Cinema Papers #113 December 1996

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Cryptically Acclaimed

Michael Helms visits the set of Peter Jackson's bizarre horror film, The Frighteners.

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Dear Sir,

I write in regard to an open letter to the AFI from film director Richard Lowenstein, published in your last edition of Cinema Papers (No. 112, October, p. 1). Mr Lowenstein singles out the pre-selection of the four films nominated for Cinematography in this year’s AFI Awards and question the credibility of judges.

I would point out that all the judges who participated in this event are members of the Australian Cinematographers Society and that all of the right judges are accredited members, namely Leonard Acocis, Mark Sporri ACS, Jeremy Grant ACS, Ian Jones ACS, Joel Petersen ACS and Yuri Sokol ACS. The remaining two judges, David Burr and Bridget Costello, although not accredited, are members of the Society and experienced in the industry (Barry Munn and Louis Irving ACS did not participate in this year’s judging).

May I further point out, for a Cinematographer to be granted accreditation and given the right to see the letters after their name is considered to be the ultimate accolade in the society and is highly valued. To question people who have achieved this honour, as to whether they know what good cinematography is, can only be considered naïve and show little respect for the views of such people – the likes of whom have no doubt helped Mr Lowenstein’s career.

All ACS members who participate in the judging do so with the professionalism, integrity and honesty that is expected, and would never have “an axe to grind” or be “embezzled” when making a judgement.

Yours sincerely

Milton Inglis
Australian National President
Australian Cinematographers Society.

The following open letter arrived at Cinema Papers from the AFI’s Ruth Jones:

Richard Lowenstein’s open letter to the AFI, published recently in the October edition of Cinema Papers, is big on rhetoric and low on logic and fact. As near as I can make out, Richard was “angry” when he heard the final nominations. He had happily participated in the process in that point, before discovering that it was a pre-selection and anti-democratic.

Why, because the films he favours didn’t get in. But that’s what democracy is: Richard – you live with it, even when the numbers aren’t with you.

Let’s make a few things clear:

• 100 jurors voted for Best Film nominations – not the six or so Richard implies.

• He reckons it wasn’t a good year for cinematographers and says the decisions of the cinematography jurors were wrong. Frankly, cinematographers are a better judge of cinematographic quality than he. The names, only a short list of their credits as ASP, 2nd Unit ASP, camera operator or Second Camera Operator, are: Ian Jones, Bad Boy Bubby, Babe, Dead Calm, Strictly Ballroom, The Russia House, Clear and Present Danger and Evil Angels, David Burr, Wild America, The Phantom, Beyond Rangoon and The Man With the Golden Gun.

Nor would the cinematography jurors appreciate his implied suggestion that they are “embarrassed” and “have axes to grind”. What gives him the right to suggest this when he was not party to their discussions?

• To suggest jurors are normally out-of-work industry members is simply wrong. Read the full list of jurors printed in the Awards presentation programme and judge for yourself. I doubt if they are Richard’s informed assertion on their behalf.

• To think about the above question in the American system where you don’t have to see the films in order to cast a nominating vote? The British system, where films are nominated on the basis of how many write-in votes they accumulate? Prior to introducing pre-selection, as few as thirty people voted in some of the specialist craft categories – this was the number that managed to see all the entered films. Now that is an unrepresentative sample. Statistical validity is another concept Richard needs to come to grips with.

It is difficult enough ensuring one hundred people view all the entered feature films. In 1986, in the non-fiction categories only, it would be necessary to view more than 70 films in order to vote. In this scenario everyone really would need to be unemployed.

Nominations and pre-selection are part of any democratic process and by unlocking them we ensure that thousands, rather than hundreds, vote from in the nominated films.

The AFI does not now pre-selection in order to save money. We had an exhaustive consultation process earlier this year and, after extensive discussion, the Awards Advisory Committee was unanimous in its recommendations to the Board of the AFI that, on balance, the interests of the industry were best served by the pre-selection and anti-democratic system, where films are nominated on the basis of how many write-in votes they accumulate.

We are appalled by Cinema Papers to Richard’s letter naming the cinematography jurors was incorrect. In future, feel free to check the facts with us before publishing.

And, by the way, I was interested to read Cinema Papers’ comments to the effect that winning an AFI Award had had no effect on Angel Baby’s performance at the box-office. I don’t think the producers would agree, and with a 74% audience in the office, on 13 least screens, immediately following the AFI Awards telecast (figures courtesy of Motion Picture Distributors Association of Australia), I don’t either.

Ruth Jones
Chief Executive
Australian Film Institute.

Richard Lowenstein replies (over):

Dear Ruth,

I think you have misunderstood the letter and its intent. I agree about how the votes were cast, but I hereby retract my comments on the way the jury was chosen. I think it must be acknowledged that people who are out of work do not have the commitment to the industry, and the necessary time, to do the job of a juror. I also agree that the letters after the names of the jurors are not sufficient to allow a person to know exactly how they vote in any particular instance.

I was very impressed to have been nominated for the award, and I would suggest that the credit should go to the AFI for its organization and the hard work of its staff. I think the AFI is the best organization of its kind in the world, and I am proud to be associated with it.

Yours truly,

Richard Lowenstein.
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Richard Lewenstein replies:

The focus of my mention of the cinematographers' panel this year to select (or not select, as the case may be) the four top films in their section misses the point of my intended criticism. My gripe is not the whim of the 1st and 2nd unit DOPs, and the 1st unit DP, Jim Piddock, who has to speak for the whole industry is fraught with problems (as any unjustly-convicted criminal will tell you). It was a system that was brought in during the turbulent days of the IBOA funding where between 35-40 films were being made each year, with upwards of 25 of them being unwatchable (I know, I had to watch most of them). The system does not work any more. The amount of films made per year is now present 20. Surely, accredited DOPs from each section of the industry should be able to see all 20 films if they are going to vote democratically for the one that is the best of the year in their arena of expertise. Or are the panels of 5-6 always going to do the bulk of our thinking for us?

I know from conversations with the AFI organizers (who have done a marvellous job given the judging system they have to work with) that low attendances at the screenings from accredited DOPs was a major problem with the old system. Since 15 out of 20 Films submitted this year were screened twice for jury members and then twice again a month or so later for all Accredited voters, this should not be a major express or problem. It may also give accredited DOPs currently in gainful employment a chance to be involved in the process of selecting their “Best”. Of the 8 DOPs on the jury, only four had seen the film by the time I spoke to my good friend Steve Windon, he’d photographed Hotel de Love, Country Life and Rapa Nui, not Marc Scicopoli. The last time I spoke to my good friend Steve Windon, he’d photographed Hotel de Love, Country Life and Rapa Nui, not Marc Scicopoli. He was there to support Jones.”

Bastard indeed features some disturbing and shocking scenes of violence, but Huston’s point—that this is not gratuitous violence for the purpose of titillation—is clearly made: it’s not the violence itself that’s disturbing, but Huston’s point— that this is not the violence itself that’s disturbing. But Huston is disarmingly calm about this treatment of her artistic product, when asked at a press conference whether she would win out in the end, she smiled serenely and replied, “I’m not fighting anyone.”

Dorothy Allison’s best-selling novel, about a girl’s abusive childhood in South Carolina in the ’50s, was considered too violent and stiff off to the Showtime network. While Tatum was assured to go to Cannes, the same privilege was not extended to Si Seb, and the film was only shown at Edinburgh on the condition that there would be no press. Huston is disarmingly calm about this treatment of her artistic product, when asked at a press conference whether she would win out in the end, she smiled serenely and replied, “I’m not fighting anyone.”

The erratic nature of the nominations are there to be seen. The remarks refer to many films, not just Angel Baby, and “little bearing” has never meant “no effect.”

That item in Cinema Papers reported the following facts on the 1995 theatrical release of Angel Baby. Babe set an all-time record for an Australian film in domestic release, and was amongst many films, not just Angel Baby, that did not perform well at the box office. I know from conversations with the AFI organizers (who have done a marvellous job given the judging system they have to work with) that low attendances at the screenings from accredited DOPs was a major problem with the old system. Since 15 out of 20 Films submitted this year were screened twice for jury members and then twice again a month or so later for all Accredited voters, this should not be a major express or problem. It may also give accredited DOPs currently in gainful employment a chance to be involved in the process of selecting their “Best”. Of the 8 DOPs on the jury, only four had seen the film by the time I spoke to my good friend Steve Windon, he’d photographed Hotel de Love, Country Life and Rapa Nui, not Marc Scicopoli. The last time I spoke to my good friend Steve Windon, he’d photographed Hotel de Love, Country Life and Rapa Nui, not Marc Scicopoli. He was there to support Jones.”

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The Editor replies:

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CRYPTICALLY
FROM THE SET OF HIS FIRST STUDIO FILM, THE BLACK COMEDY/HORROR
How did The Frighteners begin?

Every movie has a gestation story. Some time after Braindead was finished, Fran [Walsh] and I were mucking about with story ideas and came up with a simple, novel twist to the ghost story. We were, at that time, interested in the idea of writing a couple of scripts a year for Hollywood - spec scripts, not for me to direct. They'd just be a bit of work we could do in-between movies.

So, we came up with this idea and wrote a two-page outline which we sent to our agent in Hollywood. He just keeps these things on file, and, if he thinks it's a good idea to show it to anyone, he does. A few months went by and he heard that Robert Zemeckis was looking for story and script ideas for a series of Tales from the Crypt movies - big feature films. This was about three years ago. The plan was that the guys who developed the Tales from the Crypt show - Zemeckis, Richard Donner, etc. - were all going to direct a feature film.

At that point, we had Heavenly Creatures lined up to shoot. It was about a year after we talked that we developed the first draft. We were writing it thinking it was possible for Bob to direct.

Eventually, when he got the first draft, he called up and asked me if I'd ever thought of directing it? It was actually the first time I'd ever thought...
about it, which was kind of weird since we'd written the script.

So, I said, "Yes I'd like to. If you want me to make it, how about doing it in New Zealand?" He said, "Okay, if you can make it look like middle America." We sent someone with a camera around New Zealand taking photos of small towns and sending them back. Bob and Universal were happy we could do it, and then the whole thing came together relatively quickly. Fran and I wrote more drafts and had more meetings. We were still taking THE FRIGHTENERS through its final stages of post and into festivals.

So, last year was taken up with that and getting The Frighteners to the stage where, this year, we could start shooting it.

Was Heavenly Creatures a test for the computer animation when you wrote the script?

Yes, in a way it was. It was actually an excuse to buy the gear.

Around the time we were writing Heavenly Creatures, I wanted to get into computers. It was when Jurassic Park [Steven Spielberg, 1993] hadn't been seen by anyone, but all these rumours were going around about how amazing the dinosaurs were. I wanted to get into computers. They are actually an amazing tool for just about anything. It's quite expensive but there was none of that gear in this part of the world.

So, we deliberately wrote some sequences in Heavenly Creatures that could only be achieved through computers. We deliberately wrote morphing and various other things into the script. The wish to get the computer was a definite factor, rather than the dramatic reason, really.

We just got one computer, and the various canning and outputting things that you need to get from film onto digital effects and back to film again. [With] one computer and about 30 odd shots from Heavenly Creatures, we figured out how to do it. George Port was the only guy we had at that stage doing it.

We had this big package of about $1,000,000 of machinery from the States. It came in a big cardboard box with one page of xeroxed instructions [big laugh]. After the stuff arrived, it took four to five months before we got a single shot. George had to figure out how it all worked. A lot of experimenting and testing went on.

Computer technology is so new in terms of film that the sky's the limit. It's as much as your imagination can encompass. Initially, it was all morphing. Everyone thought, "Wow, you can morph!" It's settling down now and people are starting to realize that you can use it for many different applications.

What limits are being tested with this film?

We're testing our limits in terms of the sheer number of shots that we've got. The bread-and-butter computer work on this film is ghosts. We usually have actors playing the ghosts; not always, but usually, actors shot against blue screens and then they're composited into the shots that we've already done.

What is the special ghost effect that you're going for, and how does it compare to Casper (Brad Silberling, 1995)?

We were doing ours before Casper came out and so were very interested in seeing it. Ours is similar in that sense that they're transparent and have a bluish glow. The main difference is that ours were actors and Casper is a cartoon. The story is very much the relationship between the guy that Michael Fox plays [Frank Bannister] and a series of ghosts. We never thought of doing it any other way than using actors and dialogue, and being able to bounce off each other.

It's very much a character piece. We don't treat the ghosts in our story like a special effect. We don't make them too gimmicky or too cartoony. Scenes are written and shot as you would with any actors, only some of the characters in the scenes are ghosts and some aren't, but they interact as just a bunch of guys together. It's a classic Roger Rabbit scenario in a way.

Our lead actor, Michael J. Fox, spends more than half the movie acting to nothing, in a room, getting into quite tight conversations with ghosts who are put in later. So, it's been an arduous shoot in that sense. Every shot of that type is very time-consuming, as you have to shoot it twice: once with Michael, and sometimes months later the blue screen with ghosts.

A crew member was saying your shooting ratio is

43:1 at the moment. That's the overall ratio throughout the movie. My other movies have been 15:1. This is the one movie where I've never had to worry about running out of film stock. Other movies, there's been major panic if I've shot over the ratio, but this one has a budget where film stock is not a problem. We've shot about 1/4 million feet so far. That's enough for two-and-a-half feature films.
You've said the Blubberhead project is still hanging around. Is this a test run for that?

This is more mainstream – a good, logical progression to get my hands on that sort of budget if I should want it in the future. The one thing I want to do is go back and do more low-budget movies in the future. They're very different animals. The big-budget films like this with a long shoot is one type of experience. They're equally enjoyable because ultimately you're striving to achieve something that is commercial and funny whereas, with a low-budget movie, you have a lot more freedom to play and have fun.

You've still managed to keep your hand in with low-budget films like Jack Brown Genius.

Yes, I did. I was executive producer on that one and I co-directed a thing called Forgotten Silver, which was made for television not cinemas – it was only one-hour long. We shot that just before we started work on The Frighteners. Shooting 30 set-ups a day with a small crew: that was great. I certainly love being in the middle of all this [The Frighteners], but the concept of doing a little film with a small crew has its appeal.

Has the relationship with Universal been good?

Yes, it has; really great. At this stage, I have nothing but good things to say about working on a studio film, mainly because they haven't really had much to do with it, which has been good. We've had a very good creative executive from the studio, John Garbett, who has been with us and very supportive and has come up with some good ideas for the script. Fran and I have re-written the script all the way through the shoot, which is the way we like to work. We see the rushes and see how the film is developing and we then re-write. Just about every week we've been inserting new pages. We just try to keep ahead of ourselves and keep improving it all the time.

The guys at Universal say this is the first time this has ever happened. Usually they don't re-write much because, if they finance a film, then, in a year's time, that's the film they want to see. But the folks at Universal have been really pleased because they have seen that we've been improving it and so they say, "Great. If you want to change this, okay." So that experience has been good. We've been getting great feedback on the rushes. They get the rushes on video and they've been happy all the time. They've never signalled any problems with the rushes to me.

And, after six months, I certainly feel I've been left alone to make the film that I want to make. I don't feel that at any point they have tried to influence me in any way at all. I've had total freedom.

How do you go about producing further work?

I've got a development deal with Miramax that lets me develop my own projects and they have a first look at them. That's the sort of deal I like because I'm interested in scripts. I'm still not enthusiastic about shooting other people's scripts.

You've talked about the genesis of the film, but were the studios nervous in dealing with you?

I'm sure that they have been, but it hasn't been made apparent to me. Bob [Zemeckis] saw the script and liked it before the studio ever knew anything about it. Bob had a development deal with Universal. In other words, the studio didn't even know the project existed until they saw that script, by which stage Bob obviously liked it and wanted to proceed with it. I'm sure the studio reaction to the project probably would have been very different if it had just been me hammering on their door saying, "Read this and I want to make this film in New Zealand."

Were you granted creative freedom?

I don't have final cut on the film. But I knew that going in. Bob's got final cut, so I have no qualms about that. The guy's made some great movies, so I'm quite happy for him to have that sort of control... Bob's been very definite all the way through that I should make the sort of film I want to make. He wants me to make this because of my previous movies, and he doesn't want anything, either from him or the studio, to intrude on that. Otherwise, it's not my film; it becomes some weird hybrid.

I've never had a discussion with Bob at any stage about whether I should shoot this or that differently – he's just left me alone. He's been very useful with suggestions of scheduling and budgets, and the nuts and bolts of getting the film made. He's never attempted to have major creative input, which is great, because I guess it means he's happy with what he's seen. If he weren't happy, I suppose it would be a different story.

So, generally, you'd say you haven't had to modify your approach?

No, I haven't. I'm very much shooting in the style I've shot my other films, although this has the encumbrance of motion-control cameras. If you're
When did Michael J. Fox enter the project?

Frank Bannister and Lucy Lynskey (Trini Alvarado), The Frighteners.

not careful, you get nailed down a little bit by the technology. The film has been as much a battle against being controlled by the motion control as it has been about just being able to let rip with the style that I'm used to.

It's not a straight horror film?

No. It's just a character/black comedy really, a psychological black comedy. It has ghosts and some horrific stuff in it - some monsters and some psychos. It's sort of a weird one. Michael J. Fox describes it as Truffaut meets The Mask [Charles Russell, 1994]. Bob Zemeckis was going on the other day with a description - a combination of Ghostbusters [Ivan Reitman, 1984] and Natural Born Killers [Oliver Stone, 1994]. Hollywood always has to categorize you and to mix the films to try to explain it. That's why I don't know; it's a pretty oddball movie.

It has a lot of commercial elements because it is a commercial studio movie. But because it's made here and written by Fran and I, we've retained a lot of that quirkiness and black humour that we had in our other movies. That, immediately I think, is going to make it a little bit more interesting than if it were a film made in America by Americans. It's certainly going to have an edge.

When did Michael J. Fox enter the project?

Again, the studio has been very supportive in casting and didn't try to put anyone on the film. Fran and I obviously took the casting very seriously. If you get the script right and the casting right, it becomes very difficult to make a bad movie. We wanted to be sure we got the very best cast for the characters.

The role that Michael plays is a difficult combination of straight drama and comedy. We came up with names of various comic performers because we could see that this character is funny - he has some funny lines and does some funny stuff - but we wanted him to be a real person, not a goofy clown.

When you start thinking in those terms, it's hard to think of actors. There are not that many that you'd accept on board as being a straight actor - someone you really take seriously but also has a really nice comic timing, comic sensibility - who can play that kind of straight comedy, like the Lionel role in Braindead that Tim Baine played. It's a straight role in a sense, but the guys caught up in such ridiculous circumstances that he just has to acknowledge the humour, whilst not actually creating it, not playing up to it.

We thought of Michael and mentioned him to Bob. Bob has a relationship with him and said, "If you seriously want Michael, I'm happy to give him a call, send him a script and see what he says." I met Michael at the Toronto Film Festival and he was willing to sign on and give it a go.

What do you think of the American-edited versions of Heavenly Creatures and Braindead?

I loved the R-rated version of Dead/Alive. They took about 17 to 18 minutes out of it and it's really funny. A bunch of us sat down with a few beers and watched it and laughed every time it got cut. The lawnmower sequence is virtually gone: Lionel walks in the front door and then, the next minute, he's standing among those piles of bodies. It's just gone.

I don't take any of that stuff seriously. The whole rating system in America is totally stupid. The unrated version is available to anyone who wants it. The fans who want to see that sort of film can get copies anywhere in the world, which is just great. So who cares if someone puts out the R-rated version? Heavenly Creatures is fine. We supervised a cut of Heavenly Creatures that was about 10 minutes shorter than the New Zealand version. We did about 3 to 4 versions after it was released in New Zealand. Miramax wanted it to be a bit shorter. I had final cut on the film in the States, so Fran and I tightened it. We actually prefer the American version to the New Zealand one now.

Which version has Australia got?

Australia has a hybrid. Because we were tailoring the 10-minute shorter version for the American market, we were very much aware that the Americans would not want to see the British tennis-party mentality, so we tailored one that we thought would be okay in America. When we came to release it in places like England, Europe and Australia, I got them to stick back a couple of the scenes. The English sense of humour is more attuned to those scenes, so we stuck them back in.

New Zealand is the only country that has seen the longest version. America has the shortest version and the rest of the world had an in-between version, which was all done under my supervision.

Were you surprised by your Oscar nominations?

Yes. It was surprising. I didn't think films like Heavenly Creatures got any attention by the Oscar people and the Academy. That was good.

1 See Scott Murray's article on Peter Jackson, Heavenly Creatures and computer technology in the New Zealand Supplement of Cinema Papers, No. 97-8, April 1984, pp. 20-30.

2 U.S. release title: Dead/Alive.
Lee Robinson is a unique figure in Australian cinema, having been variously a writer, director and producer of a stream of commercially-successful projects. He has written extensively for radio drama, made documentaries, feature films and television series, and now in his retirement still deals with the ongoing business of his worldwide sales.

In the early '70s when the film community was polarized around the 'Art vs Industry' argument, Lee Robinson was condemned by some for his firm stance in the camp of commerce. He recalls "a school of thought" in that period which did not understand that "the main tool of picture-making is money" and which criticized "any leanings towards commercialism as automatically un-Australian". Indeed, so dominant was this view amongst those entrusted with establishing the new government-funded film industry that, as experimental filmmaker and ex-Robinson employee Albie Thom observed in 1971, they completely passed over experienced filmmakers like Lee Robinson — which was absurd. Robinson was one of a handful of filmmakers whose abilities had enabled them to survive in the difficult days before government support, in the days when most others went to the wall. 1958 is a case in point: in that year,

This article draws on interviews with Lee Robinson conducted by Graham Shirley (in August 1976) and myself (October 1995). Graham and I are members of the Filmmakers' Oral History Group which encourages film historians to use such sources. Access to interviews can be obtained through the oral history officer of the National Film & Sound Archive. New members of the Group are always welcome, as are volunteer transcribers. M.A.
Robinson's Southern International was the only Australian company actively producing feature films. While government intervention has led to some improvement in the prospects for Australian features — they now command between five and seven percent of our yearly box office — the film culture élite, in their nationalistic arrogance, still piss from a great height on the genre films which are today's equivalent of the Lee Robinson action drama. Yet their moral strictures regarding worthy emotional and intellectual content are not necessarily shared by popular audiences or even by other cinephiles.

Take, for example, Frank Shields, producer-director of the accomplished but decidedly B-grade thriller Hostage: The Christine Maresch Story (1983). The industry recoiled in amazement when Shields' The Surfer (1988) was selected for the Quinzaine des Réalisateurs (Directors Fortnight) at Cannes, having themselves received the film with derision at the previous year's AFI judging screenings.

Yet things do change and it is interesting that in 1992 it was Lee Robinson who received the AFI's Raymond Longford Award. The sting of commercialism now muted by a patina of nostalgia, perhaps it was time to regard Robinson's contribution to Australian cinema as a promise, not a threat.

Historically, Australian filmmakers have had to contend with particularly discouraging and complex cultural, economic and technological forces to produce a relatively small body of work; and it is true that some of these films, commercial and non-commercial alike, now seem naïve, crude and sometimes crass. Yet, it seems to me, these films and this past provide considerable insight into choices and attitudes which still confront Australian filmmakers within the changed circumstances of today. 1996 marks the fiftieth year of Lee Robinson's career, a career which spans half of the Australian century of cinema. There is much to learn from his accomplishments.
Lee Robinson was born in 1923, one of eleven children of a close-knit Mormon family, whose religious taboos included movie-going. He tells the story of the kids persuading their mother to see her first film in the '30s, a De Mille bible epic, *The Sign of the Cross* (1932). Twenty years later, when Robinson's feature *The Phantom Stockman* (1952) was at the local cinema, they talked her into going to see her second film, and, when she came out, asked her what she thought. "I've seen worse," she said. This laconic style is a mark of the Australia in which Robinson grew up and did his major work. It was an Australia whose identity had been shaped by Federation, the Anzacs, and a masculine bush nationalism. It was an Australia which valorized egalitarianism, understatement, unpretentiousness — even anti-intellectualism.

And, until relatively recently, this Australia represented "the real Australia" to almost all of us — not the least of all to Lee Robinson.

A military historian during World War II, Robinson wrote a large and detailed report on the Portuguese Timor Campaign. His view of the Anzac spirit of these Australian commandos continued to be expressed in an enduring interest in films of adventure, and directly in his last two features as producer, *Attack Force Z* (Tim Burstall, 1982) and *Southern Cross* (aka *The Highest Honour: A True Story*, Peter Maxwell and Seiji Moriyama, 1984), which fictionalized their exploits.

On his discharge from the army in 1946, Robinson learned that the newly-created National Film Board was setting up the Department of Information (DOI) Film Unit, later to become Film Australia. Under the influence of John Grierson and the documentary movement, the DOI created a new kind of film by a new breed of writers and intellectuals, the creative interpretation of Australian nation-building men at work. Often the "real" Australia was located in the bush and the bush became Lee Robinson's area of expertise. Robinson, a successful short-story writer, was hired as a scriptwriter, given a treatment to write on Aboriginal artist Albert Namatjira, and then asked to direct the film. He recalls that when he told the DOI chief, Canadian Ralph Foster, that he wouldn't have a clue about directing, Foster replied, "Well, there aren't too many around who have, so what's the difference?" Feature films were almost extinct and the cameramen who had, in actual fact, been directing (newscast) stories weren't considered as directors. So, with a few exceptions, at that time, as Robinson has said, "There were no directors in Australia."

