are like sleepwalkers dreaming of the future and in need of the wakefulness which is the present — hence, perhaps, the symbolism of the opium in the film.

Angel (Aden Young), the sailor, arrives in Honeyfield to deliver a box of opium to a man "whose soul is as cold as a hole in the ocean". Angel is carrying out the dying wishes of his old sailor friend, Max (Dennis Miller), and Angel wears the cowboy boots given to him by Max. In Honeyfield, Angel meets Wilson (Bill Hunter), a local fisherman, Elias Kidd (Norman Kaye), who owns all of the land and to whom Angel is meant to give the opium, and Catherine (Claudia Karvan), a young woman attached for no apparent reason to Wilson. These characters negotiate their relationship to their past through Angel, mostly through monologue-like dialogue which doesn't really seem directed and is, atmospheric in its expression.

It seems everyone has been waiting for Max, who left Honeyfield as a young man of 17 to sail the seven seas. Max's mother, Pauline, who drowned in the river ten years ago and whom Catherine looks very much like, is also at the centre of the collective past and is symbolic of the love for which everyone grasps. The return of Max through Angel engages the collective melancholia and, eventually, with Tatts (David Field) as the final catalyst, Pauline, or the love she represents, is realized in the release of Catherine from Wilson to Angel's embrace.

McInnes' interest in "the gender disturbance between man and woman" finds provocative

**ANGEL (ADEN YOUNG) AND TATTS (DAVID FIELD). LARRIE McINNES’ BROKEN HIGHWAY.**

*CINEMA PAPERS* 97 / 98 - 49
and idiosyncratic expression in Broken Highway, and has to be one of her authorial trademarks. The more optimistic dynamic between man and woman with which the film concludes, namely that between Angel and Catherine as lovers, is traced as something of an Oedipal story.

The Oedipal triangle is completed by the character Tatts. He is a sailor from the ship with Max and Angel, and he follows Angel to Honeyfield to fight him for the cowboy boots. Without Tatts, one gets the impression Angel is haunted by the watery grave which is the ocean. The union between Angel and Catherine remains symbolic of that between mother and son; their love has connected, and yet the feeling is that man and woman remain provocatively in the zone of "gender disturbance" — although, perhaps, the release of Catherine from the much older Wilson is a complementary Oedipal release, and the film aims for a neat balance.

Often the landscape is a spectacular backdrop for the characters, as when Catherine and Angel drive along the road at night amidst the eerie, bursting firelight of burning cars. The relationship between character and setting, and between characters, as one of atmosphere rather than actuality, makes the story a lot less important than the look and feel of the film. In the sense that it is the weight and poetry of desire that McInnes sculpts, her film is remarkably powerful.

There are moments when the story and its resolutely atmospheric articulation do have the teeth of drama. One of these moments, and perhaps the most successful, is when Tatts wrestles the prostitute (Kris McQuade) in Max's hotel room for the silver charm bracelet she wears for Max. Here, the hyper-control of the black-and-white composition relaxes into the choreography of the physical struggle to suggest a violence cold and hellish beyond the realm of the visible. The power of evocation, also well carried by the soundtrack, is here both ultimate and specific.

A simpler yet just as well-crafted narrative moment is the shot of Tatts on board ship, rocking in and out of the shadow of a steel ladder as he contemplates his "dance" with Angel.

Broken Highway is brimming with evocative light and shadow, and the camera movements tunnel and glide to create a desire-scape of considerable menace. Frame after frame (and frame somehow feels more correct than shot), this all adds up to what seems to be an attempt to conjure the ineffable, the substance of desire or the essence of art cinema. Reaching for this as the story reaches for freedom and expression of love between man and woman, McInnes achieves contention and poetry in remarkable fusion. Perhaps a more definitive intertextuality would have allowed Broken Highway a rhythmically more accessible dramatic pulse, but this film offers a fullness of mood and vision rarely crafted so beautifully and thoroughly in Australian cinema.

(With thanks to Bill Roff.)

Notes
3 Ibid, p. 59.

Further Reading

BROKEN HIGHWAY

THE CUSTODIAN
RAYMOND YOUNIS

A custodian is literally one who protects and takes care of something that is of great value — perhaps invaluable. A custodian is also a guardian — indeed, this is one of the most important connotations of the term, which derives from the Latin custos, which means to guard, to keep secure and, therefore, to perpetuate, even at the highest cost. The numerous connotations that this term has are crucial. The film, to its credit, invokes most of these, for it includes not one but at least four figures who might be described as custodians.

The story concerns a policeman, Quinlan (Anthony Lapaglia), who discovers that he is surrounded by people who are "on the take", including his colleagues in the police force. He has also just walked out on his wife. She drinks programmatically and refers to him as a "philosopher". (The use of this term as a pejorative in the film is based on ignorance and misinformation, and does a grave injustice to the subject in the sense that it propagates a deeply erroneous concept.) She also makes some rather unkind remarks about his manhood and his inability to operate in the "real world", though exactly what that is is never explained. Moreover, his partner in the force, Church (Hugo Weaving), is clearly corrupt and expects his "friends", Quinlan among them, to remain silent or to be complicit in criminal activity. Quinlan, however, is haunted by the memory of his father who was "straight as an arrow" and in whose death the police were implicated. Quinlan is also tormented by the consequences of his father's death in relation to his mother's life. He is suspended because of his deteriorating "mental state".
Quinlan decides to combat corruption and draws a number of people into his net, including a lawyer, Ferguson (Barry Otto), an immature journalist, Reynolds (Kelly Dingwall), and a young woman, Jilly (Essie Davis). Of course, his decision becomes a decisive riposte to the barbs of his estranged wife, as well as a cataclysmic response to the unforgotten legacy of his dead father and the tragic fate of his mother. Clearly, this is a story, in one sense, of at least four custodians who are trying in their distinctive ways to guard the integrity of the individual and the judicial system, the ethic of choice, responsibility and authentic commitment within relationships, and the importance of redemptive potential, though in a purely secular context in a world which seems to be dominated by corruption, greed and violence.

Accordingly, the use of colour, especially in the early stages, is sombre and shadows abound. To heighten the viewer’s sense of mental dissociation, blues are used, for example, in rooms and on walls. This serves also to link the issue of abnormality and disturbance to the police force itself, which is often associated, of course, with this colour. Indeed, one striking image is of Quinlan dressed in darker blue – though not in police uniform – lying on a bed in a hotel room in which the walls are bright blue and in which it seems the whole image is awash in blue light. The effect is almost hallucinogenic, certainly, but the colour coding is transparent given the customary associations. It is also interesting to note that the blues give way to soft browns when Quinlan is with Jilly and when he is in the process of being saved. The effect is altogether calmer and less agitating.

The film also privileges close-ups for at least three reasons. First, as the director, John Dingwall, has stated, these draw emphasis away from the locations, which are multifarious and sometimes laboured and too measured – it is altogether calmer and less agitating. The focus is maintained as it were by another custodian of another kind, whose ghostly presence is only suggested outside of the frame and the image and its internal spatio-temporal structures. There is a consistency that colours the very artifice of the film and the very articulation of themes of corruption, expiration and atonement. Third, the close-ups highlight the moral dilemmas that are played out in the lives of the characters and that are evident in their gestures, expressions and interactions.

The film is concerned with a number of ideas and it is certainly not a vacuous one. On the most obvious level, it is a rites-of-passage film in which a young journalist gains maturity and becomes a more responsible citizen and a morally-committed person – an astonishing transformation, indeed, given the opportunism that one often finds in the profession in the “real world”. Perhaps there is a message here for your current journos. On another level, it is a film that deals with the attempt to reconcile the ghosts of the past and the values they embodied – inexorable and honourable voices – with the inadequacies and the failures of the present. The film is also a brusque and occasionally overstated critique of the materialistic ethic and of contemporary society whose chief form of worship takes place at the altar of the common – a society where the fabric is rent by the opportunistic pursuit of wealth, where wealth is used as a measurement of value.

The relationships in the film are also portrayed in a somewhat existentialist vein. The transitions from a type of bad faith and passivity to a more active sense of choice and commitment and, further, to an acceptance of responsibility for one’s actions and the momentous consequences of the exercise of one’s freedom, especially in terms of the lives of innocents and others, are handled well. The strange paradox of “mateship” which provides a moral foundation, even for characters who are otherwise disturbingly amoral and who feel no compunction over the taking of a life, is presented lucidly. One might call this a monstrous parody of mateship and, though it is not presented with the flair that is apparent in a film like Miller’s Crossing (Joel Coen, 1990), the point is made strongly and clearly.

Finally, though the build-up in the film is sometimes laboured and too measured – it is supposed to be, after all, a “ripping good tale” – though the style is largely conventional and unspectacular, and though the subject matter is familiar from countless films from The Detective (Gordon Douglas, 1968) to Serpico (Sidney Lumet, 1973) to Miller’s Crossing, this film is full of conviction. It does provoke thought on a number of important issues, not the least of which is the loneliness and isolation that an honest individual must operate in once he or she is within the system which is to be uncovered and, further, the achievement of a type of redemption through fellowship, re-established relationships and the loyalty and devotion of friends.

Further Reading
“OTTO). JOHN DINGWALL’S THE CUSTODIAN. T
he Merchant-Ivory team (the very names conjure up the blend of the commercial and the exquisite that so characterizes their films) have come up against an intractable problem in filming Kazuo Ishiguro’s Booker Prize-winning novel. It may have seemed to them another breath of the past, set in a handsome English country house, and so it is; but it is more importantly, for its entire length, a sustained interior monologue.

Everything about this masterly novel is filtered through the limited sensibilities and inhibited emotional responses of Stevens (Anthony Hopkins), butler to the well-meaning Fascist, Lord Darlington (James Fox), and his American successor, Lewis (Christopher Reeve), who buys Darlington’s country house after the war. Ishiguro uncharacteristically maintains the buttoned-down tone of the butler, whether in relation to his lordship’s politics or to his own repressed feelings for the housekeeper, Miss Kenton (Emma Thompson). His language is pedantically correct, with the correctness not of education but of careful copying, signified by the odd solemnism (e.g., “between you and I”, which the film faithfully transfers).

The novel’s essential action is in what Stevens recalls as he makes a journey in his new master’s car to seek out the long-gone housekeeper whom he hopes to persuade to return to Darlington Hall; in what he recalls, and in how he does so: that is, it is a drama of self-discovery and of self-revelation.

Theoretically, one accepts that no novel is unfilmable: there is, after all, a version of Finnegans Wake: but making sense of what is an interior experience in a medium which insists on giving Stevens’ fallible recollections an objective reality has proved a daunting challenge. We are offered not just Stevens’ memory of Lord Darlington as “a truly good man”, but, in James Fox’s brilliant performance, a palpably present figure of doury, misguided, aristocratic meddling in Anglo-German affairs. It now matters more whether Lord Darlington was or was not a traitor or merely a misled amateur in international affairs than how Stevens responded to what he understood of his master. In the process, Stevens, central to the reader’s interest, often seems reduced to the function of watcher in the film.

With the no doubt inevitable removal of Stevens from the film’s centre, and Anthony Hopkins’ subtle, minimalist playing almost emphasizes this, what remains are a great deal of talk and a pair of parallel dramas of more or less equal significance. The talk is often sharply and perceptively written in Ruth Prawer Jhabvala’s screenplay and given intelligent utterance by Hopkins, Emma Thompson and the rest, but whereas The Age of Innocence (Martin Scorsese, 1993), despite its bold use of the verbal, leaves one with an overwhelming sense of the look and feel – the physical and psychological texture – of its vanished world, The Remains of the Day stays in the mind as a
conversation piece against a background of handsome pictures.

As to the parallel dramas, it may be allowed that they are thematically linked as two studies of delusion and disillusion. Darlington has thrown in his lot with the Fascists, believing that "the Fuhrer is a man of peace" and holding out for appeasement, ignoring the warnings of the American diplomat who becomes the post-war owner of the house. He is utterly deluded into thinking that the severities of the Treaty of Versailles were wholly the cause of Germany's problems in the 1930s. James Fox's playing makes it possible to sympathize with the misguided individual while deploiring the huge error into which he falls. The film does not show his disillusion; this is simply made clear in references to him as a "traitor" who nearly went to gaol, of his dying "a broken man".

Stevens, no less wholeheartedly committed in his loyalty to Darlington and in the lifetime of service to an aristocratic household, is as blinkered as his master is to other possibilities. If he comes to realize that he has lived a life of paralyzed emotions, it is too late for him to do anything about this. Miss Kenton, not happily married, nevertheless refuses to return to Darlington Hall when Stevens finally tracks her down. Her reason is that she wants to be near her daughter who is pregnant: that is, she is thinking that the severities of the Treaty of Versailles were wholly the cause of Germany's problems in the 1930s. James Fox's playing makes it possible to sympathize with the misguided individual while deploiring the huge error into which he falls. The film does not show his disillusion; this is simply made clear in references to him as a "traitor" who nearly went to gaol, of his dying "a broken man".

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Schindler's List is based on the novel Schindler's Ark, written by the Australian author Thomas Keneally in 1982. The film pays close attention to the book's details, capable of capturing all its essence and power through the film's potent imagery.

Filmed in Poland in black and white, Spielberg uses that technique to create a documentary appearance, authenticating the experience. The grey tones make reference to this bleak, sombre and colourless period in human history. The black-and-white also exemplifies the extreme contrasts between the German life of privilege and the adversity of the Jews. In a lot of cases, the faces of Jews, particularly in the midst of their enforced squalor, are brightly lit, whereas the faces of Nazi officers are often captured in shadow, particularly in their "private" dealings with Schindler.

Extreme contrasts are also highlighted through the use of simultaneous montage sequences, with such a perfect interrelation of images we may not have witnessed since Francis Ford Coppola's Godfather films. One montage sequence stands out in particular: a Jewish wedding ceremony in the concentration camp where the groom steps on an old light globe in substitution of a glass, signifying the destruction of the temple; Commandant Amon Goeth (Ralph Fiennes) beating Helen Hirsh (Embeth Davidtz), his Jewish servant; Germans clapping at a club; and Oskar kissing some Jewish women on his birthday. The contrasts are unceasing and repulsive.

The vivid palette composed of shades of black and white reveal the complexities of the human characters depicted in the film. Schindler is intriguing. His persona is full of contradiction. He is no saint, yet he is a saviour. The character of Amon Goeth, the SS second lieutenant of the forced labour camp at Plaszow, too, is presented as perplexing. For him, the German people, the uniform, his male comrades and superiors, weapons and horses are all the objects loved and honoured by the Germans, protecting him from the real love relations with women and all that was feminine. Presented as a sadistical murderer, the human element to Goeth's character is disallowed through his conduct toward his Jewish slave, Helen Hirsh. He savagely beats her repeatedly because, against all the decrees of Nazi ideology, he is attracted to her. Although voluntary, his actions become an alien power, enslaving him to the real interests of the state. Goeth's dedication to Nazism overrides his morality.