The DOI in those days was a cauldron of religious, political and aesthetic debate; and film became a subject for intense study by the neophyte director. English director Harry Watt, a former documentarist who was in Australia making features for Ealing, was supportive of the new filmmakers. He explained to Robinson the mechanics of such things as overlapping action, and, in him to Pagewood Studios to watch the making of *Eureka Stockade* (1949).

Robinson and his cameraman, Alex Poignant, set off for central Australia where they spent months researching and filming *Namatjira the Painter* (1947). In those days at the DOI, filmmakers did their research, shot their film and then came back and edited it — as a creative whole. Watt had emphasized to Robinson the importance of the editing process, and it became an aspect of filmmaking which Robinson was closely involved in — in the cutting-room throughout his career. From his very first film, Robinson shot to cut, using essentially drama techniques on actuality situations. He gave strong direction to his real-life characters. *Namatjira the Painter* even includes flashbacks of Albert Namatjira played by a young hunter known as Nosepeg. (Nosepeg joined a handful of Aboriginal actors in contributing an air of mystery and local colour to Australian productions of the '50s and '60s.) This film remained in distribution for decades, with a revised version in 1974.

In speaking of his location documentary work, Robinson recalls the pleasure and the luxury of having time (in the absence of a large crew) to research and think. Films were largely shot mute, although wire recorders were occasionally used for sync. Music, narration and voices were generally dubbed later — a consequence of the unwieldy nature of sync cameras as well as of stylistic developments. Filmmaking teams of two or three people camped out or took cheap accommodation, and expenses were low. Robinson remembers that he and his cameraman, Frank Bagnall, spent weeks in Broome on another DOI documentary, *The Pearlers* (1949), just taking everything in. Then, when he'd devised his shooting script, they shot the film in a day.

Later, in 1957, Robinson experienced a different kind of luxury, collaborating with the famous American commentator Lowell Thomas on his *High Adventure* series shot around the world for American television. The budgets were lavish, the crews large and you could ask for anything you wanted. By this time, Robinson had acquired a reputation as "an expert on primitive peoples" because of his work in Aboriginal Australia and New Guinea. And, apparently, on this basis Thomas could have gotten him citizenship in the U.S. Robinson, however, had been working on the American series in order to finance his own projects and declined the offer. He recalls that he liked working with Thomas but, as a sixth-generation Australian, he was "so totally Australian in every shape and form that I couldn't conceive of becoming a citizen of another country." He says in retrospect that he would have felt the way "leaving the ship to have done and become someone else."

In fact, once he left the DOI for independent feature production, the challenge Lee Robinson set himself was to create pictures that were distinctly Australian and yet constructed in a way that could command an international audience. He recalls that
restrictions on the raising of capital for any but essential industries and film was not one of them. Chips Rafferty had been refused an exemption to accept £120,000 committed by local businessmen for production of a feature about immigration problems and a thirteen-part series for world television. Robinson had written an urban thriller which he likewise was unable to produce. (It was eventually sold to Ealing, where it became the basis for the Siege of Pinchgut (Harry Watt, 1959). So, when Robinson, as writer-director, Rafferty, the actor, and George Heath, the cameraman, decided to pool their skills to make their first feature, they had to devise a technically simple and extremely low-budget picture with elements that would sell. This became The Phantom Stockman.

By this time, Robinson had done a number of other documentaries for the DOI in the Northern Territory, including Outback Patrol (1947) and Crocodile Hunters (1949), while Rafferty had had experience shooting in the Centre with Ealing's The Overlanders (Harry Watt, 1946). Robinson recalls that his work in the Territory had given him an abiding "fondness for Aborigines" and a tremendous admiration for their telepathic communication and finger-talk. He had endowed an earlier radio character written for Rafferty with such powers and this "Sundowner" now seemed ideal to build a film around to exploit the novelty of a Central Australian backdrop. Within these parameters, Robinson and Rafferty set about devising their script:

We knew we had very limited money because you weren't allowed to put more than ten thousand pounds into a picture then, so there was no point in going mad with all sorts of exotic locations and production values and things. We knew we had to keep it simple and very straightforward. And [...] we created this mythical character, The Sundowner, which was Chips, who became the Phantom Stockman, who had this affinity with Aborigines [...] And, of course, we had to put a semblance of a love story or a female interest in it and had to have a bit of action, but basically Chips was going to solve the problem through using his knowledge of the Aboriginal. That was the idea of it.

The Phantom Stockman is a story of Kim Marsden (Jeanette Elphick), a young station cattle heiress who sends for The Sundowner and Dancer (Henry Murdoch), his Aboriginal offsider, to track down cattle thieves. The rustlers turn out to be in league with Stapleton (Guy Doleman), the owner of a neighbouring station. When The Sundowner is captured, he uses mental telepathy to summon Dancer to the rescue. The love story sees Kim delivered from the unwelcome attentions of Stapleton into the arms of a more worthy suitor. To this plot, Robinson, with his abiding passion for things Aboriginal, added a somewhat irrelevant proclivity of Hollywood B features. The film was internationally acceptable. Because there was no way in the world that you could possibly get anything like a tenth of the budget back in this country and you had to get international distribution before you could stay in business. And that was a thing of not breaking too many rules in filmmaking. Just as there are certain standard rules for directors — you know, you don't cross the line — there are rules regarding making pictures. To start with, we knew that we had a problem with the Australian accent, getting it accepted overseas. So we were forced to go to some extent to the Australian equivalent of a mid-Atlantic accent. And, secondly, we were giving people a story like a tenth of the budget back in this country, internationally acceptable. Because there was no way in the world that you could possibly get anything like a tenth of the budget back in this country and you had to get international distribution before you could stay in business. And that was a thing of not breaking too many rules in filmmaking. Just as there are certain standard rules for directors — you know, you don't cross the line — there are rules regarding making pictures. To start with, we knew that we had a problem with the Australian accent, getting it accepted overseas. So we were forced to go to some extent to the Australian equivalent of a mid-Atlantic accent. And there was an old filmmaking axiom: don't do two new things at once. Don't have a new location and a new storyline. If you've got a new location, put it in an old location that's familiar to people. Make it like New York or Los Angeles or London. So we were aware of these rules and didn't want to break them.

The challenge really was to make pictures that were internationally acceptable. Because there was no way in the world that you could possibly get anything like a tenth of the budget back in this country and you had to get international distribution before you could stay in business. And that was a thing of not breaking too many rules in filmmaking. Just as there are certain standard rules for directors — you know, you don't cross the line — there are rules regarding making pictures. To start with, we knew that we had a problem with the Australian accent, getting it accepted overseas. So we were forced to go to some extent to the Australian equivalent of a mid-Atlantic accent. And there was an old filmmaking axiom: don't do two new things at once. Don't have a new location and a new storyline. If you've got a new location, put it in an old location that's familiar to people. Make it like New York or Los Angeles or London. So we were aware of these rules and didn't want to break them.

Firstly, we had to work against the Australian accent. And, secondly, we were giving people a totally new location, so therefore we had to be fairly conventional in our storyline to be commercially viable at all. We could have been totally way out and experimental and probably would have made...
on the set, and rapidly learned how to get the most out of his appearances. Bud Tingwell took Taylor under his wing. Robinson:

I remember Bud saying to Rod, "You've got to watch out when you're working with Chipsy." Chipsy, of course, was six foot five. "When you're working with Chipsy, he doesn't look tall, he makes you look short," Bud said. "Watch him. Try and get on a rise." And I watched Rod through the camera, day after day after day, and he seemed to creep up gradually on Chips until he was just about at his car level — close enough to be able to play two-shot scenes with him. And I wondered how the hell he seemed to grow like that. And one day I found — he used to wear those basketball boots, like those Redkob things now — all packed with paper, up for about two inches. He hardly had room to get his foot in but he'd woken up to that was the way to get himself a bit taller. Oh, he was smart, Rod.

One of the most successful elements of the film was Ross Wood's exquisite black-and-white photography of the sail-powered pearlers around the little-known Torres Straits. Wood, too, became Rod Taylor's tutor.

It was on these early features that Rafferty and Robinson began their relationship with Joy Cavill. Cavill started as continuity, soon took on the rôle of production manager and eventually worked as a writer and producer with Robinson for many years and, ultimately, on her own features. Initially, Rafferty had been the one who organized the film scheduling, marking cross-hatches on big sheets of paper. Robinson recalls — and others confirm the story — that Cavill soon became involved in that aspect of production and, with typical Australian inventiveness, developed the strip board scheduling system which — so industry tradition would have it — consequently spread throughout the industry and the world.

In a period when most Australian features were not financially successful, overseas sales of King of the Coral Sea returned its £25,000 budget within three weeks of the film's completion. The Australian box office was also good, laying the foundation for Southern International's original strategy of producing low-budget Australian films was, in the long run, a miscalculation. While the first joint venture, Walk into Paradise (1956), was a great success, co-production ultimately led to disaster. Southern International linked up with Discifilm and producer Paul-Edmond Descharme when Walk into Paradise was in the final stages of pre-production, and successfully adapted the adventure script to accommodate two French stars. Discifilm also provided a director for a French language version of the film along with 30 percent of the budget. In future, the two companies would alternate in providing the bulk of the finance and the choice of story and director. With a small crew, Robinson set off for a twelve-week shoot in the New Guinea Highlands. Again, the film emphasizes travel and action, as District Officer McAllister (Chips Rafferty) and his New Guinean colour lead, a party into the interior to investigate jungle oil deposits. Fossed on the group is a French woman doctor conducting malaria research for the United Nations. The climax of the film comes when McAllister, ever knowledgeable about the ways of the natives, secures the co-operation of initially hostile tribes in building an airfield in return for a promise to cure the chief's sick children. Witch doctors cause trouble, the explorers are nearly massacred, but the children recover just in time.

Shot under extremely difficult circumstances, the £65,000 film was the second feature to be shot in colour by an Australian crew — at a time when colour stock was slow and difficult to use, demanding high light levels and perfect colour balance. The film was the first Australian feature to be shown at Cannes, where the work of cameraman Carl Kayser was highly commended. Lee Robinson was delighted when his American agent sold the film to Joseph E. Levine's Embassy Films for $60,000. Retitled Walk into Hell, the film became one of the 100 top-earning box-office pictures of all time in America. Robinson recalls seeing Joe Levine in New York later:

I took him around to the clubs and said, "Eat what you like, drink what you like. You're my guest while you're in New York." He said, "I made millions of dollars out of you." And I said, "Well, Joe, I didn't do too good with that picture. You oughta give back some to me." He said, "I'll give you as much as you would have given me if I had lost." You know, you don't get the value out of what you make. Now, of course, I know that Joe would have probably gone to £200,000, but I didn't know then. But I also found later in life that our own agent was working with Joe Levine to buy the picture, and Joe was giving a backhander to him to tell me that £60,000 was a very, very good price.

Indeed, although Southern International appeared to be maintaining production, the overall situation for Australian features was pretty grim. Since the '20s, filmmakers had been trying to get legislation in support of the Australian industry but to no avail. In the twenty years between 1946 and 1966, only 38 features of an hour or more in length were made, of which eighteen were produced by overseas companies. Only seven wholly-Australian films managed to get a release of more than a week in a commercial cinema. Robinson was well aware of the precariousness of his situation:

Chips and I had done an analysis before we went to Canberra to lobby Menzies — we saw Fadden, the Deputy Prime Minister, and I think we saw one other Minister. What we wanted was a plan like they have in England, the
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Eoffrey Rush describes it as "Battleship Potemkin meets Mel Brooks", Rachel Griffiths as "a bit Citizen Kane and Robert Altman". Sam Neill "had never read anything like this [script] before" and "is still not quite sure what it is", while Judy Davis thinks "It's very funny." Oscar winner F. Murray Abraham was sufficiently inspired to travel across the world to do a cameo role as Stalin.

And the industry panels voting electorate were sufficiently impressed to nominate it in nine categories in the Australian Film Institute Awards in probably the strongest and most diverse year ever. Whichever way you look at it, Peter Duncan's imaginative debut, the black comic-tragedy Children of the Revolution, has made a strong impact.

This story wasn't actually inspired by family heritage, was it?

It actually started out as an essay, a polemic I was writing on the concept of blind faith. I was interested in how to prove to a Christian that God didn't exist. How do people cope when everything they put their faith in turns out to not exist? As a short story, it wasn't working because you can't offer the ultimate proof. Then I thought of human gods throughout the course of history, with some of the most dramatic examples in the 20th century being Stalin and Hitler, who flew off the agenda because I wanted it to be funny. That left Stalin.

My grandfather, even though he was a bank manager, was a card-carrying member of the Communist Party back in the 1940s and, through him, I found a vehicle to tell this story. I remember how to the end of his life he adhered to his communist principles. That concept of blind faith really intrigued me and became the catalyst for lots of other ideas. The story became a combination of these two things.

Was the main character of the fervent communist, Joan Fraser [Judy Davis], based on him?

There are no real parallels, though so many people have said that they know a Joan, someone who's virulent and impatient in terms of their world beliefs, who watches the news on television and gets so frustrated by what's going on in the world.

I guess I had when I first did the original script focusing on a Stalin worshipper/devotee who many years later reviews his opinion?

No, but I did see a lot of documentaries in preparation for this, amongst them one in which kids talk about the impact of Stalin's death as the worst event of their lives - 11- to 12-year-olds who in 1953 believed that all science, politics and literature had stemmed from him.

The fervency of the beliefs is extraordinary and what's fascinating now is that Stalin's pictures are going back up in Moscow. People are rehabilitating him saying, "Despite everything else, we never had it so good as back then." The post-Gorbachev experiment hasn't worked and it's extraordinary how Yeltsin has to deal with cyclical effect. It's an interesting time to make this film. In 1989, when I started writing the script, the response, especially in Russia, would have been quite different.

How did you connect with your producer Tristram Miall?

We met at the AFTS graduation screenings early in 1994 where my short, A Bit of a Tiff with the Lord, was shown. Tris liked it and suggested we get together. The scenario happened just as I hoped it would. I'd resolved to have a screenplay ready for graduation, though it was in a very unruly form of 203 pages of totally-unshooatable material.

Tris warned me he only goes for projects that have a personal appeal. "Commercial viability plays a part, but if something doesn't appeal to me at first read I will pass", he said. Fortunately, he really loved it and things started rolling from there, with the NSW Film and Television Office coming in with development money to enable me to hone it into something vaguely shooatable.

Towards the end of 1994, Judy [Davis] read the script and really liked it. Once she was on board, we had a combination that was strong enough for the FFC in April 1993 to agree to back it.

Did your short films have anything in common with Children of the Revolution?

Black humour. As a writing student at film school, I also got to direct The Obituary, about a man who is mistakenly believed by his girlfriend and best friend to be dead, and is not too happy about their reactions. It's a story in which I was very much concerned with turning points and structure to try to get the laughs coming at the right place.

A Bit of a Tiff with the Lord is about a young merchant banking priest [Richard Roxburgh] from the Vatican who comes back for his mother's funeral on a property in western NSW. His father [Ron Haddrick] is seeing angels, which faces the son with a crisis of how to deal with that - it's a bit mad and very black.

Film was actually a second career choice for you?

I was a para-legal at Allen Allen & Hemsley for three years while I was finishing my law degree, though I never got admitted as a solicitor. It was very interesting work - the best in the field - which actually strengthened my resolve to leave it because it wasn't satisfying me. I knew I had to try something else.

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The best fun I'd had at uni - much to my academic detriment - was doing revues, so ideally I wanted to go in that direction.

At that stage, you could have veered towards theatre. How did you make the choice to become a filmmaker?

I'd always been more attracted to film. I'd watched movies with my mother since I was a small child. I didn't expect to get into film school but while at Allen Allen & Hemsley I'd written a 60-page script called "The Discreet Revolution" and sent that as part of my application to AFTRS. When I went for my interview, that's all everyone wanted to talk about, and Paul Thompson [now Head of Film and Television, then Head of Writing], who's been a key supporter in this whole process, was wildly excited about it.

Did you continue to work on the Revolution script at film school?

Not really. For most of the time it sat in my drawer, but the ideas withstood a very important test: the test of time.

The screenplay has been highly acclaimed. Can you elaborate on the writing process?

I guess I did 10 to 12 drafts all up, but each one was a lot of work. I wasn't disseminating.

What had I done when I first did the original script became pretty much the first half of Children of the Revolution: Judy's character; her world in Balmain; her trip to Russia; fucking Stalin; his death as a result of that; return to Australia pregnant and the child's growing up. The first part fell into place quite easily. As a committed communist, her reason for going and Stalin's attraction to her all became terribly log-
The material being covered was structured in such a way that it would reflect — on a metaphorical level — the history of communism, starting off with great humour, larger-than-life, well-intentioned, big-hearted people who end up quite a bit older and sadder. To have done it in a way that didn’t reflect that breadth of tone would not have satisfied me or the story that I wanted to tell. Whether or not the film suffers from having those gear shifts is in the eyes of the individual filmgoer, but I wouldn’t have made the film differently.

The gear shifts were always inherent in the story and we certainly discussed them. I always made it clear that the film was going to start and end in the way it does, and it was up to those people who were choosing to be involved with me on this film whether they were going to accept that.

The Russian sequences contain the most farcical humour, bordering even on slapstick. What were you trying to achieve there?

I made a decision in keeping with the tone of black comedy that Stalin would not be treated in the traditional way of being portrayed as a foreboding ogre. I chose to treat him in a humorous way. I also am aware from material I’ve read that anyone who visited the Kremlin at that time found it to be a larger-than-life experience. Therefore, it seemed to me, the intellectual logic of it was to push that into the realm of the bizarre, using as much dramatic licence as possible.

I don’t think there’s anything in reality that’s more strange than Stalin singing and dancing at the end of a dinner party, because he did it at the end of every dinner party he had at the Kremlin. The fact that he sings a Cole Porter tune is certainly taking a lot of licence, but from the western point of view that has the resonances that are quite appropriate to history. As Geoffrey Rush has said, “It’s Mel Brooks meets Battleship Potemkin.” What I was trying to convey was a sense of larger-than-life in overt comic terms which wouldn’t have worked in other, everyday parts of the film.

But there is so much powerful iconography attached to the period that people have an expectation and understanding of Stalin. So, when you travestie, it’s naturally going to be funny — as our first impression of him doing up his fly or reading Hollywood movie magazines.

In the early drafts, on her arrival in Russia Joan was going to be appalled by the excesses, but that just didn’t work in the story. It was much better for her to be blown away by everything — psychologically drunk — on the whole trip. Working against the grain is where the humour is.

Had you thought of Judy while you were writing it?

The role required a person who could play from the ages of 27-69 with a lot of long diatribes; in short, it required a brilliant actor and she is arguably our most brilliant. I count my blessings every day that she liked the script.

You’d already established a relationship with Richard Roxburgh in A Bit of a Tiff with the Lord. Was that automatically extended to this project in casting him as Stalin’s offspring?

Absolutely. Richard and I had a great time on Tiff and have since become very close friends. When I told him about this film back then, he was wildly enthused. At that stage, we even talked about getting a co-op together to make it somehow. Given the scale the film has turned out to be, it would have been a catastrophic experience. Richard fired the enthusiasm of Anne Churchill-Brown at Shanahan’s Management and, as most of our leading actors — Judy, Sam Neill, Geoffrey Rush, a star on the ascension by someone familiar to the audience — to whom we are represented by them, it was a great asset to have this communication.

F. Murray Abraham is the only non-Australian actor in the film. Did you intentionally want Stalin to be played by a foreigner, a non-Australian?

I wanted an icon to play Stalin. Given Judy’s stature, I thought it was important that the role was played by someone familiar to the audience — to whom we travel to make a pilgrimage. There are probably a number of Australian actors who could have played him, but I felt it was important to get an international icon. Murray is an Oscar-winner, can look like the most evil son of a bitch on the planet, and yet he’s a charming and lovely human being. It was a blessing that he was available and loved the script.

Geoffrey Rush’s performance as Joan’s suffering husband, Welch, is remarkable for its understatement — so different to his role in Shine. Were you using him as the antithesis for your larger-than-life characters?

He’s the glue, the person untainted by the outer world. The inner-world of that family is everything. The inner-world of Joan and Joe. That makes his external world of Joan and Joe. That makes his role significant. Lest we forget, the German side of the family are all nazis, while it was his family. Joe, with all his faults, is the only one who’s not committing genocide for a living.

The material being covered was structured in such a way that it would reflect — on a metaphorical level — the history of communism, starting off with great humour, larger-than-life, well-intentioned, big-hearted people who end up quite a bit older and sadder. To have done it in a way that didn’t reflect that breadth of tone would not have satisfied me or the story that I wanted to tell. Whether or not the film suffers from having those gear shifts is in the eyes of the individual filmgoer, but I wouldn’t have made the film differently.

The gear shifts were always inherent in the story and we certainly discussed them. I always made it clear that the film was going to start and end in the way it does, and it was up to those people who were choosing to be involved with me on this film whether they were going to accept that.
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A Film Australia Production 1996. Made in association with the Australian Film Finance Corporation, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, ZDF and ZDF Enterprises.

AFRICA HIGH AND WILD
Produced by Beyond Production Pty Ltd

LITTLE WHITE LIES
Rutherford films Holding Pty Ltd
We've known each other for 25 years and have a very open relationship and can hurl abuse at each other. I find that was so important in the editing process where you're locked in a room with someone for 12 hours a day, 6-7 days a week. The person has to have your sensibility and, while other editors could have cut *Children*, I'd seriously question whether anyone else could have been as sensitive to the material. Bringing in Simon at script stage meant that he had the distinct advantage of being acutely tuned to the tone.

**How did you plan the look of the film?**

I had lots of stylistic conversations with the director of photography, Martin McGrath, production designer Roger Ford and costume designer Terry Ryan. A lot of these related to following the tone of the metaphor.

We started with warm reds and oranges, the colours of idealism and commitment. In Russia, cold blue and greys predominate, but as the story progresses, and the idealism crumbles, so too does the film lose warmth. I storyboarded about one-third, but Danny Batber, one of the most senior [camera] operators in the country, and Martin were very flexible about coverage. Russian sequences were shot with a lot of camera movement to reflect Joan's all-at-sea nature.

**How was the editing process?**

We tried to show that through re-reflecting the Kremlin segments. As his power-base expands, things become increasingly a metamorphosis of the Kremlin environment. It works on an exponential curve; it is imperceptible at the beginning and gradually looking backwards to that fun part of the film but with a very different feel. Something's gone horribly wrong along the way.

**So, in a sense, you revisited the Russian segments in the latter part of the film?**

Stalin's office in design terms was the key to the Kremlin segments. As his power-base expands, things become increasingly a metamorphosis of the Kremlin environment. It works on an exponential curve; it is imperceptible at the beginning and gradually looking backwards to that fun part of the film but with a very different feel. Something's gone horribly wrong along the way.

**How difficult was it shooting the Russian sequences in Australia, to recreate the Kremlin, for instance?**

It wasn't at all difficult because we only had one exterior. That was probably the biggest night of our shoot: making the exterior of the Commemorative Pavilion at the Showground into the Kremlin steps. Roger Ford and Laurie Fahey, the art director, and I had long conversations and they were wonderful. The exterior was tough but I didn't want it to be the ornate baroque palace full of gilt chandeliers as it is known. I wanted to play against audience expectations. We opted for a more fascist look—an oppressive, foreboding and gloomy set-up with straight lines—and then to have the twist in the characters. I think that worked for the comedy.

**How important was subtext in connecting the personal and political worlds?**

It was very important to connect the kitchen-sink world of the film and the political power world because that's the heart of the journey for the individual zealot/ideologue's relationship to the bigger structures. For Joan, world revolution is the goal, but it starts at home with a kitchen-sink reality. One of the things that frustrates her is that no one's quite committed as she is; no one's badly off, no one actually wants to have a revolution.

Nine AFN nominations in probably the strongest, most diverse field ever is pretty impressive for a début. I was absolutely thrilled. We went in with very modest expectations and I'm just delighted that so much good work and effort—so much blood, sweat and tears—was rewarded. My only personal chagrin was that Simon Martin didn't get a nomination for editing, because he was so integral, not only to the editing but to the whole process.