Partial colourization is restricted to two scenes in the black-and-white footage. The first is where hundreds of Jews anxiously await the opportunity to receive a blauschein - a blue stamp which prolonged their ability to work within Nazi industry. As the stamp materializes on the document, the imprint appears in faded blue. Colourization is also apparent on the coat of a little girl escaping through a Nazi raid. Despite her red coat and susceptibility, she flees undetected. The next time we view this red coat is when it is heaped on a pile of rotted bodies awaiting incineration. The image reveals the inhumanity, indifference and horror of the war and its perpetrators.

Both instances are viewed from Schindler's point-of-view, which details the progressively slow shift in his character: from exploitation to protection of his Jewish workers.

The employment of hand-held cameras in various scenes adds to the realism of the footgear, presenting the images as timeless and inexhaustible. Overall, the style of Schindler's List is in stark contrast to all of Spielberg's previous films, especially his latest, Jurassic Park (1993), which is a marvel of computer technology for feature filmmaking. But just as interesting as the radically different styles are the structural affinities: the monstrosity of the Nazi regime, and its embodiment in the figure of Commandant Goeth, is a creation of terror equal to the monstrosities let loose in Jurassic Park. The Plaszow labour camp can even be viewed as something of a theme park lorded over by Goeth for fulfilling his arbitrary, psychotic fantasies.

And then there is Schindler. At first a mercenary, enjoying the spoils of his dealings on both sides, and somewhat indifferent to the fate of the Jewish people, he gradually takes on a paternal role and uses up all his wealth in protecting the workers from reaching the extermination camps. In this regard, Schindler has much in common with Dr. Alan Grant (Sam Neill), who is also a reluctant father-figure, overcomes self-interest and capillitates to caring for his charges. Thus, the marvel of computer technology in Jurassic Park, which compensated for its lack of story and characterization, in Schindler's List is matched by the story's incomparable marvel of human destruction and survival.

The end of Schindler's List is shot in colour. Optimistically, it reveals the survivors of the Schindlerjuden (Schindler Jews) and their families accompanied by the song "Yerushalayim Shel Zahav" ("Jerusalem of Gold"), which was written and sung after the six-day war in 1967, when Jerusalem was recaptured by the Jews. The scenes of optimism is attributed to the existence of Israel as the Jewish homeland, bestowing Jews with their own identity.

By posing Oskar Schindler as the hero of this film, Spielberg presents the Holocaust not exclusively as a Jewish event. It belongs to world history and to the domain of human ethics. However incomprehensible, the Holocaust was a human event. It reveals the capacity of the human race to wholesale annihilation and self-obliviation, abusing technology for the cause of destruction. The Holocaust destroyed the conviction that science and technology were beneficial to the human race. As time progresses, the Holocaust persists and develops as a symbol which may influence our sensibility in times of depression, catastrophe and chaos.

Schindler's List reveals Spielberg's wide-ranging talent as a filmmaker. He unearths, amidst all the ghastly events of the war, the power of an individual to "save the world entire". The balance of horror alongside the ray of hope constitutes a film of wide appeal. By focusing on the Schindler story to reflect on the Holocaust, he is able to personalize and sympathize with several of Schindler's Jews. As a spectator, one is able to identify with the characters, their fears, courage and determination, viewing each survivor's story as extraordinary.

Schindler's List is invaluable as a film, enlightening the public of the consequences of unquestioned obedience to government authority, particularly in light of the rise of frightening extremists in the late 20th Century. With the
It's clear Tarantino loves cinema as a popular form of expression. He can turn a movie on a six-piece if required, as we can see and hear in 
Reservoir Dogs (absurd humour and noir machismo and violence on either side of the razor, if you pardon the poor pun).

Tarantino does have an ear for dialogue, too. Culturally and radiophonically, he is tuned to the male-bonding dynamics of street argot, its absurd inflections, rituals and rhythms. Reservoir Dogs is a veritable Chandleresque talk-fest recalling some of the better lines and vivid metaphors of classical and neo-noir since the 1940s. Tarantino's assured artistry is partly based on the realization, to quote the ever-quotable Angela Carter, that American cinema "provided the furniture for all the living rooms, and the bedrooms, too, of the imagination of the entire world."

Yet what True Romance clearly demonstrates is that Tarantino as a writer-director is preferable to Tarantino as a scriptwriter for someone else. Unless a director has an absorbing empathy for the dramatic, generic and performative subtleties of the script, and an overall kinetic understanding of its far-ranging allusions (i.e., Sam Peckinpah, John Woo, Jean Cocteau, Marvel Comics, kung-fu movies, rockabilly, doo-wop music, Martin Scorsese and Elvis), Tarantino's input could become a pretentious charade, engaging in a disappointing exercise of heavy sign-posting.

Tony Scott's failure to capture on a regular basis the many generic shifts in storytelling, tone and mood is quite evident throughout True Romance. His particular style of directing is too oblivious to the subtleties of Tarantino's finely-calibrated script. Only on occasion does Scott demonstrate a reasonable capacity to represent some of its more dramatic and kinetic high points.

However, some great and witty dialogue does percolate through this uneven movie. One memorable scene is the multi-faceted, pun-encrusted "Sicilian" dialogue between mobster Vincenzo Coccotti (played by the tremendously-gifted actor Christopher Walken) and the stoic, but nevertheless funny, security guard Clifford Worley (Dennis Hopper) who, on the threshold of his imminent death, enlightens the dapper gangster about the "impeccable" African origins of his ethnic identity. This scene also captures (in substantive tour de force terms) Tarantino's generic-inflected propensity for satirical violence. Coccotti, much to his feigned displeasure, is forced by Clifford's egging-on about how his mother's ancestors were fucked by Moors many moons ago to shoot him (Coccotti's first personal killing, as we are told by him, since 1984). It is a scene that works on many different levels.

True Romance is a hyper-volatile, pop-art billboard of a noir movie. It rockets along with a post-modern sensibility teeming with references, which are not so successfully integrated into its dramatic and thematic fabric. A key scene which signals the film's Cinzano advertisement-like look — despite the depressed-city environs in the world of Clarence Worley (Christian Slater) and Alabama (Patricia Arquette) — happens in Clarence's work place: a comic and poster bookshop. This is a perfect metaphor of the bustling, "low"-art allusions which honeycomb the runaway couple's presence throughout the movie. One cannot help but feel that the widespread hip-hop referentiality is a symptom of the encroaching mental and physical vulnerability of the male protagonist.

The occasional scene between a carefully-framed, imaginary Elvis (Val Kilmer) — known as "le Mentor" — giving advice to Clarence on his next move is evidence of this vulnerability. It telegraphs to the audience the pervasive, cool icon that Elvis has become after his death. Because Elvis has been rendered in so many different and interesting ways in film, comics and popular magazines, Scott's tendency to
pump the Elvis angle is another problematic facet of the movie. Despite the seductive, Badlands-styled voice-over by Alabama, accompanied by music that also evoke the romantic tenor of Terence Malick's masterpiece, the many virtues of the script and some fine performances, True Romance becomes too glaringly confident in its clumsy attempt to render the awesome and sinuous balletic choreography of the action sequences of directors like Don Siegel, Peckinpa, or Woo. This is evident in the penultimate sequence where we encounter a triple-sided Mexican stand-off bathed in a shower of white feathers and blazing guns. Aside from the intricate moves necessary for the sequence's choreography of action, Scott fails to deliver the more subtle and moving contours of such elaborate gunplay. Instead, the broad, cartoonish humour of the set-piece mitigates against its rate gunplay. Instead, the broad, cartoonish "air brush" mentality for creating a frenetically-paced action comedy. Not that the film is clumsy in toto. It has a fair few engaging sequences, scenes and gestures—though these are, admittedly, more to do with Tarantino's scriptwriting than with Scott's direction. Where Scott excels is in another sequence: an intensely violent confrontation when Clarence (Gary Oldman), that she is through with whores. This is evident in the penultimate sequence. Drexl, with his scarred face and deadly pale eye, is worthy of Spielberg's Melvillian monster. Gary Oldman does a superbly modulated performance that is, chillingly. As Drexl, a Rastafarian-looking, bad-ass, white-pimp schooled in the argot of black street culture, Oldman projects an uncanny image of feral monstrosity.

As a study in character and motivation True Romance has merits, especially as it applies to the scene-stealing secondary characters played by Walken, Hopper and Oldman. These three exceptionally capable and galvanizing performers form the cornerstone of this full-throttle ("I want to live hard and fast and leave behind a good-looking corpse") noir comedy. Both Slater and Arquette are quite serviceable in their respective "teen" character roles. We are entitled to know more about them in the movie's early scenes where Clarence, a lonely, popular-culture buff who lives by an almost Kantian clockwork sense of reality, and Alabama meet in a cinema watching a kung-fu movie. So, too, the scenes where the couple try to extricate themselves from Drexl, Vicenzo and their taciturn hoods (who progressively feature weird macho beliefs, tics and a pervasive "Three Stooges" sense of violent humour) are finely chiselled. But the couple becomes progressively less engaging as the film furiously uns tops toward its inevitable ("Here we are in Mexico on a glorious beach with our child and things okay") ending, which is shot through with a golden light evoking the blissful patina of an early-1970s surfing movie.

One should not throw away the proverbial "baby with the bath water", though there is a temptation to do so. In regard to the more far-reaching nuances of Tarantino's script, Scott's True Romance is just adequate as everyday cinematic fare goes. Yet the film does possess a handful of gripping performances and certain noir moments of action and convention, making your time spent in the dancing celluloid aura of the movie theatre a reasonable 116 minutes or so.

Notes
1 Angela Carter, "Robert Coover: A Night at the Movies", in the author's posthumous collection of essays titled Expletives Deleted, Vintage, London, 1992, p. 131. Carter's enduring cinephillic interests can be measured by her moving idea of hiring a cinema (after she passed away in early 1992) for a week, and playing her favourite movies to her friends as a final gesture of friendship. I hope this is not an apocryphal story.

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ALLEN & UNWIN
SITES OF DIFFERENCE: CINEMATIC REPRESENTATIONS OF ABORIGINALITY AND GENDER
Karen Jennings, Australian Film Institute, South Melbourne, 1993, 88 pp., pb, rrp $14.95

MARCUS BREEN

To retreat from this challenge, to say that this opportunity is beyond our reach as a nation, beyond the limits of our collective intelligence and goodwill, would be to betray not just the indigenous people of Australia but ourselves, our traditions and our future. Films come and go, but discourse goes on forever. And part of the terrain in which the ebb and flow of debate and discussion takes place is the small magazines and journals that pepper the newsagencies, specialist bookstores and subscription-only publications. In their own ways, each publication bespeaks a new imagination taking up the valuable task of reading and re-reading films in public. Such ventures are usually exciting events, often presenting fresh voices and perspectives seeking to break out of the established tram lines of activity.

So the launch of The Moving Image by the AFI's Research and Information Centre is to be welcomed. This venture has the (relatively) substantial resources of public funding to sustain it. This is a luxury not always enjoyed when working for, and on, small magazines.

With this sort of public funding oomph, the venture can afford to be somewhat grandiose, and why not? We need a few publicly-funded grand ventures that don't look and sound like the Olympic Games for 2000! But the plan to make The Moving Image a four-times-a-year publication of about 30,000 words per issue may be asking too much of the small community of Australian film writers - not to mention the even smaller community of researchers. Another question is whether an audience will be found to subscribe. It's a challenge the six-person editorial board and the AFI itself may not find easy to sustain.

All of which means that the first publication of a new venture is examined more closely than subsequent ones, which can be a blessing for the writer seeking recognition for, and criticism of, the work, while it can also mean that later efforts are less noticed. Again, it is to be hoped that this is not the case... which brings me to the substance of this review of the first issue of this brilliant publishing initiative.

Karen Jennings undertakes a detailed, yet selective, examination of cinematic representations of Aboriginality and gender over 35 years. She begins with an explanation for the selection of the films which by the end of the study seems to be fading. This is the second recent example of a book which begins with a bold assertion of eclectic theoretical ideas which rapidly moves on to the substance of the writing without referring to the connections that need to be made to the theory. In both cases, the books were reworked Masters and Doctoral theses.

Despite this disappointing disjunction between theory and practical cultural analysis, Jennings has a useful project in mind. It is, she says, to examine "the ways in which 'racial' difference is inscribed ideologically within the textual features and generic conventions of specific films and on analysing the ways in which audiences are positioned in relation to these" (p. 8). Even 30,000 words makes this target massive.

The result of this research intention is a superb reading of films, in particular the mise-en-scène as signifier approach. And it is here that Jennings' work exhibits what Adrian Martin called "a certain textual-analytical facility". Martin maintains that this approach has dropped out of cinema study and criticism in recent years, to be replaced by the contextualizing and political-economy approach to research and analysis.

In Jennings' work, the textual analysis is valorized to such a degree that context seems to fade from view. Such a frustrating approach fails to make the obvious connection between text and context. As Gay Hawkins has pointed out in her study of community arts in Australia (From Nimbin to Mardi Gras: Constructing Community Arts), the discourse between text and context is the point at which meaningful negotiation occurs.

Jennings is sensitive to this view and tries hard to suggest ways of negotiating scenarios and political contexts. Ultimately, however, her resort to detailed textual analysis often floats free of the broader political concerns she outlines in the introductory theoretical chapter.

The scope of the book is, as she more or less admits, too wide. The chapter on documentary film does not sit easily within the rest of the material on Aboriginal representations in feature films, while the penultimate chapter on experimental films, such as Tracey Moffatt's Nice Coloured Girls (1987) and Night Cries: A Rural Tragedy (1990), could be another book. Nevertheless, the chapter on documentary filmmaking, while skating over dozens of unmentioned documentary films, points to Two Laws (1981) and My Survival as an Aboriginal (1979) as fine illustrations of engaged filmmaking, producing equally brilliant results. Which brings to mind the opening quote made by Paul Keating when introducing the Mabo legislation to Federal Parliament: there is a desperate need to find new and better ways of expressing our collective and individual lives.

Although this criticism is detailed and not very positive, this first issue of The Moving Image offers numerous insights that should provide a valuable starting point for other writers in the field and the editors responsible for the publication (of which Jennings is one). The unwieldy dimensions of this first issue suggest the need for a concentrated editorial policy, aimed at assisting writers to maintain the focus of the material.

This is a welcome and healthy addition to Australian film scholarship. Karen Jennings has gamely put her work on the line and made a significant contribution to the discourse on Australian film and society, by being first in line. I look forward to seeing and reading more good reports from the coal face of Australian film studies.
THE FILMS OF ALFRED HITCHCOCK


KEN MOGG

David Sterritt's primer on Hitchcock seems forever about to pin down something crucial about the films, but never quite succeeds. In the end, Hitchcock's detachment defeats both the critic and his definitions. Even so, I commend what he says about the climax of Lifeboat (1943). The moral issues raised when Willy, the Nazi U-boat captain, is killed by a "crowd of 'good guys'" are subordinate to the murder itself, "which has its own inescapable life" (pp. 17-8). This shows how in Hitchcock's universe "profundely physical conflict" is the arbiter. This is a very good point, it seems to me.