**What are the release plans for the film?**

We're opening in the U.S. on Boxing Day, and Screen has picked it up for North and Latin America, the UK and Italy. A May Day opening is being planned for the U.S. 1

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1. Recent feature credits as producer include Strictly Ballroom (1992), Billy's Holiday (1991).
2. Stone (Scott Hicks, 1996).
3. The major exception being Rachel Griffiths, who plays Joe's wife, Anna.
4. Released as To Have And To Hold (John Hillcoat, 1996).
Congratulate the following AFI nominated feature films:

CHILDREN OF THE REVOLUTION
LOVE AND OTHER CATASTROPHES
LOVE SERENADE
BRILLIANT LIES
WHAT I HAVE WRITTEN
LILIAN’S STORY
The following day consisted of a daunting schedule of interviews with North American press and television; and when Rosenberg finally returned to his hotel room, no less than nine messages awaited. Festival organizers say they haven't seen a début so warmly (or so loudly!) received in years, and the press were only too keen to pick up on the hype surrounding this latest Aussie crowd-pleaser.

With the barrage of interviews you've just been through, what were the North American press most interested in talking about?

They're fascinated with why they love every Australian film they see; they're fascinated with the quality of the stories [which] they love; you know, they mention Priscilla, Muriel's Wedding, Shine. The perception is that it's amazing that Australia keeps turning out all these quality, low-budget movies.

There was a question from the audience last night about the funding for Hotel de Love.

Yeah, the guy said I was a capitalist!

They were interested, I think, because Canada has a similar system where they have a government-funding body. There's very little private money, so I think they were all fascinated with how we raised the budget.

Do you see Hotel de Love as part of a particular style or genre of Australian films that have enjoyed...
It’s an unreal place. It is not an unreal place because it’s a real hotel and people have to live and sleep there. The humour comes from a lot of the wilder aspects of it. In terms of the production design, even though these rooms were fantastically bizarre, they nonetheless had a bed in them and were real rooms.

We had to be very careful in terms of the acting, so that everyone stayed centred and were real people. I find you can be a little broader and have a little more fun with the more peripheral characters, like with the newly-married couple, Bruce and Janet Campbell [Caleb Cluff and Belinda McClory]. But with your central characters, you have to keep them grounded and focused and have the more zany, wacky stuff on the periphery. A film like Four Weddings and a Funeral [Mike Newell, 1994] is very similar in that way, with grounded central characters and a broad, comic aspect on the periphery.

The film does have a slightly dark undertone to it, particularly with Rick and Stephen’s parents, Jack [Ray Barrett] and Edith [Julia Blake]. At times it is frighteningly real, especially the final confrontation between them.

The film seems to walk a fine line between reality and a touch of surrealism, which again is reminiscent of Muriel’s Wedding and Priscilla. Do you consider that balance part of the romantic comedy genre?

I think we probably had to be more careful than other romantic comedies. A romantic comedy like When Harry Met Sally ... [Rob Reiner, 1989] is very realistic in the comedy and the dialogue. Our characters are real people in an almost unreal place. It is not an unreal place because it’s a real hotel and people have to live and sleep there.

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You need to have those kind of scenes if the movie isn’t going to be just light and frothy the whole time. I was interested in investigating what’s wrong with this marriage, what’s wrong with these people — not just focusing on the comic aspects of their relationship, but viewing them as people that are tragic. It’s a kind of tragedy what’s happened to them.

All the relationships have some serious scenes, like when Rick’s on the rooftop with Melissa. All of these characters have their serious moments,
which I think you really need, otherwise the comedy will have no real inferences, no real meaning for people.

Do you consider the outcome of the film is determined by the constraints of the romantic comedy genre?

It’s an interesting question. It’s hard to talk about it without giving the ending away!

My advantage is you never knew who is the real star of the movie, or I hope you don’t. It’s a weird ensemble, where people are meeting each other by colliding off other people and their stories are intertwining; they’re bouncing off another relationship into something else.

Because there’s a couple of permutations with an ensemble, the normal boy-meets-girl, boy-loses-girl, boy-gets-girl-in-the-end didn’t apply. We didn’t have two stars we were focusing on. We had three or four fully-developed stories, and two or three have some large intersections going on. We have Rick and Alison [Pippa Grandison], we have Rick and Melissa, Stephen and Alison, and Rick and Stephen arguing about it all. In that sense, it was advantageous in that, hopefully, the suspense of who’s going to end up with whom would go on longer than it normally would in a romantic comedy.

That seems to be an effective way of revising the genre, of giving it a bit more longevity.

Yeah, it is and I don’t think they do that in American movies. Studios don’t really make ensemble movies any more, because they’re completely star-driven. It’s impossible to think of Hotel de Love with someone who’s a star because it would completely unbalance the ensemble: “Okay, this is the person I’m following and, because this person is the star, they’re gonna end up with this other person.”

Are you perhaps just sneaking in there with Aden Young? He got some favourable comments from the audience last night.

Probably yes, particularly in Australia.

The film actually balances the two male leads very well; neither one outshines the other. But Aden Young does have the name.

Right, yeah. But what can you do?

Perhaps by giving him the less sympathetic character.

On initial reading that’s true. You know, when I was casting it, I didn’t think, “Which is the bigger rôle? Who should I give the bigger rôle to?” My feeling is, when people ask, “Who’s it about?”, I say, “It’s about both of them. It’s about how both their romantic lives are a function of this strange relationship they’ve had, ten years ago. Why is Stephen so obsessed with this girl, and why does it make him bounce off to someone else?” So, it’s about both of them. I don’t see either of them being more or less important than the other.

Prior to directing Hotel de Love, Rosenberg was a scriptwriter in Hollywood. He’d studied law at Monash University and published award-winning short fiction in various literary magazines before becoming involved in film.

What was your fiction like?

No jokes! All serious literary fiction.

Were you then writing about relationships?

Yeah, all kinds of strange love stories.

What prompted the decision to try scriptwriting?

I’d finished my degree. I was never going to practise as a lawyer. I’d always loved films and I wanted to write scripts, so I thought I’d give it a go in Los Angeles. It was a time when I was mortgage-less and wife-less, and, if I didn’t give it a go then, I might not be able to do it in ten years. So, I took off.

I wrote my first script, “Eliot Loves Gabriela”, in about four months. I got an agent and within a day and a half he’d sold it to Paramount, so I was off and running. It hasn’t been made yet, but Disney bought it off Paramount and it may be getting made towards the end of the year. John Cusack is attached to it.

How did you get a foot in the door in LA, particularly without having gone to film school?

That was the most difficult part, because you can sit in your room and write War and Peace, and write a letter to an agent, saying, “Hello, my name’s Mr Tolstoy and I’ve just written War and Peace”, and they won’t even write back to you, you know? It’s all about knowing people, so I had to go out and meet people who would pass my script on to other people. I just did it through anyone I knew who had any connection whatsoever with the film industry. Through doing that, I got about five or six agents who really liked it, and I chose a guy called Brad Groves, who also represents Ron Shelton [Tin Cup].

The next thing I was being offered scripts. I did one at Warner Bros.; one at Interscope, a Polygram company; I’m writing one for Twentieth Century Fox at the moment; and one for Disney. So, I was just busy, busy, and wrote Hotel de Love at night, after hours.

Did you always envisage Hotel de Love as the film you would direct?

Yes.

Now that you’ve crossed over to directing, would you ever go back to writing scripts for other people?

No, no.
THE DOMINO EFFECT

as seen in:

THE ADVENTURES OF PINOCCHIO
Allied Pinocchio Productions Ltd
US distributor - New Line Cinema/International Distributor - Kushner Locke International
FrameStore
The Magic Camera Company

JUDGE DREDD
Buena Vista/Cinergi Pictures
Cinema Research Corporation/Digital Rezolution

OUTBREAK
Warner Bros
OCS/Freeze Frame/Pixel Magic

INDEPENDENCE DAY
Twentieth Century Fox
Digiscope

THE UMBRELLA STORY
Golden Centro Pictures
Centro Digital Pictures

MULHOLLAND FALLS
MGM
Cinema Research Corporation/Digital Rezolution

WATERWORLD
UIP/Universal
OCS/Freeze Frame/Pixel Magic

MUPPET TREASURE ISLAND
Walt Disney Pictures
Jim Henson Productions
The Magic Camera Company

coming soon:

SEVEN SERVANTS
Das Werk
Das Werk

THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS
Allied Filmmakers/John Goldstone/Terry Jones
The Magic Camera Company

THE CROW: CITY OF ANGELS
Miramax Films Corp.
Bad Bird Productions
Digiscope

CUTTHROAT ISLAND
Carolco
Cinema Research Corporation/Digital Rezolution

HAUNTED
Double A Pictures/American Zoetrope for Lumiere
FrameStore

GOLDENEYE
UA/Eon Productions
The Magic Camera Company
Title sequence: Limelight Productions FrameStore

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What is it about the process you really don't like?

Oh, God! Got a couple of hours? You know, it's really difficult if you just want to be a writer in Hollywood, because you have to learn to give up your material to people who don't treat it very well, and I wasn't very good at that.

Have any of those scripts seen the light of day on film?

They're all at various stages of development. I don't want to jinx things, but it looks like the Disney one may be going ahead, and one of the others.

Are they all romantic comedies?

No, no, they're different. Two of them are romantic comedies, one's a comedy but not romantic, and the other's a bit more serious. So, it's been predominantly comedy, but now I'm branching out into other genres.

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It does seem a real contrast, though, to go from writing serious fiction to comic scripts. How did that happen?

I know, I know. Well, when I sold my first script, which was a romantic comedy, they said, "Fantastic! You're a comedy writer", and I said, "Oh really? When did that happen?" But that's how Hollywood tends to type you.

Would you direct someone else's script?

If it was the right script, I would. If I really loved it and felt some involvement with the script and that I could bring it to life, I would do it. It's not like I have a prohibition to never direct someone else's script. But you just have to be very careful. You have to get a good producer who's going to protect you and a studio exec who's going to be supportive of you. You have to search a bit, but they're there, and you just have to be careful about the people you work with.

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What were some of the difficulties you encountered in the transition from writing to directing?

The most apparent thing is that as a writer you spend six months in intense isolation, and then as a director you spend three months in intense exposure to people. Everyone's coming up to you saying, "What do you want?" It's about communicating what you want from the script to the people around you.

The most difficult thing is probably the unforeseen things that come up every day, and having to deal with them. You know, like losing the permit for this location where you're planning to shoot, and losing the sun behind a cloud - just those unforeseen physical things that can happen on a movie set. But I think the only way to deal with that is to try and turn it to your advantage, and, instead of fighting it, work with it and say, "Okay, we don't have this. What's fantastic that we can do elsewhere?"

So, rather than the logistics of it getting in the way of your creativity, it actually makes you more creative.

Exactly. It spurs you on to new and fresh ideas.

To me, the real danger with directing is over-preparing, such that you don't allow things to happen spontaneously in front of the camera. The whole enormous organization is designed to capture some moment of truth, of real life, between people. I think you always have to allow for the opportunity to do that. You can't be too structured in your thinking about how you want to shoot something, or where you want people to stand, and things like that.

What will be your next project as director?

I'm being offered a few studio jobs at the moment, so I may do one of those; or I may do another script of my own which I am currently writing. At the moment I'm just reading and writing, and in a few months I'll decide.

Will you be heading for another comedy or off on a different tangent?

Again, I don't have a strict prohibition against comedy, but I would like to do something different.

Would you do another Australian movie?

I'd love to do another Australian movie. My feeling is that it's simply always about the script and the story. I'll do a story wherever it's set, if it interests me. But I guess I will always write Aussie movies.

1 The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert (Stephan Elliott, 1994), Muriel's Wedding (P. J. Hogan, 1994) and Shine (Scott Hicks, 1996).
Sunday Too Far Away was one of the first major features to be made during the Australian feature film revival wholly with Australian finances and with an Australian creative team. As such, it marks a significant step forward in Australian film production and film storytelling skills. Not only was it produced from an original script, using a completely Australian crew and cast, it was also made entirely on location in a part of Australia which had not witnessed feature film production for fifteen years, since Fred Zinnemann’s production of The Sundowners in 1960.
THE MAKING OF SUNDAY TOO FAR AWAY resulted from a unique set of government-initiated circumstances. In the late 1960s, the Dunstan Labor Government had taken advice from columnist and film critic Phillip Adams and political analyst Barry Jones on the feasibility of funding film production through state incentives. The result of their researches was to lead to the setting up of the South Australian Film Corporation, a state initiative. In broad outline, the plan was to create a viable industry in the state by consolidating government short-film and documentary production to provide a pool of experienced film crews, and, at the same time, to lay down plans for feature film production using loan finance. Adams' account of the process (in 1980) is succinct: "I devised the South Australian Film Corporation [SAFC] which against all logic continues to survive [...] when Dunstan found the money, the money found the talent."

In this determined effort at state capitalism, described by Albert Moran in 1983, the SAFC was designed to "Reflect our way of life with truth and artistry [...] to provide opportunity for Australian artists and craftsmen to develop and express themselves within the film medium."

The first feature from the SAFC was to be Sunday Too Far Away, but before this production could be launched there were to be a number of false starts to the plan to make feature films. The prospects of financial success, for any feature project, were not great. Experienced producer Gil Brealey, appointed as first

Editor's Note
Gil Brealey and Matt Carroll have expressed to the author some reservations about this article appearing, Cinema Papers has taken note of these concerns, but has decided to publish as it believes the article is written without bias, and goes to great lengths to represent and fairly discuss the views of all the key players.

Equally important, Sunday Too Far Away is one of the few true icons of Australian cinema. Whatever problems the filmmakers had along the way, whatever courageous steps Brealey believed he had to take to rightly fulfil his role as a producer, the result is a classic that continues to gain in stature with the years.

Only in celebration of this beloved film is this article printed.
Producer-in-Chief of the SAFC, felt that the main problem facing the Australian industry was its discontinuity, because very few locally-produced feature films had been made in the country for more than thirty years. Australians had almost no useful experience in the production of features, and those who did had gained their experience overseas. “We were really starting from scratch and we were all learning a great deal, and we learnt it the hard way”, Brealey said.

Also, there was no guarantee that the films would find a market, as the local industry had long been dominated by U.S. and British distributors. Despite this, the SAFC projected a somewhat naive optimism that Australian films which were well made and reflected national values would find a viable market. This, the SAFC projected a somewhat naïve optimism that Australian films which were well made and reflected national values would find a viable market.

The producers lacked experience and were conscious of the fact that American and British producers were the ones who were making the films. Theirs was a situation in which they had to learn the hard way. They had to learn the hard way how to make films that would appeal to a worldwide audience. They had to learn the hard way how to make films that would appeal to a worldwide audience. They had to learn the hard way how to make films that would appeal to a worldwide audience.

The problems faced by the producers stemmed mainly from the financial principles on which the SAFC had been founded. In 1973, Gil Brealey recounted details of his involvement in the early ’70s, recalls Gorton’s enthusiasm: “[he] made clear in many speeches that he wanted […] to show the rest of the world.” Give us some films and be quick, he seemed to say. Coleman also noted the “tendency to centralisation of decision making, so that […] people are having a say in how it is spent”. He adds, “We wanted results, some films to show around quickly and lively. So training and cultivation took second priority.”

The prevailing optimism about local feature film production was further encouraged by the election of the first federal Labor government in almost three decades, under the leadership of Gough Whitlam. The Australia Council began to address itself to the promotion of Australian cultural values, whatever vague traditions these values might have been in practice. For the first few years of the Australia Council, production was funded by a Film and Television Board, which supported short-film and script-writing activities. This was complemented by the Australian Film Development Corporation (AFDC), which loaned money for commercial projects. For the first time in recent history, many Australians working in the arts, including theatre and film, saw the opportunity to create works which were popular, and also had some artistic and social purpose. Some Australians, like director Bruce Beresford, returned from overseas and began to develop projects which would reflect the general optimism and idealism of the Whitlam era.

The activities of the SAFC were heavily influenced by Premier Don Dunstan, an ardent supporter of the arts. Through its groundbreaking development and production of Sunday Too Far Away, the SAFC was to establish itself as a prime producer of quality Australian film. Sunday stands as one of the first successful attempts at a period film, a “breakthrough with the public […] at its best a superb evocation of 1950s outback life”. Sunday was one of the first locally-produced films since Icke, made by Charles Chauvel in the mid-1950s, to make extensive use of the Australian landscape, and it set a benchmark for the development of the Australian industry in good stead, although some painful lessons had to be learnt, particularly about the process of project development.

One of the aims of the SAFC was to produce feature films, so Brealey began seeking suitable subject material for its first feature. Brealey feels that the SAFC dependence on loan funds put additional pressures on the enterprise to find a viable feature project.

The South Australian Film Corporation never operated on a government grant of any nature, which is something people don’t generally understand. On this borrowed money – at first it was $400,000 and we were paying interest on it – we had to choose some feature projects that we could go ahead with and one of those was Gallipoli.

Gallipoli was an ambitious first production, and Brealey sought help from an old school friend, Ian Jones, a military expert and a producer at Crawfords, the large Melbourne television production house. Crawfords had trained a stable of experienced writers and producers, and had developed their skills on series productions like Homicide. Jones had shown a strong interest in historical subjects, and had previously been involved as writer-researcher on the British-financed Tony Richardson production of Ned Kelly (1970), which starred rock singer Mick Jagger. Brealey was initially enthusiastic about working with Jones, as they had shared many experiences in the Melbourne theatre world of the 1950s and ’60s. The implications of the deal with Crawfords quickly became apparent to Brealey as unforeseen problems began to emerge:

Before I knew where I was, suddenly it was Hector Crawford I was talking to. It was quite obvious he was prepared to co-operate, but that if the project went ahead Hector was going to be very closely involved, and would in fact assume it was a Crawfords production that happened to be made by the South Australian Film Corporation. Now, politically that was of no value to us at that stage, because we had to get some sort of clout if we were to pursue this as producers in our own right.

Valuable time began to be lost in negotiations with Crawfords. Well-known writer John Dingwall was contracted, but the main obstacle to realizing the project was the attitude of Crawfords, which demanded a high degree of creative control over the production and major financial participation. At an early stage, Dingwall was asked to register the project at the Writer’s Guild as being Crawfords’ property.

There were soon other unexpected political problems. The film was to co-star a number of large-scale scenes, and Brealey had contacted the Minister for the Army. He was told by the Minister’s office that government support (required for the staging of large-scale scenes) would only be forthcoming if the project was an anti-war statement. Brealey also learned that Crawfords’ involvement was to prove a stumbling block with the Minister: “When I said that we were thinking of working with Crawfords, he was not pleased and he circled the name Crawfords and became very concerned about it.”

Matt Carroll, a Sydney architect-turned-producer, who had previously managed the Australia Council’s Film and Television Board, was Head of Production (so Carroll recalls; Brealey says Carroll was, in fact, Production Co-ordinator), and became involved in the efforts to solve the Gallipoli problems. The points of dispute seemed irreconcilable and the SAFC decided to relinquish the project. Carroll recalls that the break was acrimonious:

It was a terrible bloody falling out. It was a really ugly conversation because Gil didn’t want Crawfords, so the whole thing fell out of bed. All of a sudden, I had a contract with John to write a project, and Gil said, “Look, the only way to settle this is to not do it”, and I said, “Well, we now have a writer with a contract.” So he said, “Will you go and sort it out?”

This left the SAFC with Dingwall still on contract but no project to work on. Dingwall offered an original idea, based on the career of his brother-in-law, who had been a shearer involved in the great Queensland shearers’ strike of 1956. Working briefly as a roseabout in shearing sheds, Dingwall had listened to his
brother-in-law’s stories about the life of itinerant shearsers, and built these into a short story treatment titled “Shearsers”. 11
Brealey, with little time to develop another project to replace Gallipoli, read Dingwall’s treatment. Matt Carroll says that Brealey asked him to have a meeting with Dingwall about the new project:
So I went up to Sydney and sat down with John. He said, “I have got a great idea. I’d like to do a script about my brother-in-law’s life as a shearer.” And I said, “I would much rather do that than Gallipoli.” So I went back to Gil and said, “John is happy to drop Gallipoli but he wants to do something on shearsers”, and Gil said, being the good old urban Melbournian, “I don’t want to know about shearers, but, if you like, go ahead with it. We have to get John to write something, so it may as well be about shearers as anything else.”
Brealey says that he was immediately attracted by the potential of the story and setting, and particularly by its casting potential:
John said that it would probably make a very good project for Jack Thompson [as Foley]. I had used Jack Thompson for one of his first film appearances back in the late 60s at the Commonwealth Film Unit. I had a terrific admiration for his work. He was one of the few, in those days, with a genuinely butt maleness about him. He was so genuinely Australian; he was saying everything that we wanted him to say.
A film treatment usually defines scenes and segments in short outline form, but Dingwall’s treatment read like a short story. Brealey recognized the quality of the story, characters and setting, and became very enthusiastic: “It was about 20 pages long and was undoubtedly one of the most exciting things I have ever read in the Australian film industry.” 12
“Shearsers” had been written with a definite social purpose in mind, and it had strong documentary elements. Dingwall wanted to record a way of life which would soon disappear:
I felt the magnificence of the story of men who would go into the middle of nowhere, and work at this incredible pace for a period of six or seven of the film, lists the kinds of incidents which would be shown, and moves towards a closure which has Foley defeated as gun shear, and losing his money gambling. The shearers’ strike against reduced pay and conditions begins, and Foley finds himself leading the men against police harassment and hired toughs protecting scab shearers. Foley is bashed up and banned from town, but returns to consummate his romance with the cocky’s daughter.
The film was to be a historical piece, set in the recent past, depicting a labour struggle, as well as the lifestyle of the shearers, as outlined by writer John Dingwall: “Sunday […] records a period that we are no longer familiar with. It encompassed the Australian spirit – ‘don’t give a stuff’, ‘do anything’, fight, drink, everything was contained in that story.” The film treatment also delineates some of the less-attractive class divisions which exist in Australian society, foregrounding the workers against a less-than-sympathetically-portrayed “cocky”, who refers scathingly to the shearers as “scum.”” 13
Carroll asked Dingwall to fulfil his contract with the SAFC by writing a screenplay from this treatment, and found he had a strong personal commitment to the story: “Part of my honours thesis was the shearing sheds, as indigenous architecture […] and so I knew all the history of the Australian Workers Union going right back.” Dingwall agreed, although in retrospect he was less than happy about the financial deal that was struck. Dingwall indicated his relatively low status and the humble aims of the project by reference to the fees that were agreed to for his services: “They asked me to do the script for a pittance, which I did. I wrote the screenplay for $7,500, which even then was a pittance, on the basis that I would get 10 percent of the overseas profits. I have never seen another penny.” “Shearsers” was announced in 1973 in a fulsome press release. Carroll was attracted by the setting and the visual qualities of the environment, and together he and Dingwall discussed the settings for the film:
John then went off on a research trip. He went to Queensland to track down his brother-in-law. I also sent him up to where my brother lives in the bush and we did a whole research thing. Out of it came this screenplay, which obviously I worked pretty closely with John on, because Gil didn’t like it very much.
Dingwall spent many hours in conversation with his brother-in-law, listening to the tales of shearers’ lives, and recording these in note form:
I asked him to take me around to the old shearers in Brisbane. Old Garth was based on a guy whose son had gone up shearing, and stayed one day and came down to Sydney. And this old guy had come down to Sydney to look for him. He had heard he was a window dresser, and he couldn’t find him. He looked in all the windows in Sydney.

The title of the film came from a piece of shearing folklore, which tells of the effects of hard work on the sexual life of the shearers, and especially the women’s response to this: “Friday night too tired, Saturday night too drunk, Sunday night … Sunday night too far away.” “Sunday Too Far Away” became the title, as Dingwall recalls: “It was just a saying they had … the shearers” wives. So I called it Sunday Too Far Away. Now that’s pure instinctive titling of the film.”
Brealey intended to raise funding for the project through the AFDC, which would match the SAFC’s own funds. Just as the AFDC approved the project, Dingwall suddenly went back to Queensland, and Brealey feels that this created problems in the development of the script:
The AFDC liked it [the treatment] and they invested in the first draft. John Dingwall disappeared that afternoon. He got the sudden news that his son was ill or there was some trouble and he couldn’t stay. He never came back to Adelaide but he went straight into his first draft.
Brealey lost contact with Dingwall for the period of time he was writing the first draft, and his only contact was through Dingwall’s agent:
It was disastrous from my point of view, because in about six weeks’ time it was supposed to be delivered and it wasn’t. I rang his then agent and she said, “Well, we do have a problem: he is over-writing.” I said, “What do you mean ‘over-writing’? Do you mean he’s writing too much, or is he writing the characters too large or what?” She said, “Both, actually.”
The main problem in developing the screenplay arose from the many events contained in the treatment, which was too long for a 90-minute feature. The unusual form of the treatment created problems for Matt Carroll:
The film was really only about half of that treatment. We then went into a screenplay and there were several drafts of it all – by largely me working
closely with John. There was no director at this stage for a long, long time.

While the script was in development, Dingwall spent another lengthy period driving around with Carroll that the film should be shot entirely on one location (the same shearing shed used for Fred Zinnemann's The Sundowners. The film story as presented by Dingwall is complex, with a number of sub-plots and themes. The storyline contains a number of character interactions, but does not follow a conventional plot which sets up an audience-satisfying resolution of the main character's aims and needs. The needs of the Foley character are obscure, and, even though the characterization is strong and convincingly realized by Jack Thompson, the audience is no more in touch with Foley's inner life at the end of the film than they were at the beginning.