As a test, consider these six key films to which the book devotes individual chapters: Blackmail (1929), Shadow of a Doubt (1943), The Wrong Man (1956), Vertigo (1958), Psycho (1960) and The Birds (1963). Only in the case of The Wrong Man does physical conflict or its threat not figure prominently at the climax — and even then there it is latent in the face-to-face confrontation of 'Manny' Balestrero (Henry Fonda) with his 'double'. But now, is this element of physical force really the most important thing? What about a tendency of the films to finally push 'beyond' philosophy (though not, I think, beyond morality)?

Repeatedly, as I read Sterritt's detailed descriptions of the films, I thought of Bertrand Russell's salutary remark that "no one has yet succeeded in inventing a philosophy at once credible and self-consistent". Sterritt himself cites the "dialogic" principle of literary theorist M. M. Bakhtin, whereby "everything means, is understood, as a part of a greater whole" (p. 6). In other words, everything is both relative and subjective. My point is that some such assumption about the limits of our understanding is implied in the typically physical Hitchcock climax. Or, at any rate, that's what I inferred when I read Sterritt's oxymoron concerning a murder with an "inescapable life" of its own! Arguably, only life itself, conceived as a force, is absolute — and even it needs death to give a measure.

From this it seems to follow that, as living persons, we should be humbled by anything that reminds us of our true state, about which philosophy is unable to speak either fully or directly. If I had to characterize in a phrase the cautionary message at the end of Lifeboat or of The Birds, "be humble" might be as apt a description as any.

Here seems a suitable place to explain Hitchcock's "detachment", which I suggest is what defeats Sterritt's attempts to pin the films down. In an obvious way, it causes him to make points about the films that are one-sided. Quoting Tania Modleski (whose 1988 book on Hitchcock is exemplary), he describes an important Hitchcock theme as "fear of the devouring, voracious mother" (p. 7) — without noting, however, the concomitant theme which concerns love for the 'good', nurturing mother, something felt most strongly in some films where that mother is absent (like the 1937 Young and Innocent), but not wholly missing from the depiction of Mrs Brenner in The Birds.

Or, again, Sterritt refers to the films' "equation of knowledge and danger" (p. 7), making much of Hitchcock's repeated use (in 1934 and 1956) of the title The Man Who Knew Too Much. (For the record, though, that title comes from G. K. Chesterton, who used it for a collection of tales in which conventional justice has to be waived — danger or no danger.) But, equally, there are other Hitchcock films whose characters clearly know too little, among them The Wrong Man and The Birds. In short, Hitchcock takes life as he finds it, and it's the resulting complexity and ambiguity which Sterritt notes but never quite embraces.

In a more subtle way, too, Hitchcock's detachment puts him where Sterritt (a hit film reviewer for The Christian Science Monitor) seems reluctant to go — though not before saying that the films sometimes signify "that heaven and earth may indeed contain more things than are dreamed of by a materialistic philosophy" (p. 81). More than once, Sterritt is puzzled by Hitchcock's demonstrations of 'negative capability', such as a scene in The Birds in which Mitch (Rod Taylor) makes to throw a stone at some crows, and Melanie (Tippi Hedren) intervenes. Sterritt can't work this out: "it's not clear whether [Melanie] dreads stirring up the situation or [whether she] feels some strange, residual concern for the birds" (p. 138). Actually, Melanie's passivity here, and Mitch's opposite reaction, has echoes of the Scottie-Madeleine relationship in Vertigo, where Madeleine's quick- etude is almost Buddhist, something which simultaneously fascinates and repels Scottie. (The Buddhist, or mystic, element is even more pronounced in the short novel, by the way.) Moreover, an ambivalence towards self-abandonment also occurs elsewhere in Hitchcock's work.

I'm saying that Sterritt never defines what is at stake here. This, despite the following accurate account of The Wrong Man:

the closest Manny may come to transcendence of his passive/masochistic daily life is, ironically, through an ultimate act of submission [in prayer] to the ultimate dominating power. (p. 81)

And despite this true description of the end of Psycho:

That is, Norman consummates what classicist Norman O. Brown, in Life Against Death (1959), calls the Oedipal project of becoming father of oneself. The question is: Does he do it by finally 'possessing' the mother or, rather, by being possessed by her? In any case, what I'd now like to note is this: How close do Hitchcock's films come to merging West and East? Norman in his cell at the end of Psycho, draped in a blanket that makes him resemble a Buddhist monk, and intoning, "I'm not even going to say that fly", provides at least a parody of what Buddhists (and Hindus) call Nirvana, the abolition of individuality when it is fused into the collective soul ...

Surprisingly often, in fact, Hitchcock's films imply a way of seeing what lies 'beyond' the particular film or world his characters inhabit. This is largely what I meant above when I referred to characters who know too little. In Vertigo, the Chinese symbol for 'double happiness' goes apparently unremarked in the wrought-iron railing outside Scottie's front door. And at the end of Rear Window (1954), the title of the book which Lisa (Grace Kelly) pointedly does not read is, suggestively enough, Beyond the High Himalayas.

This review, then, has had a hidden agenda. Earlier, I quoted Bertrand Russell on how no one has yet invented "a philosophy at once credible and self-consistent". If there's one person who disproves that comment it's surely the
German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), still virtually the only serious thinker in the West to combine elements of Western and Eastern thought. The key to Schopenhauer’s philosophy and ethics is his emphasis on Will, or life-force. And I must say that in recent times I’ve learnt far more about Hitchcock’s films from studying Schopenhauer than I have from reading Sterritt! Where Schopenhauer is lucid and certainly as self-consistent as any universal thinker could be, Sterritt is still groping towards an understanding of Hitchcock in a global context – where, indubitably, the director and his films belong.

Still, I’m not saying that parts of Sterritt’s book aren’t fun to read. The best chapter is the one on Psycho, which draws heavily on Freud to spell out the film’s running gag concerning money and “anal-compulsive” behaviour. In particular, Sterritt stresses the characters’ attachment to what they’ve ‘made’, beginning with the millionaire Cassidy’s pleasure in “dumping out” $40,000 for the women in Lowery’s office to admire. Later, after Marion’s car with the wad of money in its boot has bottomed in a faecal swamp, Norman retains his own “illicit bundle” – his mother’s corpse. “The movie’s symbolic order”, we’re told, “remains entirely intact, its first energizing object impressively exchanged for one far larger, smellier, and more forbidden.” (p. 110)

My sole criticism of this is that Sterritt doesn’t see the joke’s point. For that, though, you can always turn once more to Brown’s Life Against Death (which frequently cites Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, as well as Freud) and read there about our society’s unconscious equation of faeces with child, gift, property, and even weapon; and about why anything ‘puritanical’ desire to transcend the body – such as I think Marion Crane shows in Hitchcock’s film – ironically posits that body’s continued status as excrement.

**LIGHTING BY DESIGN: A TECHNICAL GUIDE**
Brian Fitt and Joe Thornley, Focal Press, Oxford, 1992, 321 pp., pb, rrp $29.95

**THE CONTROL OF LIGHT**
Brian Fitt and Joe Thornley, Focal Press, Oxford, 1992, 184 pp., pb, rrp $49.95

_Leilani Hannah_

Lighting by Design is the parent book of the two. It is a little perplexing as to why the authors decided to publish The Control of Light, since it reproduces word-for-word some of the chapters in Lighting by Design. In the preface of The Control of Light, they explain this by stating that after writing Lighting by Design they realized the need for a book purely on the control of light:

A vast amount of information is available on the art of lighting the subject, and how to control that illumination. However, there is a surprising lack of material on the technical approach to lighting the subject. We have set out to examine lighting and to try to explain the technical aspects of controlling it.

This seems a rather vague differentiation, and there are some chapters included from Lighting by Design that could be argued are not technically related to “the control of light” – chapters such as “Servicing, maintenance and hired equipment” and “Safety”.

This said, this review will concentrate on Lighting by Design which contains all of the chapters. This is not a book that discusses lighting techniques or the aesthetics of lighting. Basically, it is a book that explains the principles of light and the way we have come to control and measure it. In doing so, it covers topics such as light meters, lighting sources, systems for rigging lights in studios and stages, and electrical information. It also gives advice on maintaining lighting equipment, safety considerations and how to deal with the business side of things.

Lighting by Design is a thoroughly-detailed technical manual that considers many aspects rarely found in technical publications (safety, servicing and contracts, for example). In addition, it contains a complete colour chart of available gels, a glossary of lighting terms, a world television-and-mains-voltages table, a table of all available lamps and their output and range at spot and flood, and a table of luminare symbols.

This book takes a different slant to most technical books, as it includes very detailed historical information on the topics covered in each respective chapter. The opening chapter, “Theory of Light”, is an introduction to the early discoveries of light: Franz Boll’s discovery of “Visual Purple”, Jan Evangelista Purkinje’s discovery of the human eye’s ability to change from colour perspective during daylight to black-and-white perception at night, Newton’s discovery of refraction of light, and Heinrich Hertz’s discoveries of the properties of electromagnetic waves. All of this background information is very engaging and makes much of the technical data that is required to be understood today relative and accessible.

For example, by describing the evolution of such things as tungsten lamps, blackbody radiation and colour temperature, the book provides a historical context which highlights the inherent interconnectedness of this data. This is an approach seldom found in technical publications on lighting, and is an approach the authors maintain throughout the book on all of the subjects discussed.

It is also very uncommon to see such detailed information on stage and studio lighting design. With regard to this, the authors cover considerations such as safety aspects of designing lighting systems for studios and stages, how to go about drawing up a plan for a building that has no existing lighting system, special considerations for stage lighting design, television studio lighting, and air conditioning, power and acoustic requirements.

A significant chapter is one concerning light measurements. Once again, the chapter begins with a historical perspective relating artificial light to “caveman’s times” and man’s desire to extend the hours of daylight for one’s own purposes. They discuss the evolution of methods for creating artificial light and the need to create a standard for measuring light intensity – which is the footcandle. They also explain the equation of lux to footcandles and properties of light.

There is a lot of information aimed at gaffers in business, such as problems to avoid while buying or hiring equipment, understanding manufacturer’s catalogues and diagrams, assessing the manufacturer’s quote of colour temperature, negotiating and writing specifications.
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for the equipment you need, awarding contracts, etc.

Another chapter that one doesn’t often see in these kinds of books is one on servicing, maintenance and hire d equipment which covers advice on what spares and expendables to hold and how much responsibility should be taken on board for hired equipment. They also explain the EN 60598, which is a set of safety standards published by the International Electrotechnical Commission. But with Australia currently in the process of introducing a new set of safety codes and regulations, this serves more as a basic guide to safety rather than an indication of legal standards required to uphold.

There are very few books available on the market today that are as diverse and detailed in their information. Lighting by Design is a rare find among technical volumes and is a worthwhile addition to the needs of any gaffer, director of photography or theatre lighting designer.

ART & ARTISTS ON SCREEN

ANNA DZENIS

John Walker’s book Art & Artists on Screen acknowledges that millions of people experience the fine arts second hand via “the movies”. Walker aims to provide a critical study of “those key English language films” about art and artists from 1930 to the present day. He is re-searching the nature and quality of this experience. Coming as he does from an art historical background, he also proclaims that historians must take an interest in the audio-visual world, if they are not to become schizo-phrenics, rejected by society as the representatives of an outdated erudition. [p. 1]

In this way, the project begins positively, locating itself in a contemporary framework, and is motivated by a passion for the arts and an evident love for the object. The study is divided into four sections: 1. Bio-pics of real artists; 2. Films about fictional artists and architects; 3. Artworks, dealers and critics in films; the artist in Hollywood; and 4. Artists’ films and arts documentaries.

The film biographies of artists selected for study Rembrandt (Alexander Korda, 1936), Moulin Rouge (John Huston, 1952), Lust for Life (Vincente Minnelli, 1956), The Agony and the Ecstasy (Carol Reed, 1965), Caravaggio (Derek Jarman, 1986), Örvin (Wolf at the Door, Henning Carlsen, 1986), and Camille Claudel (Bruno Nuyttens, 1988). Each piece is illustrated by production stills of the actor next to a veri-similar etching, painting or photo of the artist under study. In defence of Hollywood, such cinematic portrayals are seen to be a continuation of a centuries-old tradition that began with Giorgio Vasari’s 14th-Century biographies of Renaissance artists. The mass media’s focus on the individual merely repeats the practice of such classic art history texts.

Motivated by an interest in truthful representation, Walker led to the following conclusions. Most of the films focus upon the artist rather than the art. The work is marginalized, often seen to be an expression of personal subjectivity rather than a construction motivated by cause or reason. The history, social context and infrastructure of the art world are sketchy at best. He further concludes that in a film which seeks to condense an entire life into one hundred minutes, often all that remains are the melodramatic incidents, the romantic relationships and the tempestuous or suicidal tendencies. The dominance of a white European male genius is universally evident, except for the inclusion of the film Camille Claudel. (Camille Claudel was the sculptor who was Rodin’s mistress.)

In any case, this film transgresses the original parameters of the study to only examine key English language films. The reason for its inclusion, and by implication the exclusion of all other “foreign language” films, is never explained.

Walker finds American films of the 1970s and ’80s to be even further compromised. The selection here may surprise, ranging as it does from The Towering Inferno (1974), Manhattan (1979), An Unmarried Woman (1978) Beverly Hills Cop (1984), After Hours (1985) 9 1/2 Weeks (1989), Legal Eagles (1986), Wall Street (1987) and the “Life Lessons” episode of New York Stories (1989). In these films, according to Walker, the art world, particularly New York, appears as an exotic, decadent domain, with designer lifestyles, an aura of perverse eroticism and the greedy accumulation of expensive commodities. What is therefore ignored is the possibility of alternative artistic practices and cultural milieus, such as feminist and socialist artists and their art.

The Selznick-Hitchcock-Dali collaboration on Spellbound (1945) is singled out for special attention because it’s a celebrated case of an artist coming to Hollywood. This is a particularly scathing attack. Walker labels Salvador Dali the first exploitation artist, claiming that during his years in America he exploited his early achievements, and that of Surrealism in general, for cash, publicity and notoriety. Spellbound is also unfavourably compared with the “more complex, interesting and much earlier Un Chien Andalou [Luis Bunuel, 1928].”

Hence Walker rapidly argues himself into an unenviable position. While recognizing the importance of the cinema as a mainstream communicator, his study of the cinematic representation of art and artists reveals a history of compromise and failed promises. The disappointing nature and extent of this compromise sadly dominates most of the text.

The disappointments are, however, interspersed by occasional moments of joy. Derek Jarman’s Caravaggio and Peter Greenaway’s The Draughtsman’s Contract (1982) and The Belly of an Architect (1987) are revered as articulations of new hope, new possibilities. Caravaggio is described as more poetry than subjective response in the medium of film to the painter’s life and work. Jarman’s creative decision to offer contemporary paraphrases rather than recreate Caravaggio’s work is highly praised. Greenaway’s The Draughtsman’s Contract is described as the result of a conjunction of fine art, avant garde film, European art cinema and film theory. For Walker, Greenaway is always conscious of the pleasure of imagery, language and scholarship, delighting in playing games with the conventions of film and genre, constructing films which are surprising, witty and visually stunning.

For Walker, the artistic success of these
films can be explained by the background of the filmmakers. Greenaway and Jarman are exceptional because they originally trained as fine artists. And so, by implication, these remarkable films are not so surprising at all. It is the power and the primacy of the fine arts.

The real contribution of Walker's book is to begin mapping a genre in a field of study where there has been very little coherent work. However, as Walker looks backward to a betrayal of promise and possibilities, it is the gaps in his critical practice which are most suggestive for future analysis.

Limiting this study to "key English language films" may encourage a particular kind of ideological analysis, but it also means major exclusions. Fascinating, magical immersions into artistic process and practice such as Tarkovsky's Andrei Rubeliev (1966), Rivette's La Belle Noiseuse (1991) and Corneau's Tous Les Matins du Monde (1992) warrant attention and rapture. However, there is no place for them in Walker's study. Even the favoured Peter Greenaway has been limited to only two films because they have at their centre a painter and an architect.

This points to a major limitation of the study. The question about what constitutes a work of art, and who are the artists, is not up for contestation. The parameters, in fact, are fairly narrowly defined. As Walker says,

"For the purpose of this text, 'artists' will be defined as those recognised as such by the art world. These individuals have generally been trained at art schools (film and video departments are to be found in a number of colleges), have created paintings and sculptures as well as films, have exhibited in art galleries, and museums, and have been reviewed in the art press. [p. 161]

Writers, actors and musicians obviously don't count. Neither do film directors, sound designers, production designers, directors of photography, art directors, costume designers, gaffers, etc.

This unnecessarily limits the scope of the study. As Umberto Eco says in In Travels in Hyperrality:

Once upon a time there were the mass media and they were wicked, of course and there was a guilty party. Then there were the virtuous voices that accused the criminals. And Art (ah, what luck!) offered alternatives for those who were not prisoners of the mass media. Well, it's all over. We have to start again from the beginning, asking one another what's going on. [p. 150]

Art & Artists on Screen is not the end of this debate. The range of its study is so limited, and it's so out of sync with our fundamentally-decentred cultures, that it's barely even a beginning. Today, from the development of discursive ideologies to sampling in contemporary music, from interactive multimedia productions, to global exhibiting and publishing on

"The Net", we are living an exciting and unclaimed artistic future. Such contemporary cultural practices radically redefine our relationship to art and artistic endeavour. In this light, Art & Artists on Screen appears strangely anachronistic, like the practices it admonishes. Perhaps John Walker has fallen prey to his own warnings, of being "rejected by society as the representative(s) of an outmoded erudition."

AUSTRALIAN FILM 1978-1992
A SURVEY OF HISTORICAL FEATURES
Compiled and edited by Scott Murray, Oxford University Press, in association with the Australian Film Commission and Cinema Papers, Melbourne, 1993, 426pp, $39.95

As this long-awaited 'sequel' to Andrew Pike and Ross Cooper's pioneering work, Australian Film 1900-1977: A Guide to Feature Film Production, was researched and edited by the editor of this magazine, a review in these pages was felt to be inappropriate.

Let it just be said, the book, which is being reprinted (with some minor corrections) due to the demand, covers every Australian feature to be theatrically released in 1978-92. Each film has a page devoted to it, listing all the major credits, recorded from the screen, with at least one still and a 300-500 word analysis by one of the 50-odd leading Australian writers on film. There is also an Appendix on all features made during the period but not released theatrically.

LONG SHOTS TO FAVOURITES: AUSTRALIAN CINEMA SUCCESSES IN THE 90S
Mary Anne Reid, Australian Film Commission, Sydney, 1993, 111 pp., pb, rrp $14.95

Clearly-written case study of three recent Australian successes: Proof, Strictly Ballroom and Romper Stomper. Emphasis is on the workings of the marketing, distribution and exhibition side of the business. To be reviewed in a forthcoming issue.

THE MACGUFFIN
NEWSLETTER OF THE FILM/ALFRED HITCHCOCK SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP
Edited by Ken Mogg, East Melbourne, 4 issues per year, $4 individual copies; $14 annual subscription

The MacGuffin is far more than a neatly compiled mass of current news items. It's twenty or more pages per edition is packed with film and book reviews, correspondence, information, listings, and at least one lengthy, scholarly article — all on Alfred Hitchcock, his career and films.

It is an intriguing blend of Hitchcock fandom and scholarship. Copy is mostly supplied by Mogg, though contributors of late have included such diverse film commentators as Movie mogul Charles Barr, Adrian Martin and the film critic for The Australian, Evan Williams.

Hitchcock-specific material is a priority, yet items of general interest are also welcome. Recent editions published a review of Jane Campion's The Piano by Freda Frieberg and a review of the 1993 Cannes Film Festival.
Mogg puts together a breathless, fact-filled, comment-and-critique style publication that certainly redefines the concept of a newsletter.

**THE FILMS OF VINCENZO MINNELLI**

To be reviewed in a forthcoming issue by Tom Ryan.

**TONY CURTIS: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY**
Tony Curtis and Barry Paris, Heinemann, London, 1993, 352 pp., hb, rrp $34.95

To be reviewed by Rolando Caputo in the next issue.

**MORAN’S GUIDE TO AUSTRALIAN TV SERIES**
Albert Moran, AFTRS, North Ryde, NSW, 1993, 672 pp., pb, rrp $24.95

To be reviewed in a forthcoming issue by Ken Berryman.

**100 BEST FILMS OF THE CENTURY**

To give an indication of where this book is coming from, it is worthwhile quoting Norman’s preface at some length:

All I attempt to offer is a quick glide across the first 100 years of what is potentially (and sometimes actually) the most exciting art form of the twentieth century, my purpose being to pick out the most significant developments and thereby give some kind of context to the final section — my choice of the best 100 films of the first 100 years [...] Concerning that list there is one thing of which I am quite sure: you will not agree with it. Oh, yes, you will agree with some of it; there are films included that would undoubtedly appear on everybody’s list but equally there are several, maybe many, which would not appear on any but mine. And not only will some of the exclusions upset you but so will the omissions. Why, you will wonder was this not mentioned? Or this? Or this? Or that? And the answer quite simply is because it is my selection — not yours, nor anyone else’s. [p. xi]

To which, quite simply, the reader should respond: So why bother reading on? This is cinephilia of the worse kind. It is not an argument which attempts to convince the reader of the worth of the 100 films selected; instead, the possessive nature of the book (“my selection”) offers a power-position that should be uncritically accepted. Norman’s context for selection is no more than a rudimentary sketch of the first 100 years, which merely allows him to dish out thumbnail evaluations of almost entirely American films. Of all the attempts to cash in on the centenary of cinema, this is likely to remain one of the least convincing.

**THE PIANO**

The script of the 1993 Palme d’Or winner, dotted throughout with a fair selection of stills. Bloomsbury’s presentation looks impressive, but content is no different from many other published film scripts. It includes cast and crew credits, notes on extra dialogue, glossary of Maori terms, and excerpts from the press kit compiled by Miro Bilborough.

**A SIEGAL FILM AUTOBIOGRAPHY**
Don Siegal, Forward by Clint Eastwood, Faber & Faber, London-Boston, 1993, 500 pp., hb, rrp $45

To be reviewed in a forthcoming issue by R. J. Thompson.

**THE TELEVISION PA’S HANDBOOK**
Avril Rowlands, Focal Press, Great Britain, 2nd edition, 1993, 244 pp., pb, $49.95

**WORKING IN COMMERCIALS: A COMPLETE SOURCEBOOK FOR ADULT AND CHILD ACTORS**

Like other Focal Press publications, these two books are geared toward professionals, students and potential newcomers of each respective field. Their intention is to develop existing skills by blending theory and practice, and a thorough A-to-Z approach which take into account the changes (technological, economic, etc.) in each area of practice.

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**Notes**


13. The Thrilling Suicide (shot c. December 1898)
A young unmarried woman with a baby is seen by a river. “She returns again and again to her child, caresses it, and finally throws herself into the water, whereupon two blood-and-fire [Salvation Army] men appear on the scene.” One throws his coat aside and plunges into the water to save the girl’s life, while the other runs to get a boat, and between them they save the betrayed girl. See War Cry (Melbourne), 1 July 1899, p. 3. Earliest known reference: South Australian Register (Adelaide), 20 December 1898.

14. The Drunken Swell (shot c. December 1898)
“A Salvation Army officer who has had his War Cry thrown upon the ground, seizes the drunken man dressed in his best clothes, carries him into the [Salvation Army] shelter, and sits on him until he gets sober”. Refer: Rockhampton Bulletin (Queensland), 25 October 1899, pp. 7-8. Earliest known reference: South Australian Register, 20 December 1898.

Further detail unavailable. Earliest known reference: South Australian Register (Adelaide), 20 December 1898.

A smallpox scare on the ship bringing the Salvation Army’s founder on his third Australian tour necessitated a week’s quarantine at Woodman’s Point near Fremantle. He lived in a small bush hut during quarantine and could speak to visitors over a wall, probably the subject of the film. The General recorded two speeches on wax cylinders during this visit. Earliest known reference to film: Port Fairy Gazette, 27 February 1900.

17. Walhalla, Victoria: North Long Tunnel Wood Shoot in Operation (shot 28 February 1899)
Taken by Perry, assisted by Rumble and Dutton. Reference is ambiguous; may have only been a “still” photograph. Refer: Walhalla Chronicle, 3 March 1899.


Shot by Perry with Williams’ assistance. “While the boys and girls [from Pakenham, Brunswick and Bayswater] were drawn up in line, on the lawn, the General passed in and out between them, shaking hands with their officers, and, now and again, waving his hat, while a cinematographe film was exposed.” Earliest known reference: War Cry (Melbourne), 29 April 1899, p. 10.

20. General William Booth at Riverview Boys’ Home, Queensland (14 April 1899?)
Doubtful attribution – description in Melbourne Argus is suspiciously like the preceding item: i.e., “the elderly General is depicted being given three cheers by the boys of the home, to which the General responds by waving his hat.” If the locale has been mistakenly reported, the film is almost certainly the one taken at Bayswater. Earliest known reference: Argus (Melbourne), 4 July 1899.

21. Burning the Martyr (April 1899?)
Possibly an early segment incorporated into Herbert Booth’s lecture, Soldiers of the Cross, or could be an imported film. First shown at Collingwood Salvation Army Hall, 9-10 April 1899. Earliest known reference: War Cry (Melbourne), 15 April 1899, p. 10.

Conclusion of General Booth’s third Australian visit, showing “the General going on board the SS Arcadia surrounded by his officers and friends, and the Commandant [Herbert Booth]. The scene was an exceptionally fine one, and as the General passed and raised his hat to the crowd around the ship there was an enthusiastic burst of applause.” (Refer: Albury Daily News, 6 October 1899; Port Fairy Gazette, 2 November 1900; War Cry (Melbourne), 12 August 1899, p. 10.) Earliest known reference: War Cry, 20 May 1899, p. 10.

23. SS “Arcadia” Leaving Australia (May 1899).
Shot by Perry. Showed Commandant Herbert Booth on the pier at Largs Bay, South Australia, leading the Salvation Army in the hymn “God Be With You Till We Meet Again” as the Arcadia, returning his father to England, left the wharf and sailed off. Earliest known reference: War Cry, 20 May 1899, p. 10.

24. Bayswater Boys’ Home, Victoria: Cows Being Paraded in for Milking (June 1899?)
May have been taken as early as Easter, 1898. South Australian Register, 25 July 1899, p. 6, states “the animals were numberless as they marched past, all plump, well-conditioned kine, with not an outward sign of disease”. Earliest known reference: War Cry (Melbourne), 1 July 1899, p. 3.

25. Riverview Boys’ Home Near Brisbane: Boys Diving into the Brisbane River (probably shot June 1899)
Naked boys diving from a log into the Brisbane River. Stills taken before and after this dive are held in the Perry album of Social Institution photos, Salvation Army Archives, Melbourne. One is reproduced in War Cry, 17 June 1899, p. 3. Earliest known reference to film: Brisbane Courier, 18 July 1899, p. 6.

26. Collie Estate, Western Australia: Herbert Booth’s Party Fording a Stream (probably shot September 1899)
Shot by Joe Perry at the newly-acquired estate later used for an Army Boys’ Home. Probably taken at Rose’s Ford: “The water was up to the bellies of the horses. It is a dangerous spot. ’Twas here two years ago that Brigadier Saunders had to jump in to help save the buggy and horses.” Refer: War Cry, 16 September 1899, p. 7. Earliest known reference: War Cry, 23 September 1899, p. 7.
27. Collie Estate, Western Australia: Herbert Booth Felling the First Tree (probably shot September 1899)
Shot by Joe Perry at “Camp Glory,” where the party included Herbert Booth, Joe Perry, Brigadier Saunders, Adjutant Suttor, Captain Arnott, Staff-Captain McMillan and their bush guide, Mr Pollard. Earliest known reference: War Cry, 23 September 1899, p. 7.

28. Collie Estate, Western Australia: Herbert Booth Burning Blackboy Trees (probably shot September 1899)

29. Slim Home Scene (September 1899?)

30. Christmas Salvation Encampment at Brighton (Melbourne) (December 1899)
Shot by Joe Perry at the open air encampment at Brighton Beach, where a circus tent accommodating 4000 was erected for services in “Simmonds Paddock” near Brighton Pier. Commandant Booth led most services. Refer: War Cry (Melbourne), 6 January 1900, p. 9; Port Fairy Gazette, 2 November 1900. Earliest known reference: War Cry, 27 January 1900, p. 9.

31. Brigadier Bruntell Leading a Salvation Army Open-Air Meeting (December 1899?)
Further detail unavailable, but the date suggests that the film featured part of the Brighton Encampment activities of Christmas 1899. Earliest known reference: War Cry, 27 January 1900, p. 5. Note: Passion Play Films, the life of Christ in 13 parts, were first exhibited at the Salvation Army’s Collingwood Corps on 30 December 1899. Formerly assumed to be Limelight Department productions, the lack of any evidence for their local production, and the close match of a list of its 13 parts to the Lumière company’s La Vie et la Passion de Jesus-Christ (1898) indicate foreign origins. The segments Christ Entering Jerusalem and The Crucifixion were later used as the opening illustrations of Herbert Booth’s lecture Soldiers of the Cross (1900). Refer: War Cry (Melbourne), 13 January 1900, p. 4; 27 January 1900, p. 7; 18 August 1900, p. 9. For information on the Passion Play Films see John Barnes’ Filming the Boer War, Bishopsgate Press, London, 1992, pp. 127-133.