Foley is full of behavioural contradictions: he enjoys the camaraderie of the shearing shed but also longs for female contact; he works hard for the final pay he earns, but throws it away in a card game; he strongly supports the rights of shearers but only acts reluctantly to try and protect those rights against the scab labourers. Foley is really a cipher, a set of characteristics; none is really consistent with the others. But Foley is, above all, a worker and a part of an Australian bush mythology. In the growing Australian nationalism of the mid-1970s, Brealey was well aware that these elements in the film would give it a better chance of success:

Not only was it the film we all wanted to make, as far as [being] a nationalistic film, but we knew that the feeling of the community was that way. We knew that we wanted this nationalistic film. So, it was not only a personal sort of want to make that sort of film, but it was also very carefully commercially calculated.

Sunday, by relying on linked anecdotes and the appeal of the extended yarn, eschews all forms of causality in its plot. The texture of the film is rooted in an everyday reality, where trivial and often commonplace events take on a sense of heightened drama through the response of the characters, rather in the manner of heroic stereotypes. Thus, the shearers are naturally competitive, and a simple task like washing clothes becomes a competition in speed. The shearers race to see who will finish first, heedless of the fact that their towels have fallen off and their bottoms are bared. This may be an allusion to the myth of mateship, and the implications of this stage for a long, long time.

The Sundowners. Aside from the problems of running time, since the film was brought into the development negotiations, although Dingwall still had not delivered a final script. Brealey sent the treatment to Hannam in London: "Ken came back to me and said it was absolutely a marvellous treatment and he would love to work on the film." Brealey also made the decision at this time to involve Hannam in the scriptwriting process, although now he has mixed feelings about this decision: "I think some of the decisions that we made at that level were in fact Ken's mistakes."

Brealey went to London to discuss the project with Hannam, and the men were meeting when Dingwall's first draft script arrived. It proved an enormous shock to Brealey, for two reasons:

I started to read this bloody thing and it was wonderful to read, absolutely superb on the page, but about half-way through we had probably covered the first two pages of treatment. I just quickly flicked through the end and I just threw the script to the other side of the room. I was just so angry - I realized he had [only] written half the picture.

Aside from the problems of running time, since the budget would only cover a 90-minute film, Brealey found that the script had major structural problems:

There was no climax - it just fizzled out at the end - although the characterization was wonderful, the humour was magnificent, all the things we had looked for were there. So, I had a talk to Ken, showed him the script and he felt the same way.

The other terrible thing was that it was almost the same as The Sundowners. Now I knew The Sundowners very well and I got a copy of it out. A major plot in The Sundowners, not the major one, but a major sub-plot is in fact a shearing competition, and it seems so repetitious and it wasn't that long since The Sundowners was made - so that again made a really big worry about it.

Brealey returned from the UK and, in a meeting with Dingwall, attempted to renegotiate the down-beat ending:

I said, "At least one of the things we have to have is a sort of a climax to it." [John] said, "There is a climax." I asked, "What is it?" He said, "Foley is destroyed." At the end of the screenplay, what happened was that Foley went back to his room of his hotel and sat there looking like he was going to slash his wrists - that was the end of the film. I said, "At least we can get something of the drama of the scab shearers coming in. At least have a conflict with them so it leaves the audience kind of high and we can leave it at a high point and say that out of this comes so and so. At least it will be a dramatic climax." He said, "I want it to be so that he is absolutely destroyed." I said, "Why John?" He said, "Because I want people to understand that shearing destroys people!" Hardly the subject of a feature film.

Time and budget constraints began to have an impact on the scope of the screenplay. The first real casualty of the writing and rewriting of the script was the subject of the strike. The film treatment had as its finale a portrayal of Foley's rôle in the shearers' strike, against a court decision to make them accept lower wages. In development, the script changed to a character profile of Foley and depiction of the shearers' lifestyle. The group of main characters, men who could have faced the strike and been changed by it, were outlined in their working situation, and the film ended where the strike would begin. The ending seemed so arbitrary that Noel Purdon accused the producers of 'tacking it on.'

Matt Carroll defends the decision to film this version, because it was the one that Dingwall chose to deliver: "We realized we couldn't take it beyond the strike in terms of length. Basically, the screenplay that first came in ended at that point."

Dingwall says that the failure to include the strike was forced on him by the industrial conditions of Australian filmmaking:

When I wrote the story, the real story is about the shearing shed. The strike should have been abbreviated in part, but probably taken about twenty minutes of screen time. That would have taken the script to 115-120 minutes. At the time we didn't do, and still don't, 120-minute films. We do 105, 110. That's basically because we haven't got too much to say.

I actually believe, if I had got to the draft further down the road, I would have written the strike in.
What happened was that I wrote it. It took me quite a while to write it. But when I got to page 95 or 100, when they were going into town, I realized that the movie was over at that point.

Through an imperfect development of the screenplay from the treatment, the character of Foley had been diminished. Further drafts were needed to tighten up the film's narrative while retaining major elements of the overall story. At the time, this arduous process of refinement, common in Hollywood product, was not fully understood in Australia. Technical problems in the handling of the narrative seemed endemic in the Australian industry of the time, a fact of which Gil Brealey is now well aware:

The first draft had the elements of a great movie. It is what we now know as a first draft of perhaps ten. It had all the ideas there but none of the structured development. We knew that there had to be a series of drafts, but we didn't know the levels to which they should go.

Problems of development, lack of expertise in negotiating script changes and the inexorable pressures of having to work on minimal budgets had an effect on many films of the time. Peter Weir's experimental The Cars That Ate Paris (1974) has an even more recessive. [Foley] backs off from situations because he does not understand what is going on. Events impose themselves on him. He spends most of his screen time mucking about. The dramatic rivalry between the two "gun" shearers carefully set up at the beginning is simply thrown away at the end when it appears that Foley doesn't car any more.12

These character faults are not apparent in John Dingwall's original treatment, which sets up Foley as a man of conscience who possesses a rugged decency, but is also capable of extreme violence if provoked. In the original treatment, Foley is victimized by the police supporting the scab workers, and, in a fight with hired thugs, bushes one of them senseless. Foley is provoked again by the police, beaten up and, under a charge of resisting arrest, banned from the town for two weeks. Foley leads the shearers back to town to reclaim Ivy's pub as their territory.

In another scene, Arthur Black (Peter Cummins) has been found to be teaching scabs how to shear, and is almost lynched by Foley and his mates-22- hardly the actions of a total recessive. Only the arrival of the scabs, protected by the police, and the pub fight appear in the final version of the film.

In the course of the film, as completed, Foley sees that Old Garth (Reg Lye) has a near respectable funeral and is able to deal with the appalling cook. He holds the camaraderie of the shearing shed together, even as his own career as a "gun shearer" is threatened and ultimately destroyed. Assessed in terms of Australian male behaviour of the time, Foley's actions, mostly on behalf of his mates, could be seen as exemplary.

Foley changes from a character who can confidently state at the beginning of the film, "If I was there, I rung the shed"22, to a drunken, bitter loser, who has lost all his money and is futilely throwing punches at scab shearers who have taken his job. This ending seems to have been forced on the film by a number of factors. While the film attempts to document a pastoral tradition that gives its participants dignity and identity, it is clear by the end of the film that this period is closed, and that Foley's plight is an indicator of the issues which led to the strike of 1956 and its outcome. On a broader scale, the film also hints at a new role and identity for Australian workers, one that will require new strategies for survival. Severe cuts in the storyline reduced the possibility of a happy outcome for the Foley character.

Another major problem in the narrative emerged when the potential love interest between Foley and Sheila Dawson (Lisa Peers), which led to the climax of the original story, was destroyed through casting decisions. Instead of a woman of Foley's age, returning to the country after a divorce, the Sheila character was changed to a woman just out of her teens. To overcome the age difference, a love affair was written in between her and the shed's rouseabout. This sub-plot was shot, but later removed in the editing process, as noted by David Stratton.22

Curiously, Dingwall attributes this major change to Brealey, while Brealey attributes it to Ken Hannam. Whatever its origins, the change has been identified as one of the film's major faults, as it squandered the possibility of a happy ending.

Brealey gives his account of the changes to the Sheila character, which he says came about through Ken Hannam's input into the scriptwriting process:

He got out of the car and they stared at one another and he said, "I need you." She said, "Smile when you say that." And he smiled. She went into the house to get some things.23

Given the personal politics that come into play in the casting of major roles in feature films, there are a number of possible explanations for the casting of an ingénue in a key dramatic rôle. Lisa Peers plays Sheila, and does a reasonably convincing job of depicting the cocky's daughter, who insists on seeing the realities of life in the shearing shed. However, her exchanges with Foley, in which the possibility of unrealistic sexual attraction was meant to be suggested, are not developed enough to be effective.

Gil Brealey acknowledges that he was too liberal in his approach to the film's casting, except where Jack Thompson was concerned:

I gave Ken a great deal of leeway. When it came to casting in the early stages, I said to him that it was written really for Jack Thompson, and he said that he didn't really want to use Jack Thompson because he had heard that he had got too big a head. But I put my foot down on that one, and said it was definitely Jack's film. In fact, they got on like a house on fire and there was no problem. But had Ken had his own way, he would have cast somebody else in the Thompson rôle.
At one stage in the rewrites, the script was left with Hannam, who produced a further draft which included many changed lines and a change of emphasis in a number of scenes. The results of Hannam's efforts so appalled Dingwall that he successfully argued that the director's lines be removed:

I finished my rewrites that took the girl down to an earlier age. Ken said to me, "Look, if you like, I'll take the script now and type it up." And in the typing Ken started to do a bit of rewriting. He had the only copy, because in those days you didn't have copies, you just had the one copy. [...] When Black Arthur beats Foley, and they're in the pub and Foley loses his money and they're standing in the bar and Ugly comes up to Foley and says, "What are we going to do?", my line was, "Go ask Black Arthur", because he has won the game right. Ken had added in the line, "He's your hero now." When we got to that line, I said, "I am professionally embarrassed by this line." Now, to Ken's credit, he read that 30-page document and he said, "You are right, I am wrong." He went back to the original script which we had agreed on before he retyped it, and that's very much to his credit.24

With costs accumulating, and with considerable pressure on him to start the film, Brealey presented Dingwall's latest draft to the AFDC:

The two assessors, who had both read the previous treatment, were very disappointed. I said, "Look, I think we will make this one." They came back and said, "No, that's not a good idea. Get the writer to go back and write the second screenplay from his treatment that we were given." John wasn't prepared to do that, so I had to finally persuade the AFDC to let us go ahead, and in the end they did.

Further doubts as to the value of the script came about 2-3 weeks [...] Ken suddenly announced that he had been offered a job directing some of the series that was being done here by a British company called Hall. It was a phone call. He said, "I'm off. Can't finish the cut. You will have to finish it yourself." He said he wasn't earning enough money. We paid him $10,000 as a flat fee for the whole thing, presuming that was a year's salary.

Luke's Kingdom25

I saw the first 30 minutes cut together and it worked reasonably well. You realized that as an assembly it was going to have to be pulled together. But it would be probably successful, and I went away on the first holiday that I'd had for years. When I came back, I expected that the whole assembly would be finished. It had progressed hardly at all over about 2-3 weeks [...] Ken suddenly announced that he had been offered a job directing some of the series that was being done here by a British company called Hall. It was a phone call. He said, "I'm off. Can't finish the cut. You will have to finish it yourself." He said he wasn't earning enough money. We paid him $10,000 as a flat fee for the whole thing, presuming that was a year's salary.

Given Hannam's experience at the ABC and BBC, he could perhaps be forgiven for assuming the film would be completed without the need for daily supervision. Brealey saw his priority as completion of a version which would be accepted by the distributors and also satisfy his political overseers, and immediately pushed for a completed version.

When completed, it ran over two hours. Brealey objected to some of the technical defects still in episodic of the mini-series Luke's Kingdom25 – which left him little time to concentrate on the problems of Sunday. Brealey was shocked when Hannam viewed the film without offering any concrete suggestions for improvement:

Hannam [...] came along with his wife and various friends, and we showed the two-and-a-half hours of it. At the end of it, I said, "What do you want us to do with it?", and he said, "Well, you could get it down a bit in length." No notes, no comments or anything.

Editor Rod Adamson and Brealey started to reduce the film in length, and this resulted in a two-hour version which was again shown down to Hannam, who offered no comments other than advising Brealey to keep working on the film: "He said, 'Just keep doing what you are doing.'" Matt Carroll states that he worked closely with the editor to bring the film down in length, after Brealey started to believe that the film was a failure:

Gil, of course, hated it. He said, "This is going to be the end of the South Australian Film Corporation" and things like that. I then got Rod Adamson, the editor, and said, "Look Rod, we will get whatever notes Ken can give us and we will get it down to time." So Rod and I, basically with some notes
1996 is a time of flux for the Australian audio-visual production industry. It faces the possibility of broad-ranging changes to its funding base and infrastructure, as well as complex policy, regulatory, copyright and industrial-relations issues entailed in the expansion of delivery systems. On top of this comes continuous change in the marketplace. DIANE COOK talks to Michael Gordon-Smith, Executive Director of the Screen Producers’ Association of Australia (SPAA), and Association President Steve Vizard, about SPAA’s world view.

Speculation about the Australian audio-visual production industry’s future, particularly about subsidy levels, is widespread. Many are alarmed at recent and proposed federal budget cuts, and strongly concerned about the future of government subsidy. Will federal government maintain the FFC after 1997/98, or use as its primary support mechanism ‘revamped’ tax concessions under Division 10BA of the Income Tax Assessment Act? How will the AFC fare? How will the ABC adjust to proposed cuts?

On the eve of its eleventh national conference, however, SPAA takes a generally positive view. “It’s a difficult and exciting time for the industry, but it has been for the past decade, and probably will be for a couple more”, says Michael Gordon-Smith. He is confident that SPAA’s recent representations to Canberra have helped to temper the Howard government’s policies, and views the current state of play as better than anticipated prior to the past election. This is the crux of SPAA’s business – negotiation, political dialogue – and it is long-acquainted to the challenge.

SPAA is the employer representative association for the audiovisual production industry. It is responsible for negotiating terms and conditions of employment within the industry; its activities include lobbying, the facilitation of information exchange and networking, and the development of business and creative relationships. The Association also aims to encourage debate on industry issues, and to develop the industry’s profile and an awareness of its contribution to Australian life.

From its earliest incarnation (1956), SPAA has expanded to represent the interests not only of feature film and television producers but those involved in documentary production, commercials, corporate and
other commissioned video production, facilities and services, and, most recently, multimedia. Structure comprises an Executive Director, an annually-elected national Council with Divisions representing the constituent production sectors (although there is no multimedia division as yet), with state chapters in Victoria, NSW, Western Australia, South Australia and Queensland. Council, as of October this year, comprises Steve Vizard as President, Maureen Barron as Vice-President, Tom Jeffrey, Daniel Scharf, Mikael Borglund, Roger Le Mesurier, Jude Lengel, Andrew Williams, Andrew Wiseman, Andrew Oglvie, Murray Forrest and Richard Krein.

National membership currently stands at just under 300; Gordon-Smith points out that this figure includes company as well as individual members, and adds that SPAA seeks to encourage new members via liaison with the Australian Film Television & Radio School. He also mentions initiatives by member companies to sponsor the attendance of new producers at SPAA’s annual Conference:

They’re sponsoring producers who might very well be their competitors. I think it’s a good demonstration of the industry’s interest in self-renewal.

Is it difficult to achieve consensus within an organization which encompasses inherently diverse if not disparate agendas? Gordon-Smith:

It’s very frequently the case that there are different viewpoints in the industry, depending upon the changes proposed, and there’s a point where an organization that represents those groups can’t be arguing for an increase in one which is only achieved at the expense of the other.

But Gordon-Smith likens SPAA’s membership to that of the National Farmers’ Federation:

There are obviously things about tax, economic structures and employment patterns that are important to all (the members), and it’s the same in this industry. I think the fundamental thing is that industries which are able to represent themselves well and to come up with some sort of consensual view, and advocate and argue it well, do better than industries that don’t. If you leave it up to the government to be the arbiter, then you’re not solving any of their problems – and government likes it when you solve their problems.

Steve Vizard adds:

The points of difference are obvious. I think we have to dwell on the points of commonality. We’re about telling stories that we think are unique to Australia, and that is our starting point. I’m a great believer in going to grass roots to get a sense of direction; my starting point for all of the (current) inquiries is: Why do we do what we do? The fundamental thing is that members of SPAA are storytellers, and what they want is the capacity to tell stories that relate to what they are, as Australians. From that point you generate an agenda – that we need to be guaranteed a space on carriage to tell our stories.

Vizard points to an “even-handed, apolitical approach, in a sense”, as crucial to SPAA’s effectiveness:

It’s critical for an organization like ours to have strong relationships with governments of all complexities. I expect that our submissions in respect of the Gonski review and the Mansfield review and CER [and other issues] will be well heard, not because we have close political connections –
although we have good political connections, as we had with the previous government – and not because we’re involved with the media, but because we have well thought-out, well-constructed arguments that ultimately employ people, create business, and give people Australian stories in cinemas and on television. They’re very compelling arguments.

Vizard goes on to describe Gordon-Smith’s executive directorship as instrumental. Explaining the need for SPAA’s Executive Director to deal simultaneously and equally with government and cultural and commercial sectors, Vizard says:

Michael is one of those rare creatures; he moves between three camps with relative ease, with poise, with dignity. He’s been the lynchpin in SPAA’s being able to attract an almost unanimous supporter base from almost all the film and television producers in the country, for it to be a successful mix, and for SPAA to achieve some real degree of success in changing the statutory and commercial environment in which we work.

Among SPAA’s chief concerns now are the review of the ABC’s statutory and commercial environment, and the current review of Australian content regulations, and the ABC review, which suggested that the industry and the ABC might be better served if the ABC were to contract out production rather than produce in-house.

Gordon-Smith acknowledges that this view could be well thought-out, well-constructed arguments that although we have good political connections, as we don’t see them as mutually-exclusive positions.

The agenda for this year’s Conference is dominated by the obvious big issues:

Having said we wanted to get away from a policy-focused Conference, the industry’s in the grip of a review of the whole structure of industry assistance, and there’s the CER case and the ABC review. These topics will get a lot of attention.

What we’re trying to do is to use the Conference to kick-start a policy-making process, to try to have the industry, government and Australian stories in cinemas and on television. We just think there are ways in which it could be better managed for more effective results.

In a country of six million television households, it’s a mistake to look to examples of systems and structures that work in countries of 25 million television households on the edge of Europe, or in a place the size of the States. We think the ABC would be much more cost-effective, much better engaged with the creative life of Australia and better able to tap into the creative juices of the independent production sector if it was to contract out.

On the debate over New Zealand product, Gordon-Smith is vehement. Justice Davies’ decision, which accepts New Zealand product as ‘Australian’ under Australia and New Zealand’s 1988 Agreement on Closer Economic Relations – CER – is highly contentious. CER was established to facilitate mutual trade benefits, and many in the Australian industry have argued that such a trade agreement should not apply to what’s essentially a cultural issue, and that to include screen product in its ambit would disadvantage Australian product (which is subsidized on cultural grounds) in the domestic market.

At the time of writing, SPAA was seeking to become a party to the ABC’s appeal of the case, due to go to court in October. Gordon-Smith says it’s a big issue in terms of the cultural precedent it sets, for the relationship between cultural policy and international trade deals.

I think the campaign by the New Zealanders has very little going for it. I think from their point of view this is the first step in a campaign to have access to the full range of Australian assistance measures.

Criticalizing NZ’s lack of content policy to date, he says:

When you have dialogue with these people who oppose the Australian standard GATT, believe there is no place for public broadcasting in their broadcasting environment, have no local content rules of their own and then seek to get access to the benefits of the Australian local content requirements, it seems to me to be an act of extraordinary hypocrisy. It’s so easy to be angry about it.

Regarding the future of government subsidy, while SPAA has yet to co-ordinate its submission to the Gonski review, Gordon-Smith says there is general support for continuation of direct funding mechanisms, in particular the FFC:

There’s no real interest in a radical re-shuffle that would see, for example, a complete about-face to an entirely tax-driven model. There are many people, many companies, in SPAA that would like to see structures which might help them put their businesses on a more secure footing, which would make the life of independent producers a shade more viable. But I think there’s more recognition of the value of direct funding mechanisms and broad support for the existing institutions.

Vizard elaborates:

Direct funding by government is a critical part of supporting a viable film industry, but, more importantly, it’s a critical part of preserving and encouraging Australian culture. That’s not to say that direct funding can’t be complemented by other forms of discretionary private-sector funding, where, for example, tax concessions and other concessions are attracted by investment in film and television. We don’t see them as mutually-exclusive positions.

One of SPAA’s most important forums for debating industry issues is its annual Conference, which has become one of the industry’s most popular events – as much for its networking and deal-making as for its official agenda. SPAA held its 1994 and 1995 Conferences in Melbourne in conjunction with the AFI Awards, and attracted record attendances – well over 500 each year. The 1996 Conference (13-15 November) continues the association, with which Gordon-Smith says SPAA is very happy:

I think there’s a great deal of value in an event having a Janus face … looking in and looking out. It’s very valuable for the industry’s annual event to focus on issues which are important to the industry, to be a gathering of the industry, but also for it to be connected with a showcase and a marketing exercise – an exercise in drawing the attention of the general public to what’s made and to how fabulous it is.

Citing other advantages for both SPAA and the AFI, such as increased interstate and foreign attendance at the Conference and the Awards, Gordon-Smith says SPAA hopes to continue the association: “I think there are useful synergies which we haven’t yet fully developed and exploited.”

SPAA President Steve Vizard
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A History of the AFI Awards

1996, it is being said, is the strongest year for the Australian film industry yet. Again. It seems that every year we are told how strong and successful Australian films are. Even last year, which was a fairly weak year for films - with some notable exceptions, of course - we were assured that the industry was powering ahead.

It is true that this year’s films are remarkable in their diversity and maturity. This started with the success of Shine (Scott Hicks) at Sundance, Love Serenade (Shirley Barrett) at Cannes, and Love and Other Catastrophes (Emma-Kate Croghan). The Melbourne International Film Festival screened half of the features nominated for AFI Awards this year, as well as many of the documentaries and short films. And here is where blood begins to bubble, and controversial comments start to circulate: the AFI Awards.

Any examination of Australian film inevitably turns to the AFI Awards, and the controversy they always cause. This year’s nominations have put many noses out of joint. Why did Love Serenade only get nominated for Best Production Design and Best Costume Design after winning the Camera d’Or at Cannes? Why was Rats in the Ranks (Bob Connolly, Robin Anderson) not nominated for Best Documentary when it is clearly one of the best of recent times? And why was Rolf de Heer’s The Quiet Room, which was in Competition at Cannes this year, totally overlooked?

The AFI Awards are no stranger to controversy, whether it be over the pre-selection process, the nominations themselves, or the telecasting of the Awards night. But they are important, they are sought after within the industry, and they are instrumental in the Australian film industry’s growth, and have been for thirty-eight years.

Beginnings

It all started in 1958 at the Melbourne Film Festival where the Director, Erwin Rado, presented the first Australian Film Awards, co-sponsored by Kodak. The aim of these Awards was “To direct public attention to Australian films and to encourage high standards in their production.” There were four categories: Documentary, Educational, Advertising and Open, and a special Experimental Film Award.

Later that year, the Australian Film Institute was established, with the staging of the Australian Film Awards as one of its major objectives, and they have staged them since 1959.
The Awards reflected the nature of Australia's film industry at the time, which was commercially-based, and explains categories such as Travel, Public Relations, Children's and Fiction. Gold, Silver and Bronze medallions were awarded to the winning films in each category, and a Grand Prix could be awarded by the judges, but only if they thought the film had international potential. It was the films themselves that were awarded the prizes, and not individuals, and they were judged by an invited jury made up of critics and a few filmmakers.

Further awards were introduced in 1962 -- the Kodak Award for Best Black and White Photography, and Best Colour Photography -- the first move towards craft-based awards, and recognition of the various elements of a film.

1963 saw the awarding of the first Grand Prix prize to Dusan Marek's film Adam and Eve, for its "original and imaginative achievement in the use of symbolism in animation", and proved for the judges that the Australian Film Awards were being successful in their aim to "stimulate and raise the standards of film production in Australia", a view that was echoed by critic Colin Bennett the following year in an ABC talk show. He also stated that international film festivals had asked to see the prizewinners, proving there was an international market for Australian film.

Awards for Best Screenplay and Best Original Music Score were established in the 1974-5 Awards, and Honourable Mentions were given for Best Performances in Supporting Roles. Sixteen feature films were entered, forcing the Fiction category to split into Feature and Short Fiction, proving that earlier concerns about the categories were pertinent and subsequently addressed.

From 1976, categories were divided into Feature and Non-Feature Films, and the Best Film Award was presented for the first time, won by The Devil's Playground (Fred Schepisi). The judging process underwent a major overhaul, and a model where professionals voted for the films in their area of expertise was adopted, with the help of various industry guilds and unions. Best Film was decided by the guilds and unions, together with members and associate members of the AFI. Other new awards included Best Supporting Actor and Actress, and Best Cinematography in a feature film.