32. Second Victorian (Boer War) Contingent Marching Down Collins Street, Melb. (shot 13 January 1900)
Shot by Perry at 3pm on the day of the Contingent’s departure for South Africa, and shown at a Melbourne Town Hall patriotic concert the same evening. “The film itself is 100 feet long and shows first the Governor [Lord Brassey] and his carriage, then a splendid panoramic portrait gallery of the members of the Contingent, with Colonel Price at their head, after which followed the veterans of their Field Artillery with their guns.” This was the first film commissioned from Perry by an external agency. The First Contingent’s departure had been filmed in 1899 by Stephen Bond. See War Cry, 27 January 1900, p. 7. Earliest known reference to film: Australasian Photographic Review, 22 January 1900, pp. 29-30.

33. Second Victorian (Boer War) Contingent Parade at Flemington Showgrounds (shot 13 Jan. 1900)
Shot by Perry and Robert Sandall, presumably on embarkation day. Writing to Salvation Army historian Col. Percival Dale on 4 October 1951, Robert Sandall recalled, “I went with Perry out to the racecourse where they camped, took the film at 4 o’clock and handed it in for showing in the Melbourne Town Hall just after 8 o’clock. That was some going in those days!” The parade was given before the Governor, Lord Brassey. Earliest known reference: Ovens and Murray Advertiser (Beechworth, Victoria), 19 May 1900.

34. Second Victorian (Boer War) Contingent Boarding SS ‘Euryalus’, Port Melbourne (shot 13 January 1900)
Probably shot by Perry, although it’s remotely possible that the film may have been shot by Stephen Bond. Earliest known reference: Ovens and Murray Advertiser (Beechworth), 19 May 1900.

35. Bayswater Boys Harvesting (June or December 1899)
Taken from the steps of the Treasury Building at the top of Collins Street, Melbourne. (10 March 1900) Refer: Kyneton Guardian, 3 May 1900. Earliest known reference: Ballarat Courier, 24 April 1900.

36. Bushman’s (Boer War) Contingent Crossing Princes Bridge, Melb. (10 March 1900)

37. Horses and Men (for the Boer War) at Camp (March 1900?)
Probably taken at Langwarrin, just outside Melbourne on the Mornington Peninsula. A film answering this description was recalled as having been shot by Stephen Bond (refer Everyones, 13 June 1923, p. 38), so it may not be a Limelight Department production, though it was exhibited by them. Earliest known reference: Ballarat Courier, 23 April 1900.

38. Cameron’s Scouts (Boer War).
Shown by James Dutton ort a Limelight Department tour. May be a film of Tasmanian Contingent under Captain Cameron, but more likely an imported British film of Cameron Highlanders. Earliest known reference: Ballarat Courier, 23 April 1900.

39. Departure of Victorian Naval Contingent for Boxer Rebellion (30 July 1900)
The making of this film by Perry was recalled by his son Reg in Eric Reade’s The Australian Screen, Lansdowne Press, Melbourne, 1975, but no contemporary evidence for its production can be found, and the event may have been mistaken for the shooting of the Second Boer War Contingent departure, which sounds similar: “It showed the Lieut. Governor of Victoria, Sir John Madden, reviewing the sailors. Taken from the steps of the Treasury Building at the top of Collins Street, it brilliantly captured the impressive significance of the occasion. The film also covered the march along City Road, South Melbourne, and the Contingent’s farewell on the pier” (p. 19). Although no contemporary reviews or advertisements for this film can be found, exhibitor Millard Johnson exhibited a film called The Naval Brigade Off to China on 10 January 1902 in Ballarat (daybill privately held).
Continuing our study of the Salvation Army Limelight Department, we investigate the films produced for Herbert Booth’s lecture, Soldiers of the Cross (1900). Was it a marvel or a myth?

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My deepest thanks must go to the Division of Humanities at Griffith University (Brisbane) and to Pat Laughter in particular for funding, and otherwise supporting, this project.

The information presented here would have been impossible to obtain without the constant support of George Ellis, Territorial Archivist of the Salvation Army in Melbourne, who supplied film data from his files over a period of six years. Mr David Morris of the Salvation Army in Adelaide also provided his constant support.

Clive Sowry (Wellington, New Zealand) provided access to the Salvation Army’s New Zealand data, essential to the investigation of this Australasian enterprise. This article owes a great deal to his final half-hour phone call!

Ken Berryman and Meg Labrum of the National Film & Sound Archive gave the project its initial push with the support of their documentation.

Notes

1 War Cry (Melbourne), 20 April 1991, p. 3
2 They processed, for instance, Baldwin Spencer’s Aboriginal films.
3 Information from George Ellis, Salvation Army Archives, Melbourne.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
7 Information from George Ellis, Salvation Army Archives, Melbourne.
8 See ref. 6, p. 243.
9 Full Salvation (Melbourne), 1 June 1892, pp. 189-92; War Cry (Melbourne), 12 September 1891, p. 16.
10 Information from Perry’s staff record card, held by Salvation Army Archives, Melbourne. Curiously, the Australian Dictionary of Biography gives 1863 as the birth date.
11 Full Salvation (Melbourne), 1 September 1894, pp. 290-5; “A Limelight’s Experience”.
12 Ibid, p. 293.
13 War Cry (Melbourne), 7 February 1891, p. 5; Full Salvation, 1 September 1894, p. 293.
14 Full Salvation, 1 September 1894, p. 294.
15 Ibid, also War Cry (Melbourne), 7 February 1891, p. 5.
16 War Cry (Melbourne), 7 February 1891, p. 5; also Perry’s staff record card, Salvation Army Archives, Melbourne.
17 See ref. 14.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
20 War Cry (Melbourne), 25 December 1891, p. 8; 16 January 1892, p. 9.
21 J. Perry: staff record card, Salvation Army Archives, Melbourne.
22 Full Salvation, 1 June 1892, pp. 189-192; War Cry (Brisbane), 7 October 1893, p. 7.
23 Ovens & Murray Advertiser (Beechworth, Victoria), 7 November 1896, advertises Perry’s slide set of “Life on the Coolgardie Goldfields”.
25 Dr. Luigi Sassi, Le Proiezioni, Hoepli, Milano, 1897, pp. 157-73.
26 Ovens & Murray Advertiser (Beechworth, Victoria), 7 October 1896, p. 7.
27 See ref. 24, p. 22.
28 See ref. 24, p. 50; Full Salvation, 1 September 1894, p. 295.
30 J. Perry: staff record card, Salvation Army Archives, Melbourne.
31 Ibid.
32 Full Salvation, 1 September 1894, p. 295.
33 War Cry (New Zealand), 11 January 1896: “The Limelight Crusade”.
34 War Cry (New Zealand), 9 May 1896: “Disastrous Fire at Marton”.
35 War Cry (Melbourne), 25 July 1896, p. 3: “Limelight in Sydney”.
36 Argus (Melbourne), 16 March 1895: “Amusements – The Kinetoscope”.
37 War Cry (Melbourne), 18 August 1900, p. 9.
38 The Victory, September 1901, p. 440: “Science and Salvation”.
40 War Cry (Melbourne), 28 November 1896, p. 6: “The Limelight in the North” reports on Perry’s absence in New South Wales since July 1896.
41 The Scientific Australian, 20 March 1897, p. 29.
42 War Cry (Melbourne), 20 February 1897, p. 4
43 War Cry (Melbourne), 21 August 1897, p. 4.
44 Australasian Photographic Review, 21 July 1897.
45 War Cry (Melbourne), 27 March 1897, p. 7: “The Cinematogar – The Commandant Pushes it Off!”
46 Ibid.
47 The Officer (London), March 1897, p. 82; War Cry (London), 26 December 1903, p. 9; and F. Hayter Gox, He Was There, Salvationist Publishing and Supply, London, 1949, pp. 67-71. The oldest of Howse’s surviving films was featured in the Hugh Baddeley documentary God’s Soldier (1955). It shows a Salvation Army open-air meeting in Whitechapel Road, London, late in 1903.
48 War Cry (Melbourne), 19 May 1900, p. 8; 7 July 1900, p. 4; 6 April 1901, p. 4; 18 May 1901, p. 4.
50 War Cry (Melbourne), 25 June 1904, p. 7.
51 Films shot by Perry at the London International Salvation Army Congress of 1904 are featured in the Hugh Baddeley documentary God’s Soldier (1955).
52 War Cry (Melbourne), 27 March 1897, p. 7; 1 May 1897, p. 8.
53 The Victory (Melbourne), June 1897, p. 236.
54 Ibid, July 1897, p. 277.
55 War Cry (Melbourne), 21 August 1897, p. 8.
56 Ibid., 9 October 1897, p. 4.
57 War Cry (Brisbane), 15 January 1898, p. 7; “Editorial Memos”.
58 War Cry (Melbourne) 19 February 1898, p. 5; The Victory, February 1898, p. 77.
59 War Cry (Melbourne) 19 February 1898, p. 5.
60 The Victory, August 1898, pp. 300-304: “The Triple Alliance”.
61 Australasian Photographic Review, 21 January 1899, p. 3.
62 War Cry (Melbourne), 16 April 1898, pp. 5, 8; Herbert Booth: Typescript “Brief”, to London Headquarters, 1899: “Limelight Dept.”
64 Ibid.
65 Her lecture was called “In The Slums of the Great Cities”, War Cry, 24 June 1899, p. 3.
67 The Warwick machines appear to have been purchased with profits from their film of The Inauguration of the Australian Commonwealth (January 1901). The earliest mention of the “1901 Anglo-American (Warwick) Bioscope” is given in War Cry (Melbourne), 13 July 1901, p. 8: “Limelight Up To Date”.
68 War Cry (Brisbane), 29 January 1898, p. 6.
69 War Cry (Melbourne) 16 April 1898, p. 8; Argus (Melbourne) 29 March 1898.
70 War Cry (Melbourne), 23 July 1898, p. 7: “Sydney’s Social Triumph”.
71 Queensland Times (Ipswich), 31 October 1899: “Social Salvation”.
72 Herbert Booth, The Austral Underworld (pamphlet), Salvation Army, Melbourne, 1900. Copy held by Salvation Army Archives, Melbourne.
73 See ref. 24, p. 52.
75 The Victory (Melbourne), August 1898, pp. 300-304: “The Triple Alliance”.
76 Australasian Photographic Review, 21 January 1899, p. 2, mentions “street scenes”.
77 The Victory, February 1900, p. 79.
78 Australasian Photographic Review, 22 January 1900, pp. 29-30.
79 Australasian Photographic Review, 23 January 1901, p. 25, gives the shot list of that film, Inauguration of the Australian Commonwealth, comprising about 2,000 feet or 1/2 hour of film. It was restored and released on the NFSA video Federation Films (1991). The subsequent coverage of the Royal Visit to New Zealand occupied 3,300 feet of film, almost an hour at the slow projection speed of June 1901.
81 Geelong Advertiser, 11 October 1898, advertises “a dozen” films in Booth’s lecture; Barrier Miner, 15 October 1898, p. 3, advertises 12 films; Hawthorn Citizen, 1 July 1899, advertises 15 films.
Southern Star Film Sales will be the international sales agent for Angel Baby and REP is the Australian distributor.

The other two films in the Fourth Film Fund are Country Life and Spider & Rose.

New Director for FFC
The former Minister for the Arts and Administrative Services, Bob McMullan, announced in November 1993 the appointment of Roger Simpson as a director to the Board of the Australian Film Finance Corporation (FFC).

Simpson is currently a Board member of Film Victoria and served for many years on the National Council of the Australian Writers Guild. McMullan said, "Mr Simpson will bring a great deal of talent and experience as a successful film and television scriptwriter to the FFC."

The Minister also paid tribute to the outgoing director, Anne Deveson, a well-known journalist and documentary maker. McMullan: "Ms Deveson's breadth of experience has been great value to the FFC Board over the last three years."

The Minister also announced the reappointment of Dr Kerry Schott and Ted Thomas as directors and Dr Patricia Edgar as deputy chair of the FFC Board. McMullan: "The reappointment of Dr Edgar, Mr Thomas and Dr Schott will ensure the continuation of a strong and professional relationship between the FFC and the local film industry."

All appointments are for a period of two years.

Producer revenue entitlements
John Morris announced that the FFC has introduced a scheme of revenue entitlements for producers starting with all projects approved in the current financial year.

Morris said that, after consultation with SPA (Screen Producers Association of Australia) and ASDA (Australian Screen Directors Association), the FFC Board approved a scheme at its meeting on 17 November 1993.

Under the scheme, a producer will be entitled to a 10% share of all revenues to which the FFC would otherwise be entitled upon recoupment by the FFC of a percentage of its investment in the relevant project. That percentage will differ depending on the production category. For feature films, the threshold will be when the FFC has recouped 35% of its investment; for television drama (adult mini-series, children's mini-series and tele-features), 45% and for documentaries, 20%.

Morris also indicated that the other features of the scheme will be:
1. Accelerated Profit
   The revenue entitlement will be considered as an advance against the producer's profit share in all projects. Accordingly, once the total budget of a project has been recouped and, prior to the producer sharing in actual profits, the revenue entitlement will need to be repaid to the FFC.
2. The revenue entitlement shall not apply to Film Fund projects. In addition, where the FFC effectively "discounts" a pre-sale, that pre-sale will be ignored for the purposes of calculating revenue to the FFC. Investment managers will clarify with producers what constitutes "discounting" before projects are submitted to the Board for financing approval.
3. The revenue entitlement shall not apply to Film Fund projects. In addition, where the FFC effectively "discounts" a pre-sale, that pre-sale will be ignored for the purposes of calculating revenue to the FFC. Investment managers will

No 1994 Film Fund
John Morris announced on 1 February 1994 that the FFC would not have a Film Fund in 1994. He stated that the Board of the FFC decided to suspend the Fund in light of the FFC's recently-adopted guidelines which have confirmed financing flexibility for lower-budgeted feature films of $3.5 million and less.

The Board also took into account the considerable number of features directed by first- and second-time directors the FFC has been able to support through its regular financing processes during the past twelve months. It expects this process to continue.

The FFC will continue to monitor the financing of projects in the medium-to-low-budget area this year. At the same time, the FFC will consult with the industry and the development agencies on their suggestions for the funding of high-risk, low-budget feature films.

Producer Support and Script Development Programmes unveiled
In recognition of the critical role played by writers and producers in Australia in Australia's film industry, the federal government has provided an extra $3.5 million under its Distinctly Australian initiative to the Australian Film Commission for producer support and script development programmes.

The former Minister for the Arts and Administrative Services, Bob McMullan, released details of the first four support programmes.

The Producer Assistance Scheme will support and encourage established film producers in a way which gives them greater responsibility and enhanced flexibility in the development process.

In the first year of the scheme, $25,000 loans will be provided to five producers with successful track records in feature film and/or television drama.

The Producers' Overhead and Expense Support Scheme will target those newer producers who have responsibility for taking the industry into the next century. Assistance with overhead costs will be provided to give younger producers the security of their office rent being covered, enabling them to consolidate an effective working base.

The Script and Story Editing Employment Attachment Scheme will assist in the professional development of script and story editors by funding attachments for up-and-coming editors with established producers and production houses. A stronger base of script and story editors will deliver benefits to both the projects and the writers.

producers and directors with whom they work.

Filmmakers with remarkable debut works often find international acclaim comes at the expense of earning a living. Stipends will provide a secure financial base from which to develop their next projects.

McMullan said that further strategies are currently being developed to ensure the government's additional funding is used in the most effective manner possible: "The result will be better film and television scripts -- and more of them -- as producers are better equipped to develop film projects and writers will receive the support they require to bring their scripts to fruition."

Fifty thousand dollars will be available for this financial year and an additional $1 million each year for the next three years.

Revived Ealing Studios
Bob Diracca and Teresa Lombardi of News Diary write:

The British film industry is rallying around the rebirth of one of its best-loved production houses, Ealing Studios, which in its heyday was a flagship of the industry producing some of the world's best loved movies such as A Run for Your Money (1949), Kind Hearts and Coronets (1949), Passport to Pimlico (1949) and Whisky Galore (1949).

The BBK Group, a property and scenery company, recently bought the site of the studio from the BBC, which had used it for many years to produce television programmes. BBK pledged to rekindle its film studio status.

The new Ealing Studio Productions is seeking capital with the aim of producing six feature films per year. Alan Latham, the Managing Director of the new company, said: "We're talking a complete range of films. We're talking about films from documentary dramas through to major films but the main point is quality films."

The venture has the support of the industry and of such actors as Ian Richardson and Alan Bates, whom, says Latham, "all like the location and who want to work at Ealing Studios". Another barracuda is Daniel Day-Lewis, the grandson of Sir Michael, who was the executive in charge of all productions at Ealing Studios throughout the 1940s and '50s. The British Film Commission is also behind the new studio.

The aim of the new studio is not to try and recapture a bygone era. Latham: "What we have to do is try and ensure that whatever we do is in the best tradition of Ealing Studios. Ealing Studios is in the hearts of a lot of people."

We need to be aware of our responsibility to the history of Ealing Studios, but we cannot rely on past glories for our future success. What we have to aim for is quality.

Martin Scorsese, in a talk at a British Academy Film and Theatre Awards (BAFTA) gathering, spoke affectionately about Ealing which, he said, was an inspiration to him in his filmmaking.

Latham is looking to the future with enthusiasm:

I think the love and support we have received from the industry, from the public and from the local community, show that there is a great desire and love of the studio and a desire to see it be successful. We must try and use that support to recreate its success.
TELEVISION DRAMA


WHAT'S SO FUNNY? (110 mins) Video Projects. Executive producer: Tony Wright. Associate producer: MasyAnne Carroll. Director: Steve West. Screenwriter: Steve West. Vietnamese comic Hung Le is one of the comic comedians profiled in this look at "wog" humour as a reflection of multicultural Australia.


POETRY IN MOTION (35 x 5 mins) David Flitman Productions. Executive producer: David Flitman. Director: Judith Curran. Screenwriter: Judith Curran. Documentary looking at a group of young Australian women preparing for the 1994 World Gymnastics Championships which will be held in Australia.


NOTE: Production Survey forms now adhere to a revised format. Cinema Papers regrets it cannot accept information received in a different format, as it does not have the staff to re-process the information. Information is correct and adjudged as of 2/94.
Creativity, Judgement & Trust
Essential ingredients to sound film investment
Complete the picture... with Permanent Trustee

For an initial discussion contact David Hepworth (02) 232 4400
THE SUM OF US

Synopsis: Spider McCall is an ambulance driver with "attitude''. He's resigned but has final orders to drive an elderly patient from a Sydney hospital to her son's farm. Rose Dougherty is a well-motivated nurse who father from a coma following a car accident.

Synopsis: Amanda Douge (Tegwyn Inti, sales agent)

Synopsis: John Poole (Greg), Deborah Kennedy (Joyce). Mitch Matthews (Gran), Julie Herbert (Jeff), Paul Sellgren (Henry Warburton), Lisa Young (Sam Flack). Amanda Darchet (Paul), Louise Siversen (Mrs. Chen), Paul Sonkilla (McChen), Jeremy Driden (PatChen), Anthea McGrath (Graeme)." 

Synopsis: Amelia Movements (Sarah), Anna Shannessy (Shelley). "Spider & Rose" is a gripping story of family secrets, love, and redemption, set against the backdrop of modern-day Sydney."

Synopsis: "Spider McCall is a successful ambulance driver with a reputation for reckless driving. He is assigned the task of transporting an elderly patient from Sydney to a rural hospital, but his personal demons threaten to unravel the entire operation."
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DOCUMENTARIES

BOYS AND BALLS
Prod. company: Thermal Falls
Pre-production: Sept 1993 ...
Production: Oct 1993 ...
Production completion: Nov 1993 – March 1994
Principal Credits
Director: Sue Thomson
Producer: Anna Grieve
Asst producer: Brian Nankervis
Screenwriters: Sue Thomson
DOPs: Paul Carlson
Sound recordist: Sally Eccleston
Editor: Jock Healey
Editor: Bill Murphy
Other Credits
Prod. co-ordinator: Fiona Deen
2nd asst director: Matt Moss
Camera asst: Thin Kaching
Asst editor: Kathleen O’Brien
Prod. assistant: Roger Monr
Still photography: Merdi Sommerfeld
Gaffer: Brian Adams
Props buyers: Kayleigh
Angela Christa
Laboratory: DFL
Lab liaison: Mark Frew
Insurer: ABC Documentaries
Sale: John Doyle and Greg Pickthaver (Roy Slaven and H.G. Nelson)
Synopsis: A humorous look at men’s love of ball sports.

CONVICTIONS
Prod. companies: Oracle Pictures
Nolton Picture Co.
Dist. company: ABC
Principal Credits
Director: David Caeser
Producers: Robert Reynolds (Oracle)
Victor Gentle (Oracle)
Exec. producers: Christopher McCulloch (ABC-TV)
Scriptwriter: Victor Gentle
DOPs: Mandy Walker
Editor: Mark Perry
Other Credits
Post-production sound: Countercoup
Sound: Sound
Length: 50 mins
Gauge: 16mm
Synopsis: A film that encourages a more diverse approach to the screening of3
Australia’s involvement in it. What happened to Australian and Korean POWs in the re-education camps.

FLOOD – THE MANAGEABLE DISASTER
Prod. company: Waterpoint Productions
Principal Credits
Director: Glenn Fraser
Line producer: Grant Hems
Exec. producer: Liza Polito
Scriptwriter: Michael Enders
DOP: Roger Turnbull
Sound recordist: Tony Webb
Other Credits
Producers: Stacey Roberson
Mike Healy
Graham Kent
Nicole Bambrieck
Gaffer: Patrick Swan
Narrator: Andrew Newman
Animation/graphics: Pilgrim Post
On-line editors: John Cameron
Sound: Betacam SP
Length: 20 mins

THE SAFETY HABIT
Prod. company: Dist. company: Australian Firearms
Consultancy
Pre-production: 23/10/93 – 26/11/93
Principal Credits
Director: Michael Enders
Producer: Michael Enders
Scriptwriter: Michael Enders
DOP: Kevin Darch
Sound recordist: Mark Swan
Producer: Tony Webb
Client: Dept. of Water Resources
Cast: Caroline Lewis, Alan David Lee, Russell Newman
Synopsis: An educational program for the Department of Water Resources designed to educate and inform local government as to the hazards of flooding.

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Client: Dept. of Water Resources
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Synopsis: An educational program for the Department of Water Resources designed to educate and inform local government as to the hazards of flooding.

EXTREMES OF SORROW
Prod company: Burchmore Productions
Budget: $95,000
Pre-production: 13/9/93 – 3/11/93
Production: 4/1/93 – 16/3/94
Principal Credits
Director: Zorro Gamalick
Producer: S. Burchmore
Screenwriter: Zorro Gamalick
Editor: Michael Enders
DOP: Michael Enders
Sound recordist: Mark Swan
Producer: Tony Webb
Client: Library
Length: 12 mins
Synopsis: A training video for the NSW Department of Employment, Industrial Relations. Employment, Training and Further Education which clarifies the department’s corporate identity, structure, goals and values, as well as outlining the department’s various programs and their broad functions.

A HOPE IN HELL
Prod company: The Write-Up Group
Production: Discovery International
Pre-production: 6/12/93 – 17/12/93
Principal Credits
Director: Greg Swaborough (Notion)
Scriptwriter: Megan Simpson
Producer: Steve Arnold
Editor: Tony Kavanagh
Other Credits
Post-production sound: Countercoup
Sound: Sound
Length: 55 mins

THE SEWING ROOM
Prod company: Judy Steeber Film Productions
Budget: $163,541
Pre-production: Nov 1993...
Production: Dec 93 – Feb 94
Principal Credits
Director: Judy Steeber
Prod. manager: Judy Steeber
Assoc. producer: Jo Bell
DOP: Kym Vateskus
Composer: Gretchen Thombum
Sound recordist: Mark Akin
Editor: Peter Long
Composer: Wayne Joiner

...continued
Cinematography, Judgement & Trust

Essential ingredients to sound film investment

Complete the picture... with Permanent Trustee

For an initial discussion contact David Hepworth (02) 232 4400

Music performed by
Wayne Joiner
James Currie

Optics
Ian Sheath

Titles
The Funny Farm

Laboratory
Ian Anderson
Rowan Wilson

Text for the Projects

Government Agency Investment

Production
AFTRS

Cast:
Nicola Anderson (Pip), Maude Davey (Grace), Robert Moroza (Jack).

Synopsis: The nostalgic '50s and a young boy wakes to the sound of a sewing machine. Pip and his mother share a time of innocence. Will the red dress ever be finished?

Principal Credits
Prod, company: AFTRS
Scriptwriter: Michaeley O'Brien
Director: Andrew Lancaster
Principal Credits
Prod, designer: Nicki Gardiner
Prod, assistant: Sally Lancaster
Focus puller: Lisa Lloyd
Clapper-loader: Dean Winnell
Key grip: Shane Peterson
Gaffer: Tom Mand
1st asst director: Murray Fahey
Sound editor: Liam Egan
Film gauge: 16mm

THE STRANGER

Prod, company: AFTRS
Principal Credits
Jan – Apr 1994
Production
Director: Jun Li
Producer: Matthew Brand
Scriptwriter: Karin McEvoy
Sound recordist: Tony Mandl
Composer: Gwendolyn Stukely

Production
Director: Jun Li
Producer: Matthew Brand
Scriptwriter: Karin McEvoy
Sound recordist: Tony Mandl
Composer: Gwendolyn Stukely

A TIME FOR ETERNITY

Prod, company: AFTRS
Principal Credits
Jan – Feb 1994
Production
Director: Thomas Kaysey
Producer: Mark Lazarus
Scriptwriter: Carolyn Careyne
Sound recordist: Tony Mandl
Composer: Gwendolyn Stukely

Production
Director: Thomas Kaysey
Producer: Mark Lazarus
Scriptwriter: Carolyn Careyne
Sound recordist: Tony Mandl
Composer: Gwendolyn Stukely

CONSTRUCTIVE REFORM

Prod, companies: Apocalypse Post
Credit
Director: Darren Ashton
Producer: Debrah Algar, Jeamin Lee, Elle-Mai Wong, Andrew Lloyd, Jon Matthews

Sponsor: Health Department – Public Affairs
Synopsis: Accent on customer focus with the Health Department. Incidents show staff responses to customers.

MOMENTS OF CHOICE

Prod, company: Paul Harris & Associates
Credit
Director: Paul Harris
Producer: Paul Harris
Scriptwriter: John Higgins
Sound: Michael Taylor

Sponsor: NSW Health Dept.
Synopsis: Complete of existing footage for Block Launch. Block Launch, so studio shots to be added

THE KITCHEN APPLIANCE

Prod, company: AFTRS
Post-production
Jan – Feb 1994
Production
Director: Andrew Lancaster
Producer: Stefan Kleinheinz
Scriptwriter: Michaela O'Brien
DOP: Tristan Miliros
Editor: Nicki Gardiner
Composer: Andrew Lancaster

Other Credits
Prod, company: AFTRS
Prod, co-ordinator: Carolyn Careyne
Unit managers: Philip Francis, Paul Roberts, Sally Lancaster
Prod, assistant: Lisa Lloyd
Focus puller: Dean Winnell
Clapper-loader: Dean Winnell
Key grip: Shane Peterson
Gaffer: Tom Mand
1st asst director: Murray Fahey
2nd asst director: Sally Lancaster
Continuity: Stewart Ewings
Playback operator: Peter O'Brien
Make-up: Kim Bowles
Special effects: Cindi Derrnan
Art dept, assis: Paul Myers
Wardrobe supervisor: Susan Ward
Asst editor: Daniel Nathtron
Sound editor: Andrew Lancaster
Film gauge: 35mm Doby stereo

Cast: Matt Potter (Charles), Gerald Letts (Boris), Nicole Quill (Ossie), Nickola Milne (Diana), Michael Zerbe (Eugene), Louis Robins (Theo), Peter Ackroyd (Olive Player), Martin Murphy (Peruvian), Genevieve Stynes (Cleric), Glen Wood (Violinist), Kay Armstrong (Clarinetist), Greg Fitzgerald (Second Violinist).

Synopsis: Energetic portrayal of the creation of an eggbeater in the 1950s.