The Telecasts Begin

1976 was also the first year the Awards were telecast nationally by the Nine Network. Criticism was not far away, and the telecast received an unfavourable pasing by Ken Quinell in Filmnews.
Further craft awards were initiated in 1977: Best Achievement in Sound Editing, Art Direction and Costume Design. Concerns that the Awards Presentation, this time telecast on the ABC, was too glitzy and not relevant to the Australian film industry clashed with the belief that, if the industry was to receive the attention of the general public, such presentations were necessary.

The next year's Awards were telecast from Perth by the 0-10 Network, and 1979's Awards were not telecast at all due to an industrial dispute. This was also the year the current Awards trophy was first presented.

One of the largest contentions regarding the Australian Film Awards and television coverage was the use, as with the Logies, of international film personalities as presenters. Theories were expounded about the contradictory nature of Australia's confidence in its own film industry. Some said that inviting international stars to host the Awards was hypocritical, and indicated to the general public that local personalities were not deemed good enough, or well-known enough. This undermined the whole aim of the Awards themselves, and therefore could not be taken seriously.

The AFI signed up with the ABC in 1980 to telecast the Awards for the next four years, and, in 1982, a pre-selection group was introduced. This consisted of a core committee of twenty members recommended by the various industry guilds and associations, and professionally-accredited AFI members willing to attend the pre-selection screenings. This group was required to see all thirty feature films entered that year, and to cast four nominations in their accredited categories. The nominated films were then screened to all members, who would decide the winners.

This system was widely criticized as being undemocratic and too selective, and actually resulted in the number of entries dropping in 1983. The system was subsequently abandoned. New awards in the Non-Feature categories were introduced, encompassing many craft awards, and, for the first time, the Awards were presented as the AFI Awards, and not just the Australian Film Awards.

In 1984, the Byron Kennedy Award was founded, carrying both a trophy and a $10,000 cash prize. Its purpose was to recognize and encourage the pursuit of excellence within the Australian film and television industry, and could be awarded to anyone within the industry. It was first awarded to Roger Savage. 

Television's growing relevance was recognized in 1986, and awards including Best Telefeature, Best Mini-Series, Best Direction, Screenplay and Performance by a Lead Actor and Actress were decided on by an invited panel of industry representatives. The controversy of the year was the withdrawal of Crocodile Dundee (Peter Faiman) from competition, and Cinema Papers published an article in September 1986 that questioned the Awards' relevance and discussed the problems the AFI was facing that year. It is interesting that many of the issues raised then are still relevant today - the inclusion and exclusion of films, eligibility, the effects of the Awards on box office and television coverage.

Today's Beginnings

In 1987, the pre-selection process was again revamped into the basic form still in operation now. Film entries were pre-selected by specialized industry groups. Those films were then judged by all accredited members - not just by the relevant members for the various categories. All AFI members voted for the AFI Members Prize, awarded for Excellence in a Feature Film, which has now evolved into all members voting for Best Film, Best Documentary, Best Short Fiction, and Best Animation. In 1991, the Young Actors Award for actors under the age of sixteen was initiated and, in 1992, the AFI Members Award for Best Foreign Film was first awarded. After a rocky time during the early '90s, television coverage was secured again by the ABC.

The success of Australian film in recent years, both locally and overseas, has resulted in a spiral of recognition and credibility. Proof (Jocelyn Moorhouse) and its success at Cannes in 1991 gave its AFI Awards, including Best Film, extra credibility, which in turn gave the film more recognition. Attendances for Proof jumped by 20 percent in the fortnight following the AFI Awards for that year, and it had already been running for seven weeks. The spiral continued upward with Strictly Ballroom ( Baz Luhrmann), The Piano (Jane Campion), Maree's Wedding (P. J. Hogan) and Angel Baby (Michael Rymer). Attendances for Angel Baby increased by 44 percent in five days after it won six awards last year, including Best Film, and, while the telecasting of the Awards has been erratic during that time, the AFI Awards now have a consolidated place, not just within the film industry, but in the minds of the general public as well.

Executive Director of the AFI Ruth Jones believes the AFI Awards are a very good promotional hook for Australian film:

People are reassured by endorsements and the AFI Awards are a signal of quality for the general public, and a final seal of approval for the local film industry. Most people know what they are now. They won't necessarily know previous winners or how they're judged, but they are a lot more informed now, and there's a sense that there's a broader audience watching.

Jones talks about the growing commercial success of both Australian films and the AFI Awards. "Australian films are now screening in the multiplexes, and not just the arthouse cinemas", she elaborates, adding:

The Awards presentation has to be an event. It's terribly important, because it's the key to the public image of Australian film. Frankly, it's gotten bigger every year, but that needs to continue as the industry continues to grow.

To this end, the AFI Awards this year are going on the Internet with a live Netcast - like the Oscars earlier this year - which will attract a much larger, international audience, and will continue, Jones hopes, to develop in the future.

Whatever the controversies - and it can be argued that controversy itself is an important element to the Awards' success - the AFI Awards serve a vital role within the Australian film industry.

1 Lumiere, October 1973.
2 The Age, 8 December 1973.
3 Filmnauz, August 1976.
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promised re-introduction of tax-breaks will undoubtedly be the hot topic for the Australian film industry in the years ahead.

The federal Coalition has already signalled a return to indirect subsidies – quite possibly something along the lines of the old 10BA tax breaks, mere mention of which provokes mixed and heated feelings among Australian producers – and a phasing down of the Australian Film Finance Corporation (FFC), presently the principal source of funding for Australian feature films.

With this article, Cinema Papers re-opens the topic of how best to apply subsidies to what has become a thriving and internationally-renowned filmmaking community. Cinema Papers welcomes responses and views on what is clearly the most vital issue presently facing the local production industry.1

CATHERINE MUNRO sets the scene.

The Howard government is returning to one of its old ideas – high tax-breaks for film investors – opening up the question of how best to subsidize the industry. The options boil down to two approaches. One is the indirect subsidy in the form of high tax-breaks, such as those that were offered under Section 10BA of the Income Tax Assessment Act during the 1980s. The other is the present system of direct funding.

Hopes that the government will adopt both seem fanciful given the current regime’s apparent preference for small government and small budgets.2 It is not about to give up large amounts of foregone tax revenue and increase spending on films at the same time.

The Australian Film Finance Corporation (FFC) is the largest government body that subsidizes films, and many in the industry are highly sceptical about its success. But no one canvassed for this article would go on the record about the FFC, reflecting the power of an organization which has a virtual monopoly over government subsidies to the feature-film industry.

On the other hand, one of the great concerns within the film industry is that bigger tax-breaks will produce bad films because investors would not be concerned about the success of their film, only the tax write-off they would make.

FFC Chairman Christopher Lovell issued a warning to supporters of the pre-FFC days in the Corporation’s 1994/95 annual report:

Then film investment was dictated by tax and financial considerations resulting in a larger industry which produced demonstrably fewer films that found their way to Australian cinemas and television screens. Whilst the present position of the industry is far from perfect it is vastly superior to the position in which the industry found itself in 1986 and 1987.

But a glance at a list of films made before and after the establishment of the FFC suggests that Lovell’s assertion may be nothing more than an attempt to justify the present system of funding which costs the government much less than the high tax-breaks provided for before the FFC was set up. What if, in fact, the films made in the “bad old days” of 10BA were, on average, better than those made using FFC subsidies?

In 1992, former Australian Film Commission officer Lynn Gailey compiled a list of the highest-grossing Australian films to 1992 in real terms. Only 11 of the 44 films on the list were financed after the FFC was established. Of course, since 1992 there have been hits, such as Strictly Ballroom (Baz Luhrmann, 1994) and The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert (Stephen Elliot, 1994). But the number of hugely-successful films made under 10BA belies Lovell’s warning.

The 10BA tax scheme started in 1981 when the Fraser Government decided to offer a 150 percent tax write-off for investment in films, with 50 percent of the net earnings tax exempt. According to the Department of Communication and the Arts, budgets for film features through division 10BA rose from $57.93 million in 1980/81 to peak at $105.60 million in 1985/86. While the number of films skyrocketed, many argue their quality plummeted because most investors had no interest in box-office revenue, only their tax write-off.

Television producer Errol Sullivan, who has made highly-successful television series, produced a large number of low-budget feature films during the hey-
day of the 1980s tax scheme. He is now chief executive of Southern Star. Ten years ago, Sullivan thought that the scheme worked because it would rid the industry of bureaucratic intervention. Now he thinks the scheme was an administrative disaster. He believes government subsidies in the form of tax breaks are inflationary and a blunt instrument for stimulating the industry:

10BA did throw vast amounts of money at the industry and it overheated and it was calamitous. The bad thing was that it caused a proliferation in production which couldn't be sustained by the creative community and put a big inflationary impact on costs. It's not sustainable in terms of growing the business in an orderly way.

Many producers love high tax-breaks because of the independence it gives them. For example, Jane Scott, who spent three years finding the money to make Shine (Scott Hicks, 1996), and got $3.5 million from the FFC, wants them back. "Any scheme that the government may be looking at is one that may attract that sort of investment from financial markets", Scott says. "I hope that they explore it [10BA] again."

But FFC Chief Executive John Morris argues there is no need for a diversity of government funds while there are "thousands" of sources out in the marketplace. He says the FFC is willing to provide the cash if the film has a "marketplace attachment". While few would be foolhardy enough to say it openly, there are many in the industry who say that subjective and personal choices are made by the FFC, especially when films are border-line cases as to the extent of their private financing.

[...] one of the great concerns within the film industry is that bigger tax-breaks will produce bad films because investors would not be concerned about the success of their film, only the tax write-off they would make.

In 1988, the Labor government abolished the scheme and reduced the tax breaks to 100 per cent, where they currently stand. It set up the FFC to distribute federal funding. Labor promised to lock in $50 million a year in funding for three years starting in 1993/94. Morris argues the move has made the industry more market-driven while being cheaper for the taxpayer. The FFC earned $25.5 million in the 1994/95 financial year and this is ploughed back into the industry. By contrast, foreign government revenue in the form of tax breaks does not produce an immediate return. The cost to revenue of tax breaks under 10BA peaked in real terms at $180.9 million in 1984/85, with no direct returns to the government. But what Morris fails to point out is that the indirect returns are far-reaching. Firstly, the proceeds of a successful film are returned to the industry, with approximately four-fifths of a film's budget taken up paying those who worked on the film. A rich film industry creates a bigger training ground for Australian filmmakers. Also, the FFC's returns of $25 million may sound a lot compared to its annual budget, but they are the product of several years of spending.

No one tries to argue that the film industry does not need subsidies. While successful producers like George Miller may not need government finance, most projects are too risky for the profit-driven private investor to participate in from the word go. Consequently, the absence of government subsidies is rare, with Jane Campion's The Piano (1994) being a commonly-quoted exception. It was funded entirely by Ciby 2000, a subsidiary of French construction company Bouygues. But, in most cases, the high start-up costs of a project, where success depends on popularity, make investing in a film an unattractive option for those outside the industry. More commonly, investment in films is left to those within the industry: the state and federal funding bodies, and a myriad of distribution agents and cinema chains.

Apart from control over spending, Morris argues another advantage for having a centralized body such as the FFC is that it has encouraged more business dealings with international distribution and sales agents, such as Miramax and Polygram, to establish themselves in Australia. For them, the FFC creates a gateway through which buyers can enter the Australian film industry. But FFC critics say these businesses would have found their way here anyway in an era when pay-television operators seem to be hungry for as many films and television productions as they can lay their hands on.

While the industry needs subsidies, and always will, private investment in the film industry appears to be popular. The fact that funds are raised for mainstream U.S. films is evidence that the money is around. Clockers (Spike Lee, 1995), Evita and Jim Carrey's latest feature, Liar Liar, are three examples. The latter's prospectus is seeking about $100 million under Section 51 (1), which allows a 100 percent deduction on something which produces income.

But such interest from the private sector will not guarantee the making of culturally-important films. A crucial advantage of direct government subsidies is the support they can provide to such projects. This is the domain of the Australian Film Commission (AFC), which, among other objectives, aims to encourage the making of "experimental programs and programs of a high degree of creativeness and the making and appreciation of Australian programs and other programs as an art form". It received $19.8 million from the federal government in 1995.

Unlike other areas, the film industry is not expected to feel the chill winds of the federal government's spending cuts immediately. John Morris said that the Coalition has promised him that it will honour Labor's funding commitment until 1997/98. But what happens after that is anyone's guess and, given that most films take at least a year to go into production, the expected changes are just around the corner.

A tax-break seems more in tune with the Liberal Party's ideology than is direct funding, because it encourages direct investment from the private sector and moves away from a centralized institution. This was highlighted by then-Opposition leader John Howard who, during the 1996 election campaign, said arts policies should "reflect the core Liberal ideals of championing free enterprise and maximizing the choices available to individuals". Howard also promised to maintain direct subsidies, incentives for private investors and Australian content requirements.

While such comments may suggest support for higher tax-breaks, the system would be prone to cost blow-outs. Tax-breaks in any area face staunch opposition within the bureaucracy and Treasurer Peter Costello's distaste for them has already been revealed. In late July, he announced the end of the 150 percent deduction for syndicates who invested in companies engaged in research and development, choosing to replace the scheme with direct grants. Costello said the system invited rents and led to growth in costs by $100 million to $200 million each year.

One of the authors of the discussion paper which led to the FFC's inception is David Court, Movioce managing director. He believes tax breaks could come back in a different form:

The option that I have heard floating around, but I haven't seen anything on paper, is an option where returns from the movies that were reinvested in new movies would attract concessions. That would be attractive to me because we aim to look very well after investors who we think would reinvest.

The government is also "exploring ways" of changing requirements for issuing a prospectus in a process that is separate to the review of 10BA. The corporations law requires a financier to prepare a prospectus for any investment less than $500,000. This is seen as an impediment to film producers because issuing the document chews up about $80,000 to $90,000. The government is expected to introduce a "short-form" prospectus which would cost only about $5,000 to produce. A plan to make it easier for 20 people or less to invest in a film budgeted at less than $500,000 is also being examined. Court does not believe the short-form option would work because investors have come to expect the amount of information contained in the long-form prospectus.

Movioce is looking at more sophisticated ways of offering films to investors. "We are looking at segmenting and spreading the risks so we can match the investors' risk/reward preference", Court said. The cautious investor would be promised a return of 20 percent and be the first to receive his or her share while the speculator's investment would be leveraged and the returns much higher. "There's an expectation that there will be some change, but I'm not holding my breath for that - it will take them a long time to come up with something that will satisfy Treasury", Court said.

1 See also interview with Ross Dimsey, "Finding a Voice", by Scott Murray, in Cinema Papers, No. 112, October 1996, pp. 22-4, 59-60, for a discussion on re-introducing 10BA.

2 See "Productive Associations" in this issue's supplement, pp. 2-4.
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Getting Moral Rights Right

John B. Murray discusses moral rights legislation

The better term to encapsulate the above qualities and attributes is creator, as shown in brackets.

The following guideline, elements 1 to 4, can be applied to all artistic disciplines, including film, video and television, and it soon helps determine who is the creator of a particular work. There is no need to award percentages for each category, and there is no need to say that all elements must be attained in order to qualify. It becomes clear when the weight of evidence is predominantly in a particular person or persons’ favour. I have suggested, in response to the draft legislation, that it be incorporated as a guideline.

A creator is a person(s) who
1. conceives of an original idea and communicates the fact in a manner recognizable by others in spoken words, by musical sounds, a preliminary sketch, model or by physical action, or in written form such as a précis or draft;

It is also clear that a playwright is a creator with points 1, 2 and 4, unless he or she has contracted to surrender point 4 to a stage director and the play is to be considerably altered.

For film it is easy to decide, by reference to the guidelines, whether the director, the producer, the scenarist (or anyone else) should be attributed as creator, or if the right should be shared.

A scenarist would clearly hold the first position, but the director might hold the following three, thus favouring the director. Alternatively, if a scenarist did retain positions 1 to 4, it would be clear that the scenarist is the creator of the film and should be accorded moral rights. In the latter case, the scenarist would have been assisted by (to use the term generally) a journeyman director who would not normally qualify for moral rights, but on some occasions as joint-creator only.

At the same time, it needs to be understood that if a creator is divorced from his/her work by forces outside the creator’s control, or force majeure, and does not execute or have power to execute or supervise the final form of the work, and his/her essential vision is realized by a replacement, then the former should still be acknowledged as creator.

John Utzon, for instance, is undeniably the creator of the Sydney Opera House, even though he was prevented from supervising his architectural vision during completion of the building. It is still apparent that he retains the predominant right by referring to the 4-point guideline. One can see that he had the major influence in categories 3 and 4, in addition to holding points 1 and 2.

I see the establishment of moral rights legislation, if properly created and promoted, particularly as a topic in schools, as having an important and much wider beneficial effect on our national psyche.

It has been the challenge, one that should have ensured face-to-face consultations with submitters and practitioners.

There may well have been an effort by draftpersons in the Attorney-General’s Department to get it right once and for all, but it does have a sense of political simplicity. Film has obviously been the challenge, one that should not have been grasped, nor has the proper stress been placed on principles as a first priority.

A dictionary definition of ‘author’ includes: “the originator, beginner, or creator of anything”. This is not quite adequate in relation to film, drama, painting, literature, etc., unless creator is fully understood. To help in this process and to provide a yardstick against which claims of authorship can be accurately measured, I have suggested a further clarification, such as:

An ‘author’ (creator) is one who conceptualizes, implements and governs the execution of his or her idea in a chosen medium or mediums, with or without the collaboration of another or others.

In this definition, “governs the execution” or, alternatively, “controls the execution” is essential. I suggest that it will become clear in the following text that it overcomes confusion. It facilitates the assessment of who is worthy of moral rights in a work and who should be denied, for, particularly in film, the responsibility of determining the final form of a work is crucial.

The better term to encapsulate the above qualities and attributes is creator, as shown in brackets.

The following guideline, elements 1 to 4, can be applied to all artistic disciplines, including film, video and television, and it soon helps determine who is the creator of a particular work. There is no need to award percentages for each category, and there is no need to say that all elements must be attained in order to qualify. It becomes clear when the weight of evidence is predominantly in a particular person or persons’ favour. I have suggested, in response to the draft legislation, that it be incorporated as a guideline.

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Similar circumstances could affect the creator of any cinema or television programme, a painting, sculpture, dance, music or literary work including drama and the staging thereof.

There is generally, and quite inexplicably, an unwillingness, historically and now, to acknowledge the degree of creativity and conceptural worth of the writer/scenarist, although it is widely recognized, figuratively, that a screenplay is worth up to 75 percent of the finished film.

As a simple example, take Paddington (originally from "Darkest Peru"). It would be inconceivable that moral rights not be accorded to the author, Michael Bond. He has created a complete character in Paddington: the way he looks, dresses, thinks, expresses himself and what he eats (a passion for marmalade sandwiches), the nature of the situations in which he involves himself, and Bond carefully defines the locations and ancillary characters.

It would be an injustice for any other person, such as a film director, to usurp the author's rights. Such a director should share with Bond, and only if new situations and events were to be created for Paddington in consultation with Michael Bond. If portrayed by puppets, the puppeteer might also be considered a joint-creator.

If a writer/scenarist conceives of an original narrative drama (or other film) and structures the work in a literary form, together with complete descriptions of characters, locations, style of realization including camera compositions, lighting ambiance, etc., and if that scenarist either has right of approval over the way in which his or her concept is realized - or delivers a shooting script that is achieved without major alterations - that writer is the creator of the film. The director would be engaged primarily as a craftsperson. Such influential writers/scenarists are few; nevertheless, one cannot accept legislation that simply denies this just recognition as a matter of course. We should not allow the collective myth that has grown out of France's elevation of the film director to any longer obscure the truth of the situation.

I acknowledge, however, that we owe much to French culture and its wonderful appreciation of artistic endeavour, which gave rise to the concept of moral rights. Its legislation, nevertheless, limited creativity in film to the director.

By establishing a more thorough means of discerning the true creator, and by legislating to protect the integrity of creators rather than 'authors', there is no need to specify the nature of the artist or of his/her discipline.

This proposed method should bring insight and intelligent debate to the consideration of creativity. More light could be brought to bear by members of an ongoing tribunal I suggest should be set up to deal with moral rights. When and if disputes do arise, a tribunal could be a more appropriate body than the Federal Court nominated in the legislation to provide this forum for discussion and bring about speedy resolutions. A tribunal is less formal, less costly for artist applicants, and probably more immediately available than the Court with its direction hearings and final adjudication, and even though there is an increasing use of mediation processes.

A tribunal would also develop special knowledge and expertise which I feel is essential to guard against inaccurate precedents in this sensitive field. It would be better able to settle differences about work-in-progress, or the interruption of a work-in-progress, or the

The term creator more readily embraces the sense of being in control of the performance and execution of, and the final form of, a work, and this is an essential and inescapable qualification for a creator, especially in a work realized in collaboration with others in a medium such as film. An understanding of this also overcomes the inability which presently exists in the community to discern a creator in the midst of contributors and collaborators.

I am not objecting to a producer or a director being recognized as the creator of a film; the director will rightly get the guernsey more times than not. I am objecting to the fact that the draft legislation does not know that one or the other is the creator. It has no principle to apply in order to find out. And it should not be a matter of whom it might suit others to call a creator.

The proposed legislation has also ignored the fact that a journeyman director should not always be eligible for moral rights. It wants to nominate the journeyman director as creator purely because he or she is a director. And it does not accept that there should be joint-creators. It allows only joint-directors and joint-producers.

If breadth and clarity is not brought to the final wording, I see it leaving the door open to confusion and injustice in the future, and, given that no sound principle has been defined, claims by other participatory creators to be classed as creators will confound the issue further.

The confusion exists between the concept of moral rights pertaining to creativeness, and the proper recognition and acknowledgment of an artist's talents - the latter, to some, seeming to be denied.

An individual contributor does not have authority over the whole work nor over whatever, or in what manner, his or her expertise may be applied and incorporated in a work. That is the rôle of the director or creator, who would not be so titled without that responsibility.

The nature of contributions is selected by the creator, and a work is not the sum of contributions of individual collaborators that have been left to their own creative devices, or who have had a free hand to decide upon and incorporate their contributions as they considered fitting.

Neither creativity nor artistic input qualifies a person as creator unless he/she has originated the concept or created an adaptation of a work and its expression in another form, who has controlled the expression and realization of the work and determined its final form: i.e., has had the decision-making ability and must take responsibility for the final form.

In film, the collaborative aspect comes into play as artists work together to realize the director's (or creator's) concept, and not as joint-creators of the work itself. But, I suggest, it would offer more protection for a clause to be included in contributors' contracts which commits the producer of a film and his/her representative, the director, to make their best endeavour to uphold the integrity of that person's work. Such a 'best endeavour' clause could help ensure that collaborators are allowed enough time and assistance in budgets and schedules to deliver of their best to their satisfaction.

All this is drawn from my responses to the Discussion Paper of June 1994, and the proposed legislation of January 1996. I was concerned that the word 'compromise' was used by the Attorney-General's Department, and that it expressed the opinion that it cannot hope to satisfy everyone, reflecting, it would seem, a view that the legislators must steer a course midst competing interests. That some in film-related industries are aggressive in attempting to establish a position suited to their own self-interest seems apparent.

Should the legislation be influenced by such attitudes - which are quite removed from the central issue - we will certainly lose our way. We must, first, clearly understand the inviolable principle of moral rights, then create a structure which will guide the community, including the industries which exploit the works of artists, in availing themselves of fair and reasonable access to the work.

The essence of moral rights is a reflection of the Declaration of Human Rights; Article 27 (2):

Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

And, Article 29 (2):

In the exercise of his rights and freedoms everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.

These are not tracts created by empirical reasoning but universally accepted ideals to which nations are expected to conform. Agents for the sale and distribution of artistic works can be accommodated. I am not aware that the rest of the world is paranoid about the marketing of films from France, where moral rights have a very high profile.

I see the establishment of moral rights legislation, if properly created and promoted, particularly as a topic in schools, and, having an important and much wider beneficial effect on our national psyche. It will help develop in society generally a greater understanding and respect for each other as unique individuals, and it will allow the freedom and tolerance which we should rightfully expect and enjoy.

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"We must, first, clearly understand the inviolable principle of moral rights."

John B. Murray, one of Australia's most experienced producers, has first-hand knowledge of moral rights, having successfully taken a French distributor to court for altering without permission a feature he produced.

Terms of a commission, or about the original terms of an engagement not being met, or if someone should be replaced as creator. There must be ready access for creators who feel under pressure to waive moral rights from employers such as television networks, production companies and/or producers, investors, distributors, funding agencies, etc.

However, just what a creator is is not fully apparent in the legislation. Producers and directors are arbitrarily nominated as the creators (see ‘author’) in film, and therefore define creator rather than are defined by creator. If a definition of creator is made wholly appropriate, there would be no need to nominate any specific rôle or rôles to fit the category.