THANK YOU

AFTRS
**PARADISE BEACH**

**Prod. company:** Paradise Beach Productions  
**Dist. company:** New World Entertainment

**Principal Credits**

- **Producers:** Andrew Friedman, Steve Mann, Riccardo Pellizzoni  
- **DOP:** John Blair  
- **Editor:** Jo Porter  
- **Sound:** Ian Grant  
- **Assistant producer:** Jo Porter  
- **Scriptwriters:** Various  
- **Sound recordists:** Various  
- **Boom operators:** Rondor Music

**Planning and Development**

- **Script editors:** Rick Maer, Alex Wyatt
- **Casting director:** Maura Fay & Assoc.
- **Dialogue coach:** John Dommett
- **Line producer:** Michael Lake

**Production Crew**

- **Production manager:** Michael Lake  
- **Producer:** Michael Lake  
- **Production manager:** David Watts  
- **Producer:** Barbara Lucas  
- **Producer:** Liza McLean  
- **Producer:** Jari Giannino  
- **Producer:** Ron Skidmore  
- **Producer:** Graham Elery  
- **Producer:** Margie Beattie  
- **Producer:** Pat Paslow

**Accounts assistant**

- **Paymaster:** Rhonda Fortescue
- **Legal services:** Hammond Jewell
- **Travel co-ordinator:** Philips Fox  
- **Freight coordinator:** Show Travel

**Camera Crew**

- **Cameramen:** Michael Healey, Brent Cox  
- **Focus puller:** Paul Howard
- **Camera assistant:** David Elmes  
- **Key grip:** Bede Harris
- **Assist grip:** Grant Nelson

**Electrician**

- **Electrician:** Michael Baker
- **Showlighting:** John Delaplace  
- **Stage manager:** Jan McKay (location)
- **Wardrobe manager:** Gerard Brown (studio)
- **Standing props:** Alisson Pickup (studio)

**Wardrobe**

- **Wardrobe supervisor:** Phil Eagles
- **Wardrobe buyer:** Phil Bell
- **Standby wardrobe:** Helen Maines
- **Wardrobe assit:** Linda Walton
- **Wardrobe assistant:** Penny Nielson

**Constrution Dept**

- **Script editor:** Adam Smigielski
- **Assistant:** Andrew Gardner
- **Editor:** Robert Monson
- **Sound editors:** Vic Kaspar, John Anderson (location)

**Music**

- **Mixers:** Geoff Lamb, Trevor Harrison
- **Sound:** Geoff Fairweather, John Robinson
- **Stunt coordinator:** Brett Struthers
- **Facilities manager:** Helen Rooses
- **Sound engineer:** Warren Pearson
- **Mandolin:** Alley Wyat

**Government Agency Investment**

- **Project manager:** Robert Qiu (location)
- **Assistant:** Robert Robert (studio)
- **Background:** Rhonda Fortescue
- **Painting:** Hammond Jewell
- **Lighting:** Philips Fox
- **Cost:** Show Travel
- **Freight:** Show Freight

**Synopsis:** The plot of the television series takes place 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 what happens with our four young, passionate central characters and their friends.

**STARS (series pilot)**

- **Prod. company:** Lennox Productions
- **Prod. manager:** John Bishop
- **Assistant:** Andrew Gibbard
- **Sound:** Helen Leonard
- **Music:** Clive Carter
- **Still photography:** Lindsey Clark

**Wardrobe**

- **Wardrobe supervisor:** Sabina Harris
- **Wardrobe buyer:** Tina Hastings
- **Wardrobe assistant:** Lara Robson

**Animals**

- **Animal handler:** Karen Wheeler
- **Animals:** Katrina Harris
- **Animals:** Lara Robson

**Animals**

- **Animal handler:** Phillip Harris
- **Animals:** Rand Productions
- **Animals:** John Bishop
- **Animals:** Ken Goederee

**Post-production**

- **Music:** Shoot S-VHS PRO
- **Post-production:** Edit 1C
- **Post-production:** Fuji H471S
- **Post-production:** Off-line facilities Lennox Productions

**Synopsis:** A perfect family, a perfect 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 what happens with our four young, passionate central characters and their friends.

**Ocean Girl**

- **Series:** Ocean Girl
- **Producers:** Lennox Productions
- **Prod. manager:** John Bishop
- **Assistant:** Andrew Gibbard
- **Sound:** Helen Leonard
- **Music:** Clive Carter
- **Still photography:** Lindsey Clark

**Creativity, Judgement & Trust**

**Essential ingredients to sound film investment**

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The structure and content of any mechanically-dependent art, such as filmmaking, is changed by the equipment and filmstocks that are available at the time.

In 1984, at the time of the 10th Anniversary issue, the first discussions were taking place in film theory on the importance of the "apparatus" in our understanding of film technique. Ten years later, there is no major study that I can find on how the developments in technology have changed Australian filmmaking. It also surprised me that no film historian had been interested in how our isolation from the U.S. and British industries in the early years of Australian cinema had forced us to re-invent many of the techniques and develop our own equipment, based on what we saw in the overseas film product.

Working through the past twenty years issues of Cinema Papers, you realise what a unique rôle Cinema Papers has played. Since 1974, this magazine has documented our coming of age in a world cinema, changing itself as it did so. In those early years, the interviews often displayed the interviewers lack of knowledge of feature film techniques. Yet reading them today, there is a sense of excitement in learning our craft, as the magazine became part of a growing industry.

Cinema Papers is now a mature and unique voice that can provide content on many levels, something we've taken for granted. It's only on re-reading that the gradual development becomes obvious. The early content came exclusively from interviews that were about the mechanics of film production, the creation of images and sound, and of doing deals to get the films made. Towards the end of the first ten years, the questions asked in interviews changed to content, style and, most obviously, the business of filmmaking. With this change, there was the inevitable loss of the enthusiasm that was displayed while the editors were learning their craft.

In the period from 1984 to today, the issues were our growing sureness of technique, of film theory, of how our filmmakers fit into the world. Technically, it was one of keeping up with evolving technologies, especially the impact of video and computers. The changes that have been reported in the past five years have had more impact than the previous fifteen, but, because the process is still underway, it is harder to see the individual changes.

If there is an emphasis on those earlier years, and the anecdotal approach has trivialized the importance of any one person's contribution to Australian film history, then accept my apologies. You can dismiss this whole exercise as my nostalgia for the kind of conversations that are hidden in those yellowing stacks of back issues. F.H.
have used them. From the pages of Cinema Papers 1974 to 1994.

IN THE BEGINNING THERE WAS THE EDITORIAL BIAS

Although the tenth anniversary issue covered the early history of Cinema Papers more than adequately, the following detail is worth repeating. In March 1974, Ewart Wade’s Lumiere magazine ceased publication, and left a gap in the spread of technical, equipment and craft information for the Australian film industry. The “born again” Cinema Papers of that year had a different editorial objective, yet the Editorial Board (Peter Beilby, Philippe Mora and Scott Murray) and their friends who contributed articles were beginning or practicing filmmakers.

So, although in those first years there were few specific technical articles, their interests came through in the interviews with the Australian feature-film directors and crew. They wanted to make feature films themselves, and while they asked questions that on reading today may have seemed naïve to some of the industry professionals at the time, they were the questions that we, as readers, would have asked (especially those of us who were eagerly making short films with the first flush of money from the Experimental Film Fund).

Just as important as the quotes and illustrations from those interviews were the advertisements around them. The ads were to provide the only industry services and facilities information until the first Motion Picture Yearbook appeared in 1980. Encore magazine only really shifted its emphasis from variety acts into film industry publication in June 1983, two months after it was acquired by the owners of Australian Film Review and Greg Bright took over as editor. Since that time you would need to take the limited production experience of the editors). Productions in 16mm would have added to the total, but the balance had obviously changed to 35mm for features.

CHANGING THE FILM FORMAT

In 1974, we were making the bulk of our films in 16mm. There seemed no chance of theatrical distribution in 16mm outside of the Filmmakers Co-operative’s and university circuits. Producing a feature in 35mm seemed an impossible dream in an American-dominated market. Because of this, we were attracted to the option of shooting on 16mm and enlarging it to 35mm, if we were lucky enough to ensure a theatrical release. Central to this, I believe, was not as much the advantages of the lower 16mm stock budgets, as to the lack of familiarity (or availability to) 35mm equipment by a new generation of filmmakers.

It is no coincidence that the first features that were shot in 35mm were shot by cinematographers who used 35mm regularly for production of television and cinema commercials. Robin Copping in Melbourne and Ross Woods in Sydney are just two examples. Commercial production has been the financial mainstay of Australian cinema for all but a few of those twenty years. It has maintained and provided impetus for technical support from laboratories, sound studios, and production facilities. It has provided work for crews and actors, and a training ground for technicians. These changes have then been adopted, and absorbed into our feature work.

There was quite a tradition of the 16 to 35mm blow-up especially in Melbourne with Stork and Libido and a number of other features shot in 16mm but released on 35mm. It fitted the time well, just as Super 16 blow-ups have in recent years. The results, however, were very different. When Ken Quinnell reviewed the movie version of Number 96 in July 1974 (Fig. 1), he tried hard to be nice.

FIG 1

Number 96 is the first commercial feature I have ever encountered of which a reviewer could legitimately say, if he so desired, that it is out of focus. The blow up to 35mm from 16mm for theatrical presentation emphasises the inadequacies of local laboratory facilities. The whole “look” of the film is appalling — garish, claustrophobic sets, the flat lighting and the poor colour quality actually make it physically difficult to watch. The acting is undirected in any meaningful way and remains pitched at the same general standard as that of the serial — which is OK for television but excruciating on the large screen.

It has allowed Australia to see its 96 superstars in colour before the arrival of colour television. That is the extent of its achievement.

Which then led to an apology to Colorfilm, in the December 1974 issue. (Fig. 2)

FIG 2

Letters:

Dear Sir,

In my review of the film Number 96 in your July issue I referred to the poor quality of the blow-up to 35mm and said that this “emphasizes the inadequacies of local laboratory facilities.” Color­film, the laboratory involved in the production at the 16mm stage has written to me pointing out that the blow-up to 35mm and the 35mm prints were done overseas. In this instance I wish to set the record straight and apologize to Color­film.

Yours sincerely,

Ken Quinnell

All the first year’s issues reflected the 16mm bias of production at the time (due in part to the limited production experience of the editors). The magazine’s advertisements were also predominately aimed at the users of 16mm equipment and remained so for many years. On the inside back page of issue one was Bleakly Gray Corp.’s advertisement that promised, along with the Arri 16 and 35BLs, that there was soon to be the new, ambidextrous-but-wait-for-it Arriflex 16SR. By the time this camera took its hold on the market (which it still maintains), we were shooting 35mm.

The move to 35mm was well underway by the time the “Production Survey” section began to accurately report local production (rather than just the films that the editors knew about) in early 1975. There were 17 35mm features listed as in production, awaiting or in release. There were 27 16mm films listed of which only five or six were of feature length. The number of sponsored documentary or independent productions in 16mm would have added to the total considerably, but the balance had obviously changed to 35mm for features.

This was to cause a sudden shortage of equipment, crew and facilities. Productions were
To us, as readers, it seemed that the start of an American style of feature-film production (the role model we somehow, without argument, assumed was the best) coincided with the use of that most American of cameras, the Panavision reflex 35mm. The Panaflex provided an alternative to the only other lightweight 35mm sync camera that was available, the Arri 35 BL.

The use of the Panavision seemed to confirm that finally we were making Serious Features and the number of photos in the magazine on the set were there to prove it, even if the camera did dwarf everything else, as in this advertisement. (Fig. 3)

The camera and equipment meant more than that, however, as an interview from the first issue with Peter Weir and the McElroys on location with The Cars That Ate Paris tells. (Fig. 4)

The options for sync sound use were limited. The choice of the Arri IIC with a blimp such as the Cine 60 today seems unbelievably cumbersome. In July 1974, it was just part of the problems that Vince Monton faced when selecting equipment for the filming of Richard Franklin’s The True Story of Eskimo Nell.

The choice of anamorphic widescreen formats as a way of again proving that this was Serious Filmmaking brought with it not just the problems of composition as Peter Weir mentioned, but also the differences in the quality and use of the lenses and equipment. There were many who preferred the 1:1.85 ratio cropped frame.

We had a whole new terminology to learn along with the new equipment, and on the whole we accepted or adapted the American and British jargon.

The experience of shooting widescreen was still new in 1978 when Tom Cowan was shooting John Duigan’s Dimboola. Jack Clancy reported on the film during production. (Fig. 5)

Ian Baker’s interview after the release of The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith mentions some of the problems with anamorphic lenses and some new lights that people were talking about called HMI. (Fig. 6)

Gillian Armstrong made the transition from 16mm to 35mm on My Brilliant Career. Interviewed in March-April 1979, she was asked if she found it difficult. (Fig. 7)

What sort of lights do you prefer for interior set-ups?

I like to use big lights bounced wherever possible. I avoid direct light, although for the first time I was forced to use it just to get an aperture sufficient to solve a depth of field problem.

We started out with the hope of using new HMI lights, but there were problems getting them together in time. We had already backed out of arc-lights, so we ended up using a wad of minibrutes.

How did you find working on 35mm for the first time?

No problem, except I am now spoilt and seduced by the 35mm screen and will find it hard going back to 16mm again.

My greatest problem was working with fixed lenses for the first time. I am extremely particular about framing, and on 16 mm you can just zoom in and out to get the framing you want. With fixed lenses, however, you have to be much more specific. So, in the beginning, there were a lot of lens changes, and carting of tripods backwards and forwards to get the shot I wanted. But I soon learnt.

FILM STOCKS.

There was a long love/hate relationship with Eastman Kodak apparent in the magazine. The stocks were undoubtedly the best available and, although it now appears almost unreasonable, the lack of any competition to force improvements in technical development, service or price...
CINEMA PAPERS: Did you start with 35mm processing?
WATSON: No, we started off with 16mm exclusively and didn’t start any 35mm till 1963.
CINEMA PAPERS: Has the use of 35mm increased over the past 10 years?
WATSON: No, I think it’s on the decrease. As emulsions improve and the need to keep costs down becomes more important 35mm will fall off except for theatrical feature release. At the same time there’s a tendency to use 16mm original and a 35mm blow-up release print.
CINEMA PAPERS: Do you see much future in 16mm and Super 16mm blow-ups?
WATSON: Yes, I think there’s a future in it. Emulsions are the only limitation, but I’m sure they’ll continue to improve.

There were alternative stocks around for black-and-white 16mm, some of which have given the earlier films a "unique" quality, as reported when Ross King was shooting Gillian Armstrong’s One Hundred a Day. (Fig. 9)

The only other major supplier of stock was Agfa-Gevaert, the introduction of Fuji stock by Haninex was a relatively late addition (first advertised in February-March 1980 issue). Because of this, it took a long time for Fuji to gain a share of the market.

In the first issue, AGFA had a full-colour back-page ad that was to become black and white for subsequent issues. Kodak had no advertisement printed in the first issue, but used a colour ad insert sheet.

(Instead of a film-related product, the outside back cover was to feature a C.U.B. Crown Lager ad, until July 1979, for 22 issues.)

Agfa introduced Gevachrome 2 reversal stocks in 1975 and on the basis of price convinced a few labs to install what was a completely different processing run for the Agfa stocks. It must have been an expensive exercise and financially unsuccessful, yet the experience was repeated when it introduced its first negative stock. The ongoing success of Kodak Eastmancolor negative meant that if anyone wanted to compete in the market for raw stock, they were forced to make their stocks compatible with Kodak, at least in processing.

The advertising of the different stocks then began to follow a formula. I don’t know if using the directors of photography in endorsement served to convince any producers to use one stock against the other, but the Kodak ads were the only colour pages in Cinema Papers for almost nine years and they became an integral part of magazine. That they were advertisements for Kodak stock was obvious, but because of the pride we felt in the quality of the productions they chose they certainly served their purpose in improving the image of Kodak in Australia.

The advertisements featured a somewhat selective who’s whom of the next ten years. The first of the ads that featured a particular filmmaker was with Russell Boyd (Fig. 10), talking about Picnic at Hanging Rock, the most technically-assured feature to that time. Boyd was shooting 7247 on corporate documentaries. He talked about Hospital Don’t Burn. Don McAlpine said that, to date, he had shot 554 kilometres of film, mostly Eastman Color Negative. Keith Wagstaff said he required toughness in his stock for High Country, and later accuracy in reproducing the Australian landscape’s colours for The Man from Snowy River. Dietmar Fills also needed accurate rendition for his micro-cinematography.

Then, maybe running out of Cinematographers who would endorse the products (or more likely in an attempt to counter the growing use...
of videotape for production for the advertising market), there were a number of commercial production people exploiting the virtues of Kodak stocks.

Director Peter Cellier, who was long known for his videotape work, said that there is a change in directing for film as opposed to tape. Mike Reed liked the time for decisions that film editing gave compared to tape. David Deneen got a plug in for his computer-controlled motion graphics and multiple exposure of Eastman neg., at that point giving an effect impossible to do with video. Robert Le Tet from Film House talked about a “magic 10%” that came from shooting film, and the happy marriage of tape and film. Henry Crawford also spoke on the quality of the film image, especially for television series. Peter Bowlay from Videolab (after one misprinted issue where his portrait appeared not opposite but on the inside back page) told us of the future of tape-to-film conversions (that wasn’t realized for another ten years). Pat Lovell talked of her relationship with Kodak and testing new stocks for features. Ray Beattie from Atlab talked about the lab as part of the team, and Russ Chapman from Kodak reassured us that his technical support was a phone call away.

What this series tells about the developments (often in the background) could be the subject of its own article.

A MATTER OF STYLE

There was considerable discussion of where we were to look for an Australian cinematographic style. With characteristic honesty, Ian Baker talked about adopting Tom Roberts’ paintings as a lighting and color model for an Australian “look” in the interview on shooting The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith in January 1978. (Fig. 11)

It didn’t appear that the Tom Roberts’ look was restricted to one stock. Peter James spent weeks testing stocks and processing before deciding to shoot The Irishman on Gevacolor, (Fig. 12) but the result proved the quality of the German stock without doubt. In spite of the small differences in processing that were required, Kodak Eastmancolor was now seen to

have a competitor of note.

When Geoff Burton was shooting The Picture Show Man, in the January 1977 issue he was comparing stylistic differences between the new Eastmancolor 5247 stock and the earlier 5254. In the October issue of that year, the discussion with Vince Monton was about which was the better stock, the English manufacture 5247 or the American? The discussion of the best filmstock has continued through the years. As the quality of stocks where subtly improved, the choice became one of availability, cost, personal preference of the director of photography, and how the laboratories handled it.

THE LABS

It was the laboratories that were to become the other great topic of conversation. Don McAlpine commented on the change to professionalism in the laboratories, while on location for Don’s Party. (Fig. 13)

Among the other advertisements in the magazine that improved the industries image, especially get my award as the best technical advertising in Cinema Papers.

The many changes in stocks and the problems of matching archive footage to achieve a consistent colour release print was mentioned in an excellent production report on Newstradamus in the first bi-monthly issue, October/November 1978.

SOUND

Peter Beilby’s sound recording background ensured that the subject was always well covered.
HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

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was indicative of the movement to recording music tracks in a recording studio environment.

It happened with music and audio recording first the computer had arrived.

**SPECIAL EFFECTS**

There were many classic early Hollywood special-effects techniques that we had to re-discover, techniques that in our earlier years we once had been able to do as well as anyone. In the first issue, there was an interview with Ken Hall where he talked about early special effects.

It was to be three years before the revolution in special effects that was brought about by George Lucas' *Star Wars*. It was 1982 before the use of computer-controlled animation stands and motion-controlled cameras for model work had been used extensively here.

Whether it was the type of movies we were making (period or landscape), or just the fear of producers in doing optical effects here, it meant that we became highly proficient at physical effects.


In the October 1977 issue was one of the best 'Production Report's to ever appear in the magazine on the local special effects of *The Last Wave*. (The story was compiled by Scott Murray on the work of Montie Fieguth and Bob Hilditch.) In the June/July 1976 issue Les Luxford talked about optics for Chris Loften's OZ, and the work of Larry Wyner.

Conrad Rothman was brought out from America to do the special effects for *Patrick* (and stayed in Melbourne). The effects were documented in full in the April/June 1978 issue. They include an air mortar, breakaway glass and the early use of Scotchlite for the effective radiator-in-the-bath sequence. As in many of the later technical descriptions, the unfamiliarity with the techniques made the descriptions quite confused.

**CAMERA MOUNTS**

In 1977, two unique camera mounts were advertised, first the Tyler, in the July issue, and, then in October, the Steadicam. (Figs 17, 18)

**VIDEO**

The Kodak colour insert ad in the Nov/Dec 75 issue said, in what must have appeared as the start of many years of concern about video, "Of the two alternatives the better way for on-the-spot, heat-of-the-moment, repeatable events is the film way." It took ten years for the change from film in ENG video for TV news, but the change was to be complete.

(When the assassination attempt was made on Ronald Reagan, there were NO film cameras covering the event. It was the newspapers and especially the news magazines that gave us the sharp, peak-of-action 35mm still camera pictures. The video electronic blow-ups looked like the Zapruder Super 8 footage of JFK's assassination. But ah, they were immediate, beamed by satellite, converted from NTSC, and on our screen within hours.)

The first ad for video equipment in *CP* was for the Akai Portable VTR, a 1/4 inch (8mm wide) reel-to-reel system, and, at the time of the introduction of the 3/4 inch Sony U-matic format, it looked to be the future system for home and semi professional use. The 1/2 inch formats proved more robust, but were supplanted by the convenience of cassette-loading systems. It wasn't until 1983 that there was an agreed standard for 1/4 inch or 8mm video.

July/Aug 75. (Fig. 19)

On the inside back page of that issue was a dreadful piece of early 1970s typography announcing that Colorfilm was extending into video, and we saw for the first time the cryptic letters, CMX. This was the first really efficient way to edit videotape; AAV in Melbourne installed the first PAL version made. It took some time to convince film editors that this was an alternative and frame-accurate way of editing videotape.

From my experience as an agency commercial's producer at the time, it was revolutionary. It allowed the creative team from the agency to preview effects such as dissolves and other film optical techniques instantly, without the weeks of waiting for laboratories turn around. The saving in time has changed commercial production permanently. Australians adopted video post-production much faster then they did in the U.S. and U.K. From commercials to series work, the finish on tape became quickly accepted.
There was for years a resentment by the film editors at the way their arcane knowledge of the laboratory had been slighted, but there are now few commercials completed on tape that do not have the agency representatives at the tape edit session. It was the new, unique-to-video digital effects that made some sessions’ post-production by a committee. “Could you move that super down a bit, make it smaller and colour it aqua with a drop shadow and show me what it looks like zooming out of the pack logo with perspective”, etc.

It was the growing sophistication of equipment leading to the rising cost of videotape facilities time that forced the growth of off-line production by a committee. “Could you move that super down a bit, make it smaller and colour it aqua with a drop shadow and show me what it looks like zooming out of the pack logo with perspective”, etc.

The introduction of one-inch tape saw the start of a number of small yet broadcast-quality production companies and video-editing facilities. The two-inch machines have become the dinosaurs in an evolving technology. The results currently being obtained from half-inch broadcast equipment, such as the Sony SP Betacam and the new digital formats for Betacam, D3, and D5, are another leap forward. Component S-VHS and Hi-8 systems are delivering the promise of high-quality, low-cost, lightweight almost broadcast-standard camcorders.

Articles on two different faces of television appeared in the December-January 1979-80 issue, as Cinema Papers tried to involve broadcast television in the magazine. There was an article on the production of the Don Lane Show and a report from Brian Walsh (an important figure in the growth of Melbourne’s Open Channel) on the growth in community television in America. The opening paragraphs of his article are significant in the thinking and development that are shaping television today.

EDITING

Les Luxford was cutting Chris Lofven’s OZ in early 1976 and spelled out a 90-degree turn in editing features. (Fig. 20)

The preference for flat-bed editing tables did not mean that the Movieolas were suddenly abandoned. Many feature productions where to be cut on a mixture of both, and they still have users. It was the speed and convenience of video off-line systems that was to change the fortunes of the flat-bed manufacturers.

ANIMATION

David Deneen’s Sydney animation company, Film Graphics, was a consistent advertiser in the magazine.

The discussion of Film Graphics motion graphics work years later (November-December 1981) showed the company’s ability to adapt to the demands and possibilities of the new technology.

TELEVISION INTERFACE

In the January-February 1981 issue there was the first part (of four) of an article that was “a technical series prepared by Kodak (Motion Pictures Division) in association with Cinema Papers”, called “The Film and Television Interface”. I’m not sure who was responsible for the text but it must have been Cinema Papers who added the inane captions and supplied the vague pictures (one of a wave form monitor that was printed upside down).

The New Products section in that issue included a press release on the Bosch Fernseh FDL-60 Telecine. This was the first of the telecines to use a solid state CCD (Charge Coupled Device) that scans one television image line at a time into a digital frame store. Because these single-line devices did not allow for the use of pan and scan and optical enlargement, the industry leader has become the Rank Cintel URSA, using...
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optics and digital signal processing.

Apparently in an attempt to resolve the different demands of writing for film and for television (and to capture the growing video advertising), the one-off experiment of Channels magazine was tried. (Fig. 21) Inserted as a free supplement in the April 1982 issue, it unfortunately attracted none of the tape or video equipment ads that would have made the magazine a financial proposition and seemed to be looking at a different readership altogether from Cinema Papers. The new products section in Channels had items on High Definition TV, the Sony Mavica electronic recording still camera, and one-piece camera recorders.

The use of video-assisted view finders in film production made the development of rigs such as the Louma Crane possible. The first Australian use of the Louma was by Ian Baker in Melbourne, for a videotape car commercial, and was reported in July-August 1981. (Fig. 22)

The use of micro-computers built into film equipment was increasing and this appeared in an ad in the September-October 1981 issue, suggesting that their use would soon be wider.

There was an interview with David Samuelson at the time of the introduction of the Samcine Front projection rig to Australia. Front projection was seen as the ideal way to avoid the complexity of blue-screen matting, but, apart from a few commercials, some overseas series work and some short use in movies like The Return of Captain Invincible, it has given way to digital post-production. There was an interview with David Samuelson at the time of the introduction of the Samcine Front projection rig to Australia. Front projection was seen as the ideal way to avoid the complexity of blue-screen matting, but, apart from a few commercials, some overseas series work and some short use in movies like The Return of Captain Invincible, it has given way to digital post-production. There was also an examination of the introduction of stereo sound for features, and producing material for the interactive video disc. In the last issue before the temporary pause in publication, there was a history of 3-D and a report on the system being used for Alex Stitt's animated feature, Abra Cadabra. (Fig. 23)

VIDEO SPLITS

The impact of video on the process of making features was covered only obliquely in CP. At each of the tradeshows I attended, there were new video splits, and modified camera doors. The adoption was slow because the bulk of the equipment was hired, it was hard for the rental companies to keep up with the pace of introduction of new higher quality video tubes, and then CCD chips. As long as a low contrast flickering video feed was accepted there was no pressure to update. It is tempting to suggest that it suited the DOPs to have control over the only quality-accurate image on set, the viewfinder. In some of the interviews this was stated openly but again the impact of television commercial production pushed for high quality, colour flicker-free preview and replay. If people were shooting video it was assumed that the floor or location monitor was going to give the director, producer and clients an accurate representation of the final image. That it often introduced decision by committee and new protocols on set didn't translate immediately to film shoots. Today the demand is for film cameras to provide a high quality video split and the future will see it digitized and stored for non-linear off-line editing. Video paved a path for the computer.
COMPUTERS IN FILM

The coverage of the computer's impact on film and video production is really the story of the last five years of "Technicalities". Small mentions at each of the SMPTE trade shows I covered became a flood. Movies by Microchip was the headline for a string of issues looking at the impact of the computer. (Figs 24, 25) At first it was in scriptwriting, the wordprocessor was a natural with on disk storage that made the process of script alterations and revisions easier. Budgeting and accounting embraced the spreadsheet and we soon saw attempts at packages that did everything. The search for one-piece-does-all software was covered in the May 1985 issue. Starting from the script which was already in the computer it seemed a natural step to be able to do a breakdown, then scheduling and integrate these into the budget and accounting.

In such a small niche market it proved impractical to market and support the products and the Mac vs IBM platform standards fractured the market further. As people became more computer literate they managed to use the growing sophistication of individual software packages rather than looking for one solution. The commercial companies that were producing quotes daily are the only groups who seemed eager for budget packages.

As the use of computers became commonplace, we covered computer motion control rigs for special effects use (the Mirage effects ad shown was placed at the peak of that company's work on the best Australian effects film, The Time Guardian), and in control of animation stands. Accurate mechanically repeatable results were a natural application and David Deneen's Film Graphics ruled when it came to their Motion Graphics work for commercials, (a style that began with the U.S. work of Bob Abel for 7-UP), and was covered in the Nov/Dec. 1981 issue. (Fig. 16)

THE PRESENT

In 1992 Technicalities took on a New Look. (Fig. 26) Acknowledging the emphasis that video and digital post had taken in this section because of my own interests, we decided to concentrate on film. Magazines such as Encore were doing a good job of covering the video scene and were faster because of their fortnightly publication schedule. The advertisers responded to the change and I adopted a superior attitude to video unless it was part of feature filmmaking. The tension between the tools I was working with doing my 'real' work and an editorial stance with our noses in the air has taken a lot of the fun away for me as editor. This is my last edition as "Technicalities" editor before I take on the task of revamping Australian Multimedia magazine. I'm still looking forward to submitting articles to the new editor, but will be concentrating on covering the story of the digital convergence of computers, telecommunications, television, and entertainment. It will also give me time to finish the book that Dominic Case and I are writing about twenty years of technical change in the industry for the AFC. It will be a bit like this article but with its teeth in. Thanks for reading and good night.

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A panel of nine film reviewers has rated a selection of the latest releases on a scale of 0 to 10, the latter being the optimum rating (a dash means not seen). The critics are: Bill Collins (Network 10; Daily Mirror, Sydney); Sandra Hall (The Bulletin); Paul Harris ("EG", The Age; 3RRR); Ivan Hutchinson (Seven Network; Herald-Sun); Stan James (The Adelaide Advertiser); Neil Jillett (The Age); Scott Murray; Tom Ryan (The Sunday Age); and Evan Williams (The Australian).

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<tr>
<th>FILM TITLE</th>
<th>Director</th>
<th>BILL COLLINS</th>
<th>SANDRA HALL</th>
<th>PAUL HARRIS</th>
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<th>STAN JAMES</th>
<th>NEIL JILLET</th>
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