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Welcome Back Freddie

After two years’ break, Fred Harden returns to Cinema Papers with his much-loved column (now incorporating the Web, et al)

Well hung

The Miller Proji, at 25lb (11.4kg), weighs in at less than most of its rivals, even with Miller’s solid construction quality. Made from hard-anodized aluminium and stainless-steel components, it folds down to 48 inches and it has a respected reputation with crews around town as a cost-effective studio or location crane, handling camera payloads up to 50lbs.

The release of the Proji Undermount has been similarly well received. It lets operators suspend their camera beneath the jib arm for even lower shooting angles. The Undermount, which attaches to the Proji bowl via a Hi-hat adapter, ensures the camera and fluid head remain balanced in the centre of the jib bowl. Miller say this increases system stability and it would certainly eliminate the stress which an offset bowl attachment causes.

The Undermount and Proji are available as separate components, and also available in an ENG or studio system package with Miller’s fluid heads, tripods and studio accessories.

For further information please contact: Brett Smith, Miller Fluid Heads (Australia). Tel: (61.2) 9439 6377, Fax: (61.2) 9438 2819.

Angles

ANGLES PACKS A LOT OF SENSITIVITY INTO ITS twenty-five pages of simple black-and-white layout. Subtitled “Women working in film & video”, it’s solid information and inspiration that works best for American readers (a good list of U.S. grants, festivals and events) but it is cheap enough for an overseas subscription (U.S.$30 for 4 issues) that you can get your fill of the buzz. In the last issue I bought (from Xines/Desert Moon periodicals http://www.xines.com), there’s an interview with Sarah Green, producer of The Secret of Roan Inish, and with NY academic and filmmaker Christine Choy. It’s even interesting for blokes.

For all those interested, please contact: Angles, PO Box 11916, Milwaukee, WI 53211. Back issues are available.

Newtonian log

If you ignore Mike Lee, who has decided to always cut film by hand, the only problem with nonlinear editing is the time it takes to review, log, organize and input the footage for digitizing. Sure, all the biggie editing systems have a simple off-line VCR logging option, some even have a cable that goes to your portable and grabs the timecode on the set. But I want to walk around on set or location and do the same thing. No wires, no bulky portables. So, I want a Newton PDA and the new Shot Logger. Shot Logger transmits timecodes from a pager-sized 916.5 MHz transmitter attached to the timecode source of any camera, VCR, professional camcorder, Nagra or device supplying a pulse timecode signal. It’s picked up by a PC Card receiver in the Apple Newton. While it’s accurately logging timecode “in” and “out” points for each take, you can rate each take, enter detailed scene descriptions, numbers and notes, and export a list of preferred shots for digitizing. The whole story is told in detail on the Production Magic web site, http://www.productionmagic.com/ and Mike Savino, V.P. at Production Magic, says he is now arranging for distribution in Australia, having made contact with a couple of companies. (He says he’s interested in opportunities for more new distributors.) So, if you want to buy one (there’s a current price deal of around US$2,000, you supply the PDA), or, if you want to sell lots of them, contact Mike@ProductionMagic.com. Tel: 802 864 0278, Fax: 802 865 2468.
new products

One eyed, one horned

PT-01 (Hollywood Series) isn’t a McHale’s Navy remake but a head-mounted video monitor. The idea was developed so that camera operators could watch head-up the video split while doing hand-held and Steadicam shots. It has found a list of other uses in sports shoots, animatronic and puppet manipulation, and it keeps directors quiet for hours. Looking a bit like a VR helmet, the display is great for use in bright sunlight and the optics produce a virtual image 60 inches diagonally that appears metres in front of you, reducing eyestrain. The helmet is light-weight and flips up so that you can have an unobstructed view, or positioned so that you look up slightly and can still see to walk. It fits loose enough so that you can still wear your glasses, has stereo headphones and attaches with a thin three-wire cable to breakout box with BNC and RCA inputs, PAL or NTSC. It costs $1,990 ex-tax from Video Department Aust., 32 Punch Street, Artarmon. 2064. Tel: 1 800 675 168 freecall.

(Can’t you just imagine a studio full of PT-01 visored crew walking around bumping into each other, or, in a twist on the famous Leunig cartoon, going “Ooooh aaah” at the spectacular sunset straight from the vidsplit.)

Small, tiny, titchy, etc.

Also from VDA comes the news that their Microdolly from Microdolly Hollywood is rolling off the shelves and out the door. Earlier this year it picked up the pick-of-the-show award at NAB ’96 and it’s almost too nifty to call a pipe dolly. In a 10lbs kit (that’s, err umm, 4.5 kilos), you get a T-Bar dolly, 13 feet of track with foam track pads, 1 dozen track shims, 1 rachet tiedown and 1 wheel wrench tool, and it fits in your pocket (if you have a 30-inches long pocket) or a custom-soft case. There’s lots of extras you can get, such as a folding handle to push the dolly and extra track.

Video Department Aust. Tel: 1 800 675 168 freecall.

Film in, Film out, Film in ...

PHILIPS BROADCAST TELEVISION SYSTEMS and Eastman Kodak Company have developed the world’s first real time multi-format, multi-standard film scanner. More than just another telecine, they claim it is the world’s first “Datacine.”

The Philips BTS Spirit Datacine offers the same functions as a traditional telecine, and also provides high-definition television and digital data for external graphics workstations. The Spirit can output to a variety of standard definition (SDTV) and high-definition (HDTV) television formats in real time and with image quality in film resolutions up to 2K (1920 pixels/line). Inside is an advanced CCD film imaging head, designed by Eastman Kodak, and the microprocessor-controlled film transport handles frame rates, at the top resolution, up to 6 fps.

Eastman Kodak will also provide a version of the Spirit Datacine, called the Cineon Thunder telescanner, with an even higher-resolution data output option as part of their integrated Cineon system. Kodak is working with Philips BTS to develop the software to enable the data transfer between this telescanner and an SGI Onyx or Challenge computer. Colour correction will be performed in conventional fashion with a standard colour corrector; then the telescanner will be switched to data transfer mode. The colourist then selects the resolution (SDTV 4:4:4, HRTV 8:8:8, or 2K RGB data) and the software will control the scanning process and data transfer to the computer.

High-definition scanning is part of the high cost of digital post-production and faster systems such as the Spirit and the Thunder will change how we work with film. The telecine session could be one of the most important responsibilities for the cinematographer, defining the image for all the formats, current and future.

Philips BTS contact is Richard Everett (61.2) 9888 0400.
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Quick Hits

DIGGING BACK into the PR releases bin (it's scary but someone has to do it), we found Quinto reporting that there's 28 major U.S. television series and 47 U.S. features currently in production using Lightworks or Heavyworks to cut on. (You knew that Lightworks merged with Tektronix Inc., didn't you?) Quinto also found Quinto reporting that there's 28 calculated to 1.2nS spatial precision picture transform information is calculated to 1.2nS spatial precision.

Dveous "delivers the highest picture quality of any DVE by using 23 x 12 point video filters and four point store output interpolators. All picture transform information is calculated to 1.2ns spatial precision with full 10 bits per pixel resolution." Help! If you don't understand it, I assume you don't need one. I just like the clean effects and nifty drop shadows that they're getting at places like Icon Post in Melbourne and Acne Digital in Sydney.

Contact is Arthur Barnstable at GEC Broadcast Sales on (61.2) 9887 6222. Maybe they explain it better on the Web site at http://www.abekas.com.

Movie Master

WHILE YOU are on the Web, if you're scriptwriting, download the demo version of Movie Master, a script/word processor that's been around a long time and still gets better with each upgrade. They've demos for DOS, Windows 3.1, (soon Windows 95), and Macintosh.

They are complete programmes (with instructions included), except that they do not allow saving, exporting or printing of files. It's enough to give you a taste and to compare with your Word macros. If you are digitally challenged, they'll send you a demo disk. Just fax to (201) 231 8050, or include your address and telephone number and what operating system you use. DOS? I remember DOS.

O.K., A FINAL MOMENT of new product whimsy to send you off to your shoot. If you peddle your Web browser over to Mark Forman's Web pages, you'll be able to experience the multimedia pleasures of The Forman Camera Bicycle. Developed by Mark (who is a proud Member of The Society of Operating Cameramen), whose credits include those as producer and director of Bicycles on Snow, the story of Alaska's Iditatbike race was shown on the Discovery Channel and was winner of Best Film at the 1994 Interbike Film Festival (one of my favourites after Telluride). He was "director of bicycle photography" for the interactive feature film Ride for Your Life, for Sony-Interfilm, released in May 1995. Mark also consulted for and photographed an MTV spot for Ray-Ban Sunglasses and has developed and built other special camera mounts.

But his pièce de (wind) resistance is the Forman Camera Bicycle (patent pending). Built to enable unique tracking shots at speed. "This patented device", he says, "was especially developed to shoot actors, athletes and vehicles at speeds up to thirty miles per hour in situations where motorized vehicles cannot be used because of safety or space limitations."

There's a small Quicktime movie you can download on the site showing Mark using a boom on the rig, and he lists the various camera positions the rig is capable of including, a front camera mount facing rearward toward the actor's face as he rides the bike in traffic. A centre top mount uses a normal 100mm fluid head to follow riders between cars, and the camera mounted on the rear looking backward toward other riders at speed. The rig can also be used safely in a low front mount looking forward, rearward or sideways using a full-sized film or video camera only a few inches from the pavement.

The Forman Camera Bicycle is available for rent but sadly only in the U.S. It comes with remote viewing system and operator on a daily basis. Get on your (patent pending) bike now and peddle your browser to http://www.seanet.com/Users/tinyle/film/forman.html.

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All the Fun of the Fair

Dominic Case delights in the International Broadcasting Convention in Amsterdam

trade exhibitions are getting bigger and bigger, and more and more frequent. This seems to be particularly true in the film industry, where, traditionally, equipment has been fairly stable and long-lasting, and technological development has been at a calm and steady pace. In Western Europe, for example, the main show always used to be Photokina, staged every two years in Cologne, where professional motion picture equipment occupied one of twelve or thirteen halls, alongside every aspect of still photography from Pentax cameras to wedding albums. Now, much of what filmmakers have come to use is to be found at IBC (the International Broadcasting Convention), which is an annual show — this year occupying eight halls, each the size of last year’s SMPTE show in Sydney — held in Amsterdam. It’s one of three shows in Europe in the same month (Photokina’s still on). IBC exhibitors show microwave transmitters, cable connectors, and video routing switches, but also telecines and film scanners, non-linear editors, camera lenses, lights, film cleaners, digital effects software and sound effects libraries.

As more and more systems are computer- and software-driven, they become more and more flexible, and attempt a wider and wider range of functions: every editing system is also an effects compositor and a titling system; every stand shows images on monitors, and demonstrators with microphones and mice. And so it is quite difficult, in a fairly-rapid stride around the halls of IBC, to distinguish exactly what a lot of the toys on show are really for.

By the same token, it becomes increasingly difficult, in a short space of time, to assess how well a given system does its job. An experienced sound mixer may, in a prolonged session at one stand, pick up on the strengths and weaknesses of a particular desk, and its suitability for a particular application. But not many others would. Few people in production or post-production have more than a passing acquaintance with what goes on in areas other than their own speciality. How many readers, for example, could identify the exact function of an Evertz film footage encoder fitted on a telecine and compare it with the Aaton CINEMA PAPERS • DECEMBER 1996 • SPAA SUPPLEMENT 29

technicalities

presentation?...
exported in Avid format as well as a range of EDL styles – but sadly not in the industry standard FLEx format at this stage. As well, there are powerful searching and sorting functions: to mark all the C/U shots, all those with a named character mentioned, all those shorter than a certain duration and so on. The database can be edited with many word processing functions: spell checking, search and replace, for example.

Instead of running a VTR, cinecode can be captured from a timecode generator on the set for location logging, or can be typed in manually. The easy and adaptable style of data entry alone would set this system high amongst its competitors. But three extra features are real crackers, and make TEP a real winner.

One: when the PC is fitted with a video board, thumbnail size frames (160 pixels wide) can be captured, one for each logged scene. These images are included in reports in a range of styles. Illustrated post-production scripts, editing notes, storyboard reports, or library management documents are just some of the possibilities that this feature presents.

The second feature? By this time I was impressed. I had spent a long time at IBC looking at this product, trying to think of something it couldn’t do. It soon turned out that there was another feature I hadn’t even dared to consider: scene change recognition, or auto marking. While you leave the videotape playing and have a cup of coffee, the system recognizes any sudden changes in scene content and marks a scene change, grabbing a thumbnail frame for reference. This feature can be trimmed to ignore flashes of lightning or other aberrations, by waiting for a consistent change over a set number of frames before confirming the scene change.

This column doesn’t normally offer free sales pitches. But the third feature of The Executive Producer that took my breath away was the price. The entire software system can be yours for under $1,000. Add about the same again for a video capture card, and RS422 interface.

For the cost of a local phone call, you can get a demonstration version (fully-functioning for up to ten scenes only) from the Internet, at www.imagine-products.com, or from Sydney-based agents Adimex on (02) 9332 4444.

1 In Australia, Techtel have supplied the first Elcosyncrism studio to Channel 7 Sydney.
2 Inquiries to ASC on (02) 9901 4455.
3 Available from Lemac (03) 9427 9344.

A Grain of Truth

A magazine in a waiting-room was full of superbly-detailed photographs of society weddings and fashion parades: in a full-length portrait of Ivanka Trump (the daughter), you could count every diamond. (Okay, they weren’t small.) But on the next page appeared some faint, blurry, immensely grainy photos of two other famous women: one cowbell-clad on a distant beach, the other, headscarfed, getting out of a car across a city square. Why was the technical quality so poor, and yet acceptable? Perhaps the captions explain it: Demi Moore – pregnant again? and Princess Caroline – has she lost her hair?

In McLuhan’s terms, the medium is the message. Here, we are being told, these women have something to hide, but our photographer has caught them out! The long lens, the fast film and the extreme enlargement all emphasize the texture of the photograph itself. The camera does not lie: it captures documentary evidence of the unannounced pregnancy, of the hidden alopecia.

Grain is the essence of the photographic image: like pixels on the computer screen, each grain is the smallest, indivisible part of a picture – but unlike pixels, the size and arrangement of grains is quite random. In conventional black-and-white film stocks, each grain is a separate granule of metallic silver, corresponding to one crystal of silver bromide in the unexposed emulsion. These crystals are sensitive to light: once half-a-dozen photons (wave-like particles of light) have landed on one crystal, it becomes capable of being developed to silver. Larger crystals have more chance of collecting photons, but still only need the same half-dozen. In a nutshell, this explains the connection between grainy films and sensitivity: fast films, in order to work in lower light levels, have larger grains, collecting scarce photons over a larger surface area. Actually, most film emulsions have a range of grain sizes. The larger ones are exposed in shadow areas: in brighter areas of the image, there is more light to expose the smaller grains, filling in the gaps and making a denser, but more detailed, negative image.

Colour film still works with silver bromide, and the exposed crystals are still developed to silver grains, but the more complex processing also produces clouds of coloured dye around each silver grain. When the silver image is bleached away, the dye clouds remain as the same grainy structure. Like silver grains, the individual dye clouds are too small to be visible even in a projected image, but they tend to clump together in a random arrangement, and it is this random, clumpy arrangement that appears “grainy”.

In the past few years, the film manufacturers have learnt how to make silver bromide crystals flat, rather than chunky and solid, and also how to arrange all the crystals to lie flat in each emulsion layer. As a result, the crystals present their best face to the light, and capture photons far more efficiently. The thin, flat crystals then generate much smaller dye clouds, leading to finer grain for faster film than was possible before.

Granularity is the objective measure of grain: taking a microscopic view of a developed emulsion, the variation of density between clumps of dye and the same grainy structure. Like silver grains, the individual dye clouds are too small to be visible even in a projected image, but they tend to clump together in a random arrangement, and it is this random, clumpy arrangement that appears “grainy”.

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Difference is an electronic system of increasing the apparent sharpness of a scanned image by boosting the high-frequency variations in the image signal. The technique adds a sharper edge to image details, but also outlines every element of grain in the same way. The grain can be suppressed by reducing aperture correction, but inevitably at the expense of image sharpness. Similarly, digital filters can reduce the effect of pixel-by-pixel variations in the image, but grain structure and fine image detail are affected alike. As we have seen though, grain is most objectionable where it is the sharpest element of the image: in these circumstances, grain suppression does little harm to the image itself.

Except where the grain is the real story. Often cinematographers choose a grainier stock for its “gritty reality” look, rather than for its speed. Is Art imitating Life, or are the paparazzi the trendsetters for a creative look? Perhaps not, after all.
Most of the best of what you see on television, in cinemas or even on the web, in games and interactives has been created with the seriously hot combo of Discreet Logic software with Silicon Graphics hardware.

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[COOL THINGS. VERY COOL THINGS.]
Brealey decided to follow the same approach. His approach was based on clear dramatic principles: audiences will forgive you if you leap sequences, if in fact there is not necessarily an absolute linear structure, but they will not forgive you if you bore them or if you destroy the illusion of the film that you are creating.

Working with Rod Adamson, Brealey assembled a spare and economical version of the film. This meant throwing out many scenes which had required considerable work and were treasured by the director and other crew members.

David Stratton’s account of the production referred to the loss of the love affair between the girl and the rouseabout as one of the major narrative losses. The “entire subplot” was the relationship between Sheila and Michael, which was removed because of poor performances, according to Matt Carroll: “The girl who played Sheila wasn’t a very good actress, and the whole thing didn’t work, so basically that subplot came out. That was basically what was done.” Brealey also made the significant decision to have the shortened version of Sunday musically scored, which implies that the editing process had been “locked off.”

Hannam learned that the film had been recut and returned to South Australia to view the completed version. Arguments ensued between Hannam and Carroll, and Brealey finally agreed to insert some shots the director wanted, but rejected others on technical grounds. One such scene included a faulty camera shot. A shot of the strikers at the station with the rouseabout was dropped without my permission. The scene could not be cut for emphasis and was not included.

Because this relationship was not developed. Other scenes, such as when Foley sees the rouseabout Michael Simpson (Gregory Apps) in bed with Sheila at the end of the film, were also cut. Brealey feels the major reason for the rouseabout was the unsatisfactory casting of the character who played the rouseabout. Hannam cast an actor for the role who was not only taller than Jack Thompson, but who was too old to portray the callow lad required in the script. Brealey feels this casting decision destroyed the dynamics of the subplot:

The fact that he was a 15-year-old runt was vital to the screenplay, and I think Ken did a major piece of damage to the film, which went on to be one of the reasons why we had to do such a major cut in the film. That character just didn’t work, and as much of it was with the girl. This was one of our biggest problems when we came to look at the film.

Brealey, by this stage, was becoming more and more anxious about how best to complete the film, and showed it to others in the business, including the SAFC’s John Morris and an unnamed distributor: I got it down a bit further and then I had a screening for John Morris, and a couple of the other members of staff that had come over. Their response was that it was unwatchable. We had some advice from a distributor who came across to have a look at it. He didn’t want to know about it. What was wrong with it? Too many diverse sub-plots that weren’t resolved, a romantic relationship that wasn’t established—all the obvious things that I had thought was wrong with it.

Brealey was forced to consider radical action to save the film, and save the SAFC. Obviously, Sunday in its longer form did not appeal to distribution interests, Hannam seemed to have lost interest in the final outcome, and only Brealey and the editor, the patient and conscientious Rod Adamson, were left working on the film. Brealey came to a difficult and ultimately unpopular decision that was to have a devastating effect on his career and his attitude to filmmaking. He was angry with Hannam’s lack of interest in the post-production stages and decided to exercise his own force majeure: “I had to decide that I was not going to let Ken get away with it and that I was going to take responsibility for it.”

Brealey had considerable experience at Film Australia in restructuring dramatic films, when a final decision could not be made as to final content or narrative form. He had reworked Peter Weir’s segment “Michael” in the portmanteau film Three to Go (Peter Weir, Brian Hannant, Oliver Howes, 1970).

To arrive at a releaseable version of Sunday, Matt Carroll refers to the loss of the love affair between the girl and the rouseabout. Hannam’s reaction to this decision was given by David Stratton in The Last New Wave: “I can’t get over the fact that the editor didn’t use that shot [...] it simply should have been used.”

The release version of Sunday was the producer’s cut of a much more complex narrative, and the producer was the individual who shouldered the ultimate responsibility for the film’s apparent failure to realize its potential. Brealey became the target for many attacks from within the industry, as summarized by David Stratton in 1980: “Jack Thompson [...] feels that in its longer version Sunday Too Far Away was one of the finest achievements of the Australian cinema, if not the finest.”

Sunday ends with a curiously enigmatic freeze frame, which became almost a hallmark of Australian films of the time, followed by a montage of the empty shearing shed. McFarlane and Mayer comment on the prevalence of “lowkey endings, often involving a closing caption [...] all ending on a deliberately muted, expository note.” In the case of Sunday, the caption read: “But it wasn’t so much the money, it was the bloody insult.” Matt Carroll believes that the script was shot as planned and the ending was as originally intended: “That was always Ken’s ending. That was where it all ended in the script and that was how Ken shot it.”

Sunday Too Far Away premiered at the Quinzaine des Réalisateurs (Directors’ Fortnight) at Cannes in May 1975, the first Australian film to be selected for this event. It was a major critical success.

In June, it opened the Sydney Film Festival to an invited and predominantly industry-based audience, which responded to the film’s energy and overwhelming visual authenticity. Rumours had already been spreading in the local industry about the troubled post-production phase. Many wondered what had been cut and what the film would have been like if Dingwall’s script had been filmed in its entirety. The legend, as reported by David Stratton, is that both Dingwall’s script and Ken Hannam’s realization of it
Thelma Schoonmaker interviewed by James Sherlock

Why Thelma Loves Marty...

In between editing the films of Martin Scorsese, Thelma Schoonmaker promotes the work of her late husband, Michael Powell.

From an early age, were you influenced by films to go into editing? There was this amazing television programme called Million Dollar Movie, which would take a classic film and run it nine times in one week. Martin Scorsese was able to use that programme as a way to obsessively study films that were intriguing to him as a child and young man. Some of the ones that were the most interesting to him were the films of Powell and Pressburger, the films of Visconti and Fellini, things like that.

I didn’t know Marty then, but I also was watching Million Dollar Movie. This is why my late husband, Michael Powell, called his second volume of autobiography Million Dollar Movie. He felt he was rescued from oblivion by Marty, who then came to England to find him and resurrect the whole canon of Powell and Pressburger films. I remember being particularly affected by seeing my future husband’s film, The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp [1943], on Million Dollar Movie when I was about sixteen.

I also remember being deeply moved by The Red Shoes [1948] in a movie theatre when I was about twelve. That film meant a great deal to me, but I had no idea how to get into the film business, or how films were made, anything like that. I thought I was going to become a diplomat.

I was brought up outside the United States because my father wanted to run an oil company. I was born in Algeria and grew up in the West Indies and came to the States when I was 15. I went to college and studied political science and the Russian language, but was told by the State Department that I was too idealistic. I did some graduate work in New York city and saw an ad in The New York Times saying someone was willing to train an assistant film editor. It was just a stroke of luck, because nobody advertises those jobs in the film business. You get jobs purely by word-of-mouth recommendations from editor to editor.

My new boss turned out to be a terrible old hack who was butchering the films of Visconti, Fellini, Antonioni and Truffaut for late-night television slots. My job was to help him subtitle things like Shoot the Piano Player and Il Grido. Because of that, I was able to study these films back and forth on the Moviola as I measured them for subtitles. The editor also taught me a little bit about negative cutting.

After about six months, however, I couldn’t stomach what he was doing to these great films anymore. But I did learn that I wanted to do something more in film.

I then saw that there was a summer course in film production at New York University, a six-week course where they put small groups of people together to make a short film. That is where I met Marty, who was attending the University, majoring in film. I wasn’t working on his film, but the person who had cut the negative ruined it and he needed someone who knew a little bit about negative cutting. Because I’d learned a little bit from this butcher, I went over and helped Marty recut his negative. That is how we met! [Laughs.]

Was that Who’s that Knocking at My Door [1968]?

No, it was a little student film called What is a Nice Girl like You Doing in a Place like This? [1963]. There was a particularly good group of students there that year: Michael Wadleigh, with whom we later made Woodstock [1970], and Jim McBride, for example. It was a fantastic time at the film school. Some of us got together and started making documentaries in the streets of New York and small films for television — and out of that came Woodstock.
You were assistant director on Woodstock. Have you ever had a desire to pursue that career?

No, I never have. Maybe if I weren’t working for such a brilliant director, I would. But Scorsese sets himself a challenge with each film he makes – something that he wants to try, or learn to do, to experiment with – and therefore I’m learning in every film with him. It is just the best job in the world as far as I’m concerned.

Back in the days of NYU, did you realize that there was something happening, that he was …?

Oh, yes. Scorsese’s first student film, It’s Not Just You Murray, which won the National Student Film Award, had early strokes of genius in it. It was quite clear to us that he was special.

We all helped him finish his first feature, Who’s that Knocking at My Door?, and he asked me to help him edit it. He already had such strong, brilliant ideas about camera movement, and particularly editing, and a great gift for getting the best out of actors, even though he had never been taught about acting. He portrayed the neighbourhood where he grew up with fascinating reality.

There is a ten-year gap between Street Scenes (1970) and Raging Bull (1980). Were you still associated with Scorsese?

I would include Woodstock in that period, because Marty did work on it for a while.

Once Marty went to Hollywood, I couldn’t work for him because I wasn’t in the union. As young filmmakers protesting against the Vietnam War and supporting the civil rights movement, we never had to be in the union. We all loaded film magazines, drove the cars, tied into electrical sources, ran sound, pushed the wheelchair we used as a dolly – we did everything but the camerawork, which was done by Wadleigh. The union was very restrictive in Los Angeles in those days, and, when Marty asked me to come out there and work with him, it turned out I couldn’t because I wasn’t in the union. It wasn’t until Raging Bull that the producer, Irwin Winkler, got me into the union and, from that point on, I’ve been lucky enough to edit all of Marty’s movies.

In 1980, you went on to win the Academy Award with Raging Bull. How did you feel to win the Oscar and to eventually find out it was voted the best American film of the ‘80s?

Oh, we were very proud of that. My feelings on Oscar night were very conflicted, though, because I was so devastated that Marty didn’t win. How they could have turned him down just seemed impossible to me. De Niro also won an Oscar that night, which was wonderful.

I was backstage being interviewed when I found out Marty had lost and it took a great deal of the pleasure out of the evening for me, because it was such an injustice. I could not believe that remarkable film had not been voted Best Film, or that Marty would not have been voted Best Director.

The reason we won Editing was because of the fight sequences, and they were so beautifully thought out by Marty. He had a different conception for each fight, and there were eight in the movie – different size of ring, a different attitude for each fighter, and there were eight in the movie – different size of ring, a different attitude for each one, incredible camera moves, and a very sharp editing conception. That is what made them so brilliant and that is why I won the award. So, I’ve always said that in a way it is Marty’s Oscar.

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One of Powell’s work tied up in copyright problems or litigation?

I understand from Michael Powell’s son, Kevin Powell, who lives in Canberra, that there is an attempt to get Weird Mob re-released in Australia this year. I hope they can get both Weird Mob and Age of Consent restored.

Age of Consent had a very nice score by Peter Sculthorpe that was removed by Columbia Pictures when they got the film. Michael was very upset about the music Columbia put in the film and told me he wanted to get the original score back in. We are working on that.

I believe you are also working in conjunction with the British Film Institute in preserving his work.

“Marty and I have worked so long together that we are almost like one mind [laughs]. We play at fighting, sometimes, just to release tension. We have fun arguments, but we always work it out.”

How soon do you become involved in a project?

I start on the first day of shooting. Marty usually gives me the script a little bit before that. He doesn’t like to cloud my mind with all of his problems during the scriptwriting. My job is to look at the daily dailies on the screen and tell him if anything isn’t working. I read the script once, then try to put it aside and not to look at it again unless I absolutely have to. I just like the film to evolve on the screen.

How long did it take to cut Raging Bull?

It took a long time because we were waiting for De Niro to go through various weight changes. Marty would stop shooting and we would edit until De Niro had gotten to his first weight gain. We shot on both coasts, so there was a good deal of moving involved. It took a lot longer than an ordinary film because of that. We shut down twice while De Niro ate his way through France or Italy – I’m not sure which.

Your late husband Michael Powell was an absolutely brilliant filmmaker, a remarkable man and, of course, a major force in establishing the British film industry. You’ve already mentioned that he was a major influence on Scorsese, as we said before, with The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp. What of the highly controversial but inspirational Peeping Tom (1960), which is extremely popular with film schools in Australia.

Marty was incredibly influenced by Peeping Tom. He felt so strongly about it that, when he discovered that Michael Powell was still alive, he arranged to have the film entered in the New York Film Festival, even though it had been made years before. It was eligible because it had never been given a proper distribution in this country. It was a huge success at the Festival and the rebirth of the Powell-Pressburger films was off and running. Marty also put up some of his own money to get the film distributed here in the U.S.

Michael Powell actually came to Australia and did They’re a Weird Mob (1966) and Age of Consent.
Yes, they have done a wonderful job of restoring many of the Powell-Pressburger films. They have gotten grants from people like Sainsbury's to pay for the restorations, which are very expensive. Michael was lucky that so many of his early films were in colour, which may have contributed to them being restored early. He made some of the first Technicolor films in England. Rank Films also took pretty good care of the negatives, which was most important.

The staff of the British Film Institute have been incredibly devoted to the work of Powell and Pressburger, for which I am very grateful.

What has been your most difficult job as an editor? Have you and Scorsese ever come to loggerheads?

We've only disagreed a couple of times on key things. De Niro and I at one point wondered whether the last speech in Raging Bull, where Jake La Motta is looking at himself in the mirror and rehearsing the “I could have been a champ” speech from On the Waterfront, should have been a warmer performance. Marty had shot De Niro doing the speech in varying degrees of emotion. He felt strongly that Bob should be stripped of emotion when he confronts himself in the mirror. De Niro and I wondered whether a warmer take was better. So, we screened it once with one take and then once with the other. And Bob and I saw that Marty was absolutely right.

Marty and I have worked so long together that we are almost like one mind [laughs]. We play at fighting, sometimes, just to release tension. We have fun arguments, but we always work it out.

The hardest thing I've ever had to do on one of Marty's films is get brilliant improvisation to cut together, particularly between De Niro and Pesci. They spark each other off so wonderfully. On some of the scenes in Raging Bull, Marty couldn't get two cameras in the room, which made it very difficult to cut the footage, because I would get a very funny line from Pesci and not have De Niro's response on camera. But, with much time and effort, it finally came together in a way that preserved all the best moments.

I love cutting this kind of improvisation because it calls on some of the things I learned as a documentary filmmaker. You are given a whole bunch of footage and you have to find a shape for it. But it can sometimes be quite back-breaking work. You just think, "I'll never get this to work", and then you have to go home and come back the next morning and dread turning on the machine, because you don't think you can find a solution. But gradually you find a way.

Are you still in that situation now? Are your eyes still opening to other filmmakers and the vast techniques?

You never stop learning. Before we did Casino, I worked for a year on Marty's documentary for the BFI and Channel 4 called A Personal Journey with Martin Scorsese through American Movies. I got to spend a great deal of time digesting the work of filmmakers that Marty had admired over the years, and I just loved it. You can learn so much from the films made before you. It can be quite humbling, but so exciting and inspiring. You feel restored sometimes when discovering a great film you never knew about.

For Marty, it is equivalent to the way painters go to museums and study the work of painters who came before them. He studies older films because it refuels him. It gives him a lift. It gives him the inspiration to go on. He never copies those older films, though. Whatever inspiration they give him he digests and it comes out as something his own. It is the spark, the spark that something like The Red Shoes gave him: the emotion, the power, the guts, the brilliant camera work, the editing, the colour, the use of music — all of it deeply influences him.

Is there any other director you have ever had a desire to work with?

I would like to have worked with my husband, but that wasn't possible. Marty is the best director in the world as far as I'm concerned, and I look forward to each film with great excitement. And because he is such a good teacher, I get to share his love of film history. It is like going to the best film school in the world, and having the best job in the world. Now what more could you ask for? He also introduced me to my husband, so I've had all the luck anyone could ever ask for in life.

How long did it take to edit Casino?

It took us almost a year because it was so big. It was really like editing two films.

Do you have a personal favourite from his overall body of work, which differs so much?

No, I love them all for different reasons. The Last Temptation of Christ (1988) was a deeply spiritual experience for all of us, and we are looking forward to the Dalai Lama film for that reason. Marty is not a devotee of the Dalai Lama, but the subject matter is one close to his heart: the collision of the spiritual and the physical — the clash of a holy man like the Dalai Lama and a political being like Mao Zedong.

Scorsese's mother plays an important part in Casino, a scene-stealing sequence. What is she like?

She has a wonderful sense of humour, slightly surreal, which has influenced Marty a lot. She has
a great love of music, which has also made its mark on him. He puts her in his films because she just responds very naturally to whatever situation he creates. She enters into it completely as if it is real.

In the scene in Casino, he had to keep saying to her, “Now just do that again. Tell him not to use swear words”, and she would answer, “I am trying to do that, but he won’t listen!” She makes every take very fresh.

Marty never prepared her for the scene in Goodfellas where she feeds Joe Pesci and De Niro and Ray Liotta in the middle of the night, while they are buried. He just told her to react to whatever the conversation was. She has known Joe and Bob for so long that it was very easy for her to just do that. She is great.

Scorsese very rarely shoots in Cinemascope. Is that for reasons of video and television?

Marty shoots in Super 35, a kind of an artificial Cinemascope so that he doesn’t have to pan and scan for television. He shoots a flat image in the camera — shooting into the area of the frame usually reserved for the track — thereby getting a wider image. He frames up in the frame, so that he can use the bottom part of the frame for television. When we are ready to finish the film, we make a flat interpositive and then blow-up and squeeze the image to a dupe negative, thereby allowing us to get a track onto the film.

When it comes to putting the film on video, we use the flat interpositive and use the bottom part to avoid panning and scanning. Marty detests panning and scanning. He feels it is a real violation of the director’s composition.

I believe Casino was edited on digital computer. Yes, it was.

How did that compare to the old faithful system?

Well, I resisted it very much (laughs). It was bad. I didn’t want to do it, but I had a wonderful, patient trainer. After about two weeks, I was off and running and stopped complaining, because it is very, very fast. The wonderful thing is that you can save your cut and then just take a copy of it, which takes about a second, and then rip into it with some revolutionary ideas and not worry if it doesn’t work because you’ve still got your old cut there as well. It makes experimentation easier.

The only down factor is the image is pretty bad, but they are going to improve that year by year, and it is, very, very fast — very expensive, but very fast.

Between projects, what do you do? I get the impression there is a lot of documentary work going on.

Yes, there are the documentaries Marty is making about the history of the movies. He is just starting one on the history of Italian cinema.

I like to go back to my husband’s cottage in England whenever I can. But I’m getting less and less time to do that these days. My stepson, Colomba, lives there when I am not there. I love being back there surrounded by Michael’s books and his paintings, and the house he lived in for 20 years. We were married in the little church in the village and he is buried there, only a short distance from the cottage.

A final question: Have “film restoration” and “preservation” always been ‘dirty’ words?

Marty got involved in trying to do something about the fading of old films during the making of Raging Bull. He had been complaining bitterly of the quality of the prints he was seeing in retrospectives in LA and New York. One day he just got furious about it and decided to call up Eastman Kodak and say, “What the hell is going on there. Why is this film fading?” He decided to use the publicity tour for Raging Bull as a way to go around the world and try to teach people about the need for preservation.

He asked me to come along to explain some of the technical information. We did lectures in Los Angeles, Tokyo, London and Venice. Out of that grew the movement that is now making a difference. Archivists at museums had been trying to do this for years, but now filmmakers themselves became involved and began to badger the studios to start looking after the great treasures in their vaults.

Robert Harris is a major influence in film restoration.

Oh yes, huge.

Film Care, the company that I’ve just started, wouldn’t be forming as rapidly if it wasn’t for his involvement.

Now they are raising money for film preservation on AMC, a cable channel here in the U.S. People have sent in large amounts of money because of the little blurbs that are run on the channel several times a year, which alert them to the crises of fading films.

Do you do any restoration work there?

No, the restoration work is done at museums or archives like UCLA. Marty’s Film Foundation is dedicated to trying to get the studios to reserve their own vaults. Some of them are doing a better job than others. Paramount has a beautiful temperature- and humidity-controlled vault. Marty is constantly attending functions to raise people’s awareness about the need for film preservation and also for artists’ rights — everything from cropping of films on television to colourization. He is a real champion of these causes.

1 Tirez au pianiste (François Truffaut, 1960), Il Grido (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1957).
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Marg O'Shea examines Kathryn Millard’s multi-hued Parklands

**Parklands** is a 50-minute film set in Adelaide, spanning the week after the death of Cliff (Tony Martin), a former policeman. His daughter, Rosie (Cate Blanchett), believes she has reason to investigate the last years of his life.

**Parklands** uses archival footage of Adelaide, mainly from the ‘50s and ‘60s, to create a collective image bank. In addition, it recreates scenes from that period.

In writing about **Parklands**, it seems important to convey the sense of ambiguity with which writer-director Kathryn Millard has imbued her film. She insists on the ambiguities of lived experience, her dissatisfactions with neat endings, and her exploration of a cinematic form, rich like life.

The parklands of Adelaide were described in the instructions to Adelaide’s surveyor, Colonel William Light, as the buffer zone between work and home. If I could, I’d use the metaphor of flowers to talk about the film: the beautiful allure of the film’s beginning buds; textures in their heads, stems and petals; and colour gradations too beautiful for a plan, too precious to fade. But Millard refines this dewy view:

The parkland is a metaphor. All that flower imagery that goes through the film – I have deeply ambivalent feelings about that. I’m extremely attracted to the nostalgia around that kind of imagery as well as seeing it as representing a kind of order that may be very containing. Some botanic and municipal gardens are extraordinarily ordered. Everything is in its right place.

They’re beautiful but they have a feeling of being rigid. **Parklands** thrives on the thrill of exploration. In a loose narrative of investigation and mystery, Rosie returns to Adelaide to attend the wake of her father. Millard: I think those times when somebody dies are times when the past can overwhelm the present. Rosie is overwhelmed by conflicting impressions and memories. It does seem that there are many unresolved issues in the relationship with her father, also a sense of fear associated with the police force, a sense of her events, archival footage both revealed and prompted technical responses from the collaborative creative team behind **Parklands**.

Millard noted a prominence of the colour red in her archival research: This is partly because of the reversal film stock used. That became an idea for the [scenes of] childhood memories, and the idea that you remember the past through the photographic technologies of particular periods. Millard also cites cross-cultural commentators who confirm children’s preference for red and yellow. And she confirms that this is her personal recollection of early childhood. So it is no surprise that key objects are red in the recollections of Rosie’s early Adelaide years: red shoes, red chairs, a red balloon. “The past wasn’t all black and white, you know”, Millard quips.

**I think different themes demand different kinds of storytelling.**

Light Years, Millard’s previous film about black-and-white photographer Olive Cotton, was born of her strong interest, albeit with no formal education, in the visual arts. I became very aware of my own sense of colour through this process of making a documentary about a photographer whose vision of the world was in black and white.

At script stage, the various strands of **Parklands** each took on a colour. Millard doesn’t subscribe to a strict colour-coding system like, say, the system French composer Olivier Messiaen was reputed to have used. But emerald green, for instance, follows particular characters and the use of red has been earlier described.

This red was also a result of the way the scenes were shot, by director of photography Mandy Walker. Millard.

Cliff (Tony Martin), Young Rosie (Corinne Ammerman) and Young Andrew (Stefan Sapio). Kathryn Millard’s **Parklands**.

What Mandy and I both liked about this process was that the results were never totally reliable. I have this notion of unstable colour and colouring the past.

And you know the way in which memories shift and fade? That’s something I’m keen to embrace. Maybe it hints at something about the unreliability of memory - not in a negative way.

In the same way, idealized, archived Adelaide shows houses Duluxed fresh, in matte and gloss everlasting. The home’s interiors, from the women to the walls, are stained and shone to catch the eye. But on hot nights the kids of **Parklands** watch television out in the yard in the palpable warmth of their parents’ porch love.

It’s one of the “bits that don’t fit in to the idealized world offered in the images of the ‘60s”.

The backdrop of the film’s...
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The most fantastic thing about this film is the motion-control photography, real-time characters on a time-lapse background in the most spectacular landscape locations. Epsilon’s drama is the story of time and planet Earth.

A woman from planet Epsilon drops unexpectedly onto planet Earth. She meets a man, a surveyor, camping alone in the Australian desert. She demands to know where she is, and, when she finds out she is on Earth, she rages against the Earth. The man must help her leave, she says. She shows him the people scurrying around like insect life, as though there was no time left. She notes that more she slows things down, the faster things go. She likens a human being to a frog placed in cold water and slowly heated until it dies. Human beings don’t want to stop, to look at what’s happening around them, the devastation, the pollution and that soon the Earth and humans will die.

The irrationality of human’s refusal to heed the obvious infuriates her; she must teach the Earth man the lesson of environmental truth. They fight, they hurt, they fall in love as, of course, they must. She embodies the intellect, he is unable to think of his body. Their desire to be together effects a reconfiguring of time, and, for planet Earth, a hero.

The reference to Huxley’s Brave New World in the film’s title has to be an ironic one. In Huxley’s tale, Epsilons are the people of the lowest caste in a mass-production society where babies are decanted from bottles and exposure to certain chemicals and conditionings predetermines caste. Epsilons are starved of oxygen in order to keep them below par and suited to the lowest levels of work. Like humans in Epsilon, they “breathe the foul air.”

Also in Brave New World, all the castes — Alphas, Betas through Epsilons — are conditioned to class-consciousness and emotional regulation through sleep teaching — whispers from under the pillow.
The Pillow Book


P
ter Greenaway’s new film of an audacious and multilayered work in which the spell of the Orient is insistently and vividly. Greenaway returns to The Pillow Book of the Minor Counsellor (Shonagon) of the tenth century in Japan. In order to fashion an intricate but stylistic meditation on the nature of the image and the text, and on the functions of writing, inscribing and sigiling. In the context, the film raises very important and topical issues with regard to notions of authorship and myth, creativity and forms of life in literature, film and culture. It also raises important points about the connections between popular cultural forms, such as the personal diary, pillow book and calligraphy on the one hand, and those high cultural forms in literature and the visual arts which Greenaway’s previous films have explored in such visually memorable terms — for example, his cinematic appropriations of The Tempest and Dante’s Divine Comedy, as well as the masterpieces of Rembrandt, Huis, Delacroix and so on. Greenaway’s cinema is largely a chronicle of illusion, invocation and inscriptions, parody and collective appropriation.

The Pillow Book is a key example of a particular kind of writing in Japanese literature. First of all, every writer in this case is a woman who belonged to the upper classes and who looked down on the so-called vulgarity of the commoners. Secondly, it has been suggested that she was persuaded or required to marry an official. This is a book that belongs in a line of verticallar literature which was inscribed — though not exclusively — by women’s hands. Thirdly, as a consequence, such a book offers crucial glimpses into the world of a woman who worked in the court and whose writing betrayed many contemporary norms, habits, conventions and values. It offers glimpses into the tenth century world with its restrictions of social hierarchies, intelligence, values, but also its skill, elegance and charm. The Pillow Book is a collection of observations, musings, sages and exterior views, and it was kept by the pillow just up to the water could capture fugitive thoughts in prose. It is a collection of less, and less writing. Presumably, it is aspects such as these that fascinate Greenaway. Moreover, The Pillow Book is notable for its confused and loose structure. There seems to be no linking logic or plotline in the collection — no doubt this is something that attracts Greenaway also, especially since it offers radical possibilities when applied to the language of cinema.

And what one gets is a radical film. Ostensibly, the film deals with a young Japanese woman, Nagiko (which, crucially, may have been the name of the woman who composed The Pillow Book, who was brought up by a father who insisted on a ritualized existence. She hears passages from The Pillow Book read out and decides to have one of her own. In it, she will write her accounts of her own. Her marriage is arranged when she is six years of age. Not surprisingly, she finds the marriage unsatisfactory at a number and the present. In this sense, the modernism that the film examines turns out to be an unfinished and perhaps an inexhaustible fabric which is concealed and fomented upon, but nonetheless there is the tenth century, which arc from the medieval to the modern world. But there is more to this. Nagiko’s father represented a particular nation. We’re finding that we’re reinventing certain aspects of cinema, but we’re also finding that we’re doing things that have clearly never been done before. There are times when there’s a new cinema language at work. For me, Epsilon is an epic two-hand, both intimate yet expansive, dealing with the most personal love and the most public (the earth). If the experience of vonnegut is half as powerful as the experience of vonnegut in fiction, we will have succeeded.

The film is a murmur of voices on a canvas to rival Koyaanisqatsi (Godfrey Reggio, 1983) and, like Bad Boy Bubby, is trenchant in pulse and message. It’s a film to see and hear more than to talk about. And then become proactive about the environment. — Dena Gleeson

For me, this diminished the sense of possibility, the magic of the film unfolding as a chamber piece. Now does the film’s journey in the recollected present in the time, and the spiritual notion of Jungian individuation is given over to the more traditionally political notion of the gifted leader (a man, of course). But I’m more than probably being picky. De Heer shot the film across a twelve-month period with a core block of ten people, including the two actions, Ully Veer (She) and Syd Boshane (Him), who both give wonderful performances. Epsilon is de Heer’s second collaboration with Italian producer Domenico Procacci, the first was Bad Boy Bubby. Says de Heer on Digital Arta. Once you learn the basics of motion control, the limitations are only those imposed by your imagination.


JUDE

Director: Michael Winterbottom

Modern Does is too softly green and cozy for director Michael Winterbottom's purposes, so for the second time he has taken to the harsher north of England. His first feature, the rigorous, bizarre road movie, Butterfly Kiss (1995), followed its pinched-faced protagonist through the bleak landscapes of northern motorways and roadhouses. In filming Thomas Hardy's austere masterpiece, Jude the Obscure, Winterbottom evokes late 19th-century 'Wessex' by a skilful manipulation of harsher settings in, for example, Yorkshire and in rain-soaked Edinburgh, which stands in for the story's Christminster/Oxford.

Winterbottom has not, that is, succumbed to a temptation to make a heritage movie from a book whose arguable hero is again and again bruised by the social and moral conventions of late-Victorian England. On the evidence of the genuinely alarming Butterfly Kiss, one would not have expected him to prettify a tough novel or to fall into a consciously literary style of filmmaking. It is good to report that he has avoided both traps. He manages to encapsulate two influential strands of British cinema - the literary and the realistic - without compromising either, and the result is a film which is committed to passion and records Jude's endeavours with unfailing compassion and no touch of sentimentalism. The film opens on a memorable vista of a hillside field beneath a wide, grim sky (for some viewers this may echo Fred Williams' unsettling hillscapes). The young Jude Fawley (Christopher Eccleston) is punished for feeding the birds he is meant to be scaring away, and the sequence is dominated by an image of dead birds hanging in a row as a grimly prophetic warning of the film's worst horror, involving Jude's small son twenty years later. This black-and-white prologue to the film establishes a mood and a difficult ambience. The village of Marygreen is muddied and dank rather than postcard-pretty: it can't offer an intelligent boy like Jude what he wants. For this he must make his way to the University city of Christminster, where the film takes on a muted colour. His Marygreen teacher, Phillotson (Liam Cunningham), has told him, "If you want to do anything in life, that's where you have to go," adding with what proves to be a tragic irony, "You can choose your future." Jude's tragedy is that he is never able seriously to choose his future and the begowned young scholars of Christminster, in their self-absorbed superiority, seem to mock his attempts.

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Jude's problems are, of course, not merely those of the frustrated intellectual, though the film is very touching about his aspirations to scholarship, and one of the most memorable scenes is that in which he, half-pressed and half-embarrassed, sings a noisy Chrismas pub by reciting the Nicene Creed in Latin. A generation later, D. H. Lawrence's hero, Paul Morel, would be less daunted by the class barriers to scholarly pursuit, whereas Jude has to accept the disappointment of a letter from the Dean of Admissions coldly advising him to stick to his own sphere in life. Winterbottom doesn't make the mistake of representing as a joyless business Jude's life as a stonemason, working on the outside of the halls of academe he wants to enter: it is shown as having its own skills and

Greenaway's cinema is largely a cinema of allusion, evocation and invocation, pastiche, parody and eclectic appropriation.

Greenaway has never been noted for his restraint — and it is overwhelmingly in a number of respects, but it can be argued that this excess is a part of the point. On the other hand, this is a vindicating and provocative affirmation of the self-reflexivity of the cinema in the 1980s, just as it is a thoughtful meditation on the extent to which images and signifiers pervade modern lives in ways which are often elusive, uncontrollable or indeterminable. © RAYMOND YOREN

Nagiko (Vivian Wu).
Jude’s fellow workers are allowed a good-natured tolerance of his aspirations. However, the imagery insistent stresses Jude’s outsider status in relation to the life he craves.

Jude’s early disastrous marriage to the pig-breeder’s daughter, Arabella (played with well-judged aspirations. However, the imagery insistently stresses Jude’s outsider sensuality and directness by Rachel Griffiths), is a major obstacle to his progress. Winterbottom cuts from a sexual basis of the marriage and the two images is summed up the killing a pig, while Arabella is Griffiths), is a major obstacle to his incompatibility of its principals. Arabella returns much later when she long ago has encouraged Jude.

The novel’s unnecessary harping on how the Fawleys aren’t meant for marriage is rather surprisingly retained in the film — surprisingly, because Winterbottom’s lean version of Lewis Amin’s screenplay more than adequately accounts for the anguish of Jude’s life. The cruelty of deprivation; of feeling shut off from the world of ideas and imagination; the conflicting demands of an urgent sexuality and a wish to grasp into the world of the cultural wealth; the poverty and social stigma that make his life with Sue one of parapletic misery; all these are movingly registered in Christopher Eccleston’s fine, unmannered Jude, so that the clasp about curse on the marrying Fawleys seems to belong to another order of drama.

Gaunt of face, intent on goals he will never reach, he reminds one in these respects of the murderous Eunice played so memorably by Amanda Plummer in Butterfly Kiss. The director, on the basis of these two disparate films, shows a special gift for representing the driven protagonist, consumed from within by needs at odds with what society permits and aware of that society rushing past heedlessly. Both films are in fact characterized by rapid tracking shots along roads or rails, or of vehicles rushing past. The Interior nature of the two is another common element, and Winterbottom exploits it just to tell an episodic story but to render the sheer weariness of incessant striving for elusive goals.

I have stressed the compassion with the earlier film because it is important to note, in a year dominated by adaptations of the classics, that Winterbottom has made an essentially modern film from a century-old novel. He avoids that numbing attention to period detail which can distort both eye and mind, and he understands that Jude’s story, for all its embedding in Hardy’s Wessex, is a modern story of dogged perseverance met by alienation and injustice. Nothing can make this a happy tale, and the filmmaker has found a visual storytelling style suited to the grim truths his characters have to face. A great work in one medium has provided the basis for a starkly powerful work in another.

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The possible meanings of the love-making (or lust-making) on the sacred site, for which the happy-go-lucky Tony pays with his life, are more troublesome. Is this event supposed to be desirable, a symbol of a happy possibility? Their presumably it is a consummation to remain wished for because the traditional blackfellas want to preserve their law. Are the lovers trapped between the patriarchal norms of blood-minded societies? At the painful climax (painful to Ray), Poppy says to the preacher, "Are you blackfellas or whitefellas?" David answers, "I'm just a fella." This suggests that the lovers are trapped between intrusive antagonists.

What is unattractive in this inference, if it is one the filmmakers intend, is the implication that Aborigines have to tolerate the violation of their core tradition (the sacred site) as a condition for reconciliation between blacks and whites. Can the filmmakers mean this? Whatever they mean, I think it is tactless of something Tony's fate is in on. Nothing happens. The sequence I think is intended to indicate that least one man of Tony's feels sorry for him or guilty, but the film is so hell-bent on creating dramatic tension that it won't stop to let us observe the moment.

Dead Heart's aimed-for serious-ness calls for space, a landscape, for uncompromised observation, but instead the film perpetuates a cornball formula for dramatic intensity.

HOTEL DE LOVE


"Bananas are green for months and ripe for only 12 minutes before they go black and mushy. Sometimes I stay home because my bananas are about to ripen and I don't want to miss it, if you know what I mean." - Stephen

The characters aren't as cool as those in another Australian film released this year with love in the title, Love and Other Catastrophes (Emma-Kate Croghan), though considerably more cooler than those in Love Serenade (Shirley Barrett). Love's narrative machinery is more obvious in Hotel de Love than in either of these other two films, but there's nonetheless that breathlessness, recklessness, urgency and confusion so necessary to love's pursuit which characterizes all three films.

There's never really any doubt of the happy endings, and perhaps this knowledge remains too easily unchallenged, or perhaps the film can't decide whether to avoid or to celebrate a self-consciousness which is awkwardly acknowledged a little late in the piece, in Rick's unsuccessful last-minute dash to the church, but Hotel de Love has a warmth resonant of the best of romantic comedies' silly, joyful moments - moments which make the film more than worthwhile viewing.

And the odds of finding love are really quite good - 60 percent, even better on weekends, as Steve calculates statistically from his time watching and waiting at the airport for the love he hopes will return.

According to the publicity, Australian-born director screenwriter Craig Rosenberg divides his time between Australia and Los Angeles, and is mostly known for his fiction writing. In some ways, Hotel de Love presents as a daisy Hollywood comedy pic without the studied languor of our home-grown characters like Muriel in Muriel's Wedding (P. J. Hogan, 1994) or Love Serenade. But Aden Young is a dream. And it's fun.
A New Conservatism

More than ever, the newly-titled Film Classification Board is reflecting an agenda of political correctness and conservative bureaucratic expediency.

David A. Haines investigates

Over the past two years, hardly a month has passed without media comment about the new conservatism emanating from the Office of Film and Literature Classification. The most recent examples have included: the banning of Jim Jarmusch’s Dead Man (1995); cuts to The Rock (Michael Bay, 1996) to gain an MA classification; the re-classification, from MA to R, of the video release Ninja Scroll after only 15 months; and cuts to Disney’s The Hunchback of Notre Dame to eliminate scenes around which there was “an atmosphere of threat and menace” before it was granted a G classification.

These decisions have been made concurrently with the revision and adoption of new classification guidelines for films and videotapes that came into effect following the meeting of commonwealth, state and territory Ministers at the end of July this year.

The question must be asked, however, why the Film Censorship Board’s practices appear to have changed so much over the past couple of years that the guidelines have had to be re-written to reflect the greater conservatism of their decisions.

And isn’t it ironic that, in these days of increasing censoriousness, the newly-adopted title of Film Classification Board probably reflects what the Board does no better than when it was called the Film Censorship Board — as Shakespeare wrote:

What’s in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet.

The introduction of consumer advice in 1990 meant that consumers knew precisely what they were getting. A costly, ongoing and clearly-successful public awareness campaign was launched in 1991. As a consequence of these changes, complaints to the OFLC have declined steadily and substantially since that time.

Surveys and research conducted by the OFLC in recent years have shown that the majority of Australians have been happy with the classifications applied using the existing guidelines. For example, interviews with focus groups to obtain feedback on classification decisions have been undertaken since 1993 and have shown consistently that the community not only understands the classification system, but largely agrees with decisions on specific films — if anything, the Board was shown to be more conservative.

It follows that any review should have used the existing guidelines as a starting point for public consultation rather than the mishmash that was put out for consideration.

The revised guidelines appear to reflect an agenda of political correctness and conservative bureaucratic expediency. More than ever, the guidelines that have been approved by the Council of Ministers, not anticipate possible changes.

The Director has also stated that the revision was necessary to make the guidelines more easily understood by the public and to better explain the classification system.

A comparison between the two sets of guidelines, however, shows that they are both more prescriptive and less descriptive. Though the film and video classification guidelines are a relatively recent introduction, they have become something of a sacred cow under the present administration at the OFLC.

Prior to the introduction of voluntary point-of-sale regulation for videotapes in 1984, when “formal” guidelines were agreed to by censorship Ministers, the Customs (Cinematograph Films) Regulations provided the legal framework for decisions to register for importation films for public exhibition; the classification assigned to a film was a matter of judgement by Board members based on their perceptions of community standards and expectations.

While there were informal in-house guidelines, Board members regarded themselves, being members of an independent statutory Board, as the appointed tribunal of fact applying the law and making the hard decisions without succumbing to outside interference from politicians or noisy minorities.

It was that informal working document used by Board members to guide them in their decision-making on theatrical films, with the addition of an X category for video, which was first adopted by Ministers. During the course of 1984, there were a number of changes made to the X guidelines to meet concerns about sexual and other violence in this new category.

Changes were also made to the guidelines for G, NR and R, but only to remove specific examples that could have led to a more rigid classification process.

It is clear from minutes of meetings held at that time that, in presenting the guidelines, the Board was seeking a broad consensus from Ministers on the way the system had worked; that there was a clear understanding of the difficulties which could arise if the guidelines used prescriptive or descriptive language; and an acknowledgement that the reason for having a Film Censorship Board was that its members were best placed to judge the merits in any particular case.

Film guidelines were next reviewed in 1988 following the appointment of a new Chief Censor, John Dickie, and the creation of the Office of Film and Literature Classification.

The establishment of the OFLC not only brought Canberra’s policy and ministerial functions under the Chief
Censor’s umbrella; it also changed the Board’s culture. Political sensitivity to decision-making increased to the point that the determining criteria have become less a matter of community standards than of considering what questions might be raised in Parliament and at meetings of censorship Ministers, or what Senator Harradine and the Senate Committee might say.

The principal reason for the 1988 review was to make the guidelines more accessible to the public and to remove the more subjective terms used. This was in anticipation of a costly and extensive public awareness campaign which was dependent on a transparent and easily-understood classification system.

Concern over the Hoddle and Queen Streets massacres was still reverberating through the community, however, and much was made of “consultation” with the states and territories—a draft was sent to each for comment, though in the event only one state came back with a suggestion (which was ignored). The Joint Select Committee on Video Material also reported to government that year and made a recommendation in respect of the R guidelines, which was also largely ignored.

The current review was announced on 14 October 1995, causing an immediate furore. In spite of recommendations by the Law Reform Commission, in its 1991 report on censorship procedure, about the need for a 3-month public consultation process, only ten days were given for the presentation of submissions. The closing date anticipated a Censorship Ministers’ meeting by just a week. Clearly that timetable influenced the time available for public input rather than the obligation to consult. In the event, the deadline was extended for a month by order of the Federal Minister.

No report on submissions received has been made public, and, although much has been made of the involvement of Professor Peter Sheehan (former Chairman of the Board of Review) in their incorporation into the draft guidelines, it is understood he saw only a summary of submissions prepared by staff at the OFLC.

The review provides an example of the political influences increasingly being brought to bear, whether from the Censorship Ministers, other federal Ministers, or the Senate Committee. One need look no further for the real inspiration for the review than the Senate Committee on Community Standards. In February 1995, it recommended that R-rated material should not be allowed on Pay-TV until such time as the OFLC undertook a comprehensive overhaul of the R classification. Only when this was done would the Committee reconsider its recommendation.

The Committee was driven by its concern with Pier Paolo Pasolini’s Salò o le Centoventi Giornate di Sodoma (Salo or the 120 Days of Sodom, 1975) which it saw, wrongly, as being typical of material classified at the upper end of the R category. In fact, none of the Committee had at that time seen the film, and the only one who has seen it since—Senator Brian Harradine—has said that the film was not as bad as he had expected.

We have yet to see what differences the new guidelines, which have been in effect now for only a short time, will have on film classifications, but it is clear from statements about cutting back on violence in films by Senator Alston (and since when has the Minister for Communications been responsible for film censorship?) and the Director of the Classification Board that there will be changes. Are we likely to see such films as Reservoir Dogs (Quentin Tarantino, 1992) Pulp Fiction (Tarantino, 1994), Seven (David Fincher, 1995) and the infamous Dead Man banned under the new régime?

The Chief Censor says no, we will not be denied the likes of Tarantino’s work, that the Ministers have expressly stated that quality cinema films are not intended to be covered by the stricter régime on film violence, that it will apply only to a dozen or so videos. This is misleading double-speak. The guidelines refer to all films and videos equally.
The reference to quality films presumably harks back to the new Code which requires the Board to take account of a film's artistic or other merit in arriving at a classification decision. It is as well to remember that Salò — the film that started this review — was classified R on appeal in 1993 on grounds that included the fact that it was one of the most powerful and important works of a leading filmmaker.

At a hearing of the Senate Committee on Community Standards last November, Dickie stated categorically that under the new guidelines Salò would be refused, even for film festivals.

He also said that films with high-level consumer advice — that is to say, those at the upper range of R that would now be refused — would include films such as Pulp Fiction and Seven. Peckinpah's Straw Dogs (1971) is another film Dickie has singled out in public statements as warranting refusal under today's guidelines.

If such films are banned, it will have nothing to do with community standards and the hundreds of thousands of adults who have enjoyed such material both on the big screen and at home, and everything to do with political expediency. The recent announcements of a tightening up on violence in film have, as Senator Alston has stated, more to do with addressing the public perception than the reality of violence in our community.

While politicians and the Chief Censor have referred constantly to "growing concern" in the community about violence, there is no evidence that such concern is higher than, for example, after the Queen Street and Hoddle Street massacres. It is undeniable that people believe there is a link between television violence and violence in the community — Australian Broadcasting Tribunal research in 1989 put the figure at more than 60 percent.

What no one has ever asked is why people believe there is a link between film violence and real violence. One suspects the media and self-serving politicians have a lot to answer for in this regard. What is unacceptable about unacceptable screen violence? A look at the lists of the most popular films and videos may go some way to help understand what is acceptable.

A couple of years ago, a small-scale study in South Australia into why people felt they were living in an increasingly violent society indicated that it was because of media reports stating this was the case, and because of increased media coverage of violent crime.

This is in marked contrast to statistics from both the Australian Institute of Criminology and the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research which have for some years consistently shown that there has been no such increase.

It is clear that the wowserism is in the ascendant. We have seen an increasing and widely-recognized conservatism in classification decisions over the past couple of years. This will undoubtedly continue with the review this year of guidelines for publications and computer games.

A further concern in terms of the politicization of censorship practices in Australia is that the new Act substantially increases the power of the Chief Censor or Director. The office now wears three hats: chief classifier; substantive policy adviser to Ministers; and public service head and CEO of the "commercialized" OFLC. There are even indications of an increasing role in enforcement.

These are potentially-conflicting roles. Statutory Boards are set up to distance the decision-making process from political influence. They should be, and be seen to be, at arm's length. That a Board member is currently acting in a public service position compounds this conflict of interest.

The determining criterion for a classification decision must be in line with community standards. Some politicians argue that they represent that view, but they are susceptible to the minority or swinging votes that win or lose elections. They are also often isolated and tend to hear only from certain sections of the community.

If the Classification Board is simply to take the safe and least resistant course, the political and bureaucratic solution, why have a Board?

For the future, perhaps we should look at the way in which converging technology is fast making the existence of two separate bureaucratic bodies dealing with regulation — the Australian Broadcasting Authority and the OFLC — an expensive and unnecessary duplication.

The existence of this two-pronged approach to the regulation of media content is an accident of history: film censorship commenced in 1917, with a Censorship Board established in 1929 evolving into the OFLC in 1988; the advent of television in the '50s saw the establishment of the Broadcasting Control Board which became the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal in the '70s, followed by the Australian Broadcasting Authority in 1992.

The separation of regulatory controls resulted from the different modes of delivery. With converging technology, this will no longer be an issue. It would be cheaper, more efficient, and more convenient from a policy point of view to link the OFLC classification processes to the self-regulatory model administered by the ABA, which has all the resources and expertise necessary, in research, public consultation and the oversighting of self-regulation in broadcast and narrowcast services including television, Pay-TV and quite probably on-line services.

Technology will soon allow us to transmit films and other entertainment straight into homes and other venues. Common sense would suggest a need to rationalize the regulatory process in order to achieve a consistent approach and facilitate public education in the use of the new communication media.

A self-regulatory approach may well be resisted by an industry that can currently point the finger at the OFLC when their audiences complain about a classification decision. With the present system becoming increasingly susceptible to political influences, however, perhaps it is time for those closest to public tastes and standards relating to filmed entertainment — the film and video industry — to take an active role in regulating themselves and thus become more accountable. It works with television; it has worked with film festivals; and it works overseas.

There are those in the industry who share my concerns — albeit to varying degrees — though they may be reluctant to make their views public. However, now is the time to speak out if the industry is not to be patronized like the viewing public has been. An industry voice in the form of an advisory or consultative council would be a start.

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Completion Guarantees Revisited

Lloyd Hart continues his examination of completion guarantees

m...y article in the last issue on completion guarantees has spawned requests for more on the subject. I will now go over a number of things that can crop up in negotiating the terms of a completion guarantee under the headings: Approvals, Script, Stop Dates, Insurance and Letters of Credit.

Approvals

Among other things, the guarantor guarantees the delivery items appearing in a distribution agreement will be delivered as required in that agreement. The producer must deliver to the distributor a film conforming to the blueprint of elements set out in the distribution agreement; that is, using the script described there, the budget, the schedule, the key cast and heads of departments named. Typically, a distributor has the right to approve these key elements and their replacements.

From a guarantor’s point of view two “What if?” arise. What if, given the exigencies of production, the distributor has not approved key elements at the time the guarantor commits? What if the distributor does not or will not approve a replacement? Generally, the guarantor’s answer to the former is not to accept liability for elements undecided at the time it commits. Otherwise, the opinion of an interested party on artistic ability could decide delivery. For example, the distributor may want to approve the composer, who is sometimes identified late in the day, or the music, which ordinarily is produced down the track. There are times when the guarantor accepts the risk of delayed approvals out of necessity. It is common on television series for many of the scripts not to be finished at the time of financing; yet the television licensee has to be bleak, if they get sick, they may suffer loss because the insurers are not liable. For instance, the fact of an actor’s obligations to provide a “stop date” which, as the name suggests, stops the actor’s obligations to provide services to the film after that date.

Another “What if?”. What if the producer does not seek or does not get the approval of the distributor as they make the film? Is the distributor bound to accept the film? This depends on the wording of the distribution agreement. If the script is so defined as to allow no departures at all, then that is what the producer must deliver. That can pressure the filmmakers, adversely affecting the film, particularly where there has been no time to obtain approvals. Where the distribution agreement uses a description like “based on the script”, there is more scope for changes. After all, the distributor will have approved the key filmmakers, which it itself shows some confidence in their ability. Film Finances, Inc. usually guarantees the delivery of the film based on the script.

To go further may require the guarantor to overtrain as a supervisor. Frequently, agreements require that, if there is a dispute, an arbitrator decides on whether a film has been delivered in accordance with a distribution agreement, to avoid leaving the question in the hands of interested parties such as the distributor or the completion guarantor.

In a recent arbitration in England, the arbitrators said that the key was whether the film as delivered was made according to the script as defined in the distribution agreement, and found relevant the industry practice which allows some scope for the producer to make changes. Frankly, this sucks. It is a more workable approach to ask what the parties to the distribution agreement intended, objectively determined, with industry practice being relevant to that intent. If common sense prevails, future arbitrators will use a test like this.

Stop Dates

The guarantor’s ability to honour its obligations depends on having the cast available to finish the film. Frequently, actors are juggling commitments and, because of competing schedules, want to leave as soon as possible after the scheduled completion of their services. They, therefore, negotiate a “stop date” which, as the name suggests, stops the actor’s obligations to provide services to the film after that date. Because the producer may extend a schedule for reasons beyond reasonable control, a tight stop date can cause real uncertainty in production. The parties may negotiate and reschedule to accommodate the differing needs of all concerned as much as possible. As the one liable if an actor does not complete a performance, the guarantor needs to know about potential stop dates as soon as the actor proposes them.

Insurance

Mostly, the insurers and guarantors cover mutually-exclusive areas. There are times when the production company may suffer loss because the insurers are not liable. For instance, the fact that an actor does not disclose addiction to an incapacitating
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The latest edition of Microsoft Cinemania ’97 allows consumers to supplement their CD-ROM experiences by getting the latest information with an enhanced Internet integration.

Cinemania ’97 includes links to the Internet for the latest movie information and celebrity guided tours behind-the-scenes perspectives. The Cinemania Online Web site (http://cinemania.microsoft.com) contains the latest movie reviews, entertainment news, video releases, biographies and monthly downloadable updates for the CD-ROM.

It also includes access to the all-new Cinemania Connections – the guide to the best independent Web sites about movies and filmmakers. Online features include Internet access, which must be acquired separately and for which the user may pay a separate fee. Free monthly updates to Cinemania ’97 are available online.

VILLAGE ROADSHOW PARTNERS WITH WARNER BROS.

Warner Bros. and Village Roadshow Limited have successfully completed negotiations begun earlier this year to create a joint venture with the existing Warner Bros. Theatres operation in the United Kingdom and Germany. Village Roadshow's interest in the joint venture will be approximately 50 percent. The total amount of Village Roadshow's initial investment in the venture is approximately $170 million.

Warner Bros. currently operates 143 screens on 16 sites in the United Kingdom, and 26 screens in three locations in the Ruhr Valley of Germany. When completion occurs at the end of November 1996 these theatres will become owned and operated by the joint venture. Warner Bros. and Village Roadshow have long enjoyed a relationship in operating, thus far, 19 cinemas with 160 screens as well as other entertainment attractions in Australia.

SUPPORT CONTINUES FOR AUSTRALIAN FILM INDUSTRY

Quantel, the company which has played a pivotal role in the evolution of graphics and effects in post-production, broadcast and film, is to sponsor the 1996 Australian Film Institute Awards. In its 38th year, the Awards are an annual event that recognises outstanding achievement in film and television, the equivalent to the BAFTA Awards in Great Britain.

In announcing the sponsorship on the tenth anniversary of Quantel's Australian office in Frenchs Forest, Managing Director Haydn Deere commented: Quantel has been in the picture business since 1975 when we launched the world's first frame-store software. Now, most recently with the launch of Domini, Quantel has shown a continued investment in developing products that help creative people achieve excellence. It's our pleasure to support the AFI by sponsoring the Awards success in Australia over the years.

AFI Awards Manager Lindsay Van Nuenen commented: By sponsoring the AFI Awards, Quantel is showing its support for the many outstanding achievements over the past year in the Australian film and television industry. The AFI congratulates Quantel on its tenth anniversary and looks forward to a successful partnership in the 1996 AFI Awards.

TAKING STOCK

You'll have realized that we're in the middle of a product boom at the moment (count the titles in the 'in production' section of this issue), so it's a busy time for film stock suppliers. With Agfa out of the negative stock market here, Kodak has the lion's share of it. Richard Koshn reports that the company is handling 12 major productions, both local and for Japan and the U.S. To that, says Richard (he's the PMI National Sales and Marketing Manager for Australia and New Zealand), and an increase in local television production and all the film schools who are finishing student productions. The long and optical houses also report good business. Agfa has been busy supplying print stock. Graeme Wilson, Motion Picture Products Manager, reports Agfa has just done the two biggest local releases, Braveheart and Independence Day.

DIGITAL TOYS

Pixar's production for Walt Disney, Toy Story, will be out on video self-through and hire mid-November in Australia. U.S. pre-orders were over 21 million, bearing the pre-orders that were set by the best-selling video of all time, The Lion King. Disney took nearly US$280 million at the box-office for The Lion King. Want to bet there'll be a Toy Story videogame in lots of Christmas stockings in Australia as well?

Disney also announced a video release early next year of a frame-by-frame restoration of Bambi for the 55th anniversary of the movie. The edition will have 'never-before-seen footage' and a free commemorative booklet entitled The Magic of Bambi.

YOU CAN LOOK DOWN NOW

The other restoration to have an Australian release early next year is Alfred Hitchcock's Vertigo, made in 1958. It opened the New York Film Festival in October and is in show-case around the country. Originally shot in colour as Vision in Time, the colour faded film was restored, emulsion layer-by-layer by Robert A. Harris and James C. Katz, who restored such classics as Lawrence of Arabia, Spartacus and My Fair Lady. They have a painstaking devotion to detail, even tracking down a paint chip from the Jaguar sports car that appears in the film, so that the original colour could be recreated. The release wouldn't have been so dramatic if it wasn't for the major discovery of tapes by Bernard Herrmann's original score recording of the score, which has been re-mixed and converted to a DTS digital soundtrack. Fans of the James Stewart and Kim Novak classic can look forward to revisiting it in a new Super Vision 70mm print.

MISSION: CRAWFORDS

Crawfords Australia went top secret for its promotional briefing by the Treasurer and Minister for Multimedia, the Honourable Alan Stockdale, and launch if its new multimedia facility with joint venture partners Sega and Compaq Computers Australia.

The day was hosted by Crawfords’s owner, Bruce Gordon, who flew in from London for the day. The first two projects will be a multi-path movie, Amanz the Powerless, slated for Christmas 1997. This science-fiction comedy adventure was written and devised by Crawfords’s Brian Douglas. The second will be a television series designed for the Internet titled Moulinov. The comedy adventure is set 50 years from now. The facility is being housed as a stand-alone section within Crawfords, and is looking to specialise in interactive entertainment programmes.

The ‘Multimedia Show and Tell’ tour addresses the implications of new technology and multimedia for Indigenous Australians, and looks at issues of copyright, cultural misappropriation and promotion of Indigenous culture.

There are some 300 sites on the Web that focus on Indigenous Australians, and only around 25 percent have been created by Indigenous people.

We are also concerned about the extensive archival holdings about Indigenous people and the risk of this material being appropriated in order to satisfy the increasing need for multimedia products.

The world still hasn’t worked out who owns culture. The copyright laws of this country do not recognise or support ownership of cultural property, like stories, legends, archival images and Indigenous cultural practices.

But we recognise that the new media also offers tremendous opportunities to promote Indigenous issues to the world and to encourage kids within our communities to respect and understand their own culture amidst the ever-changing world.
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CINEMA PAPERS • DECEMBER 1996

PETER SHEEHAN

STORYBOARD ARTIST

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Australian Film Commission
Distributor's notes concluded that the film's reception from afar with a sense of English reviews and registered the production and post-production periods, won over by threats and flattery. Prior to 1975, only a few locally-funded films went over to the international market. They gave us a glimpse of the possibilities that we are going to make the most of it. I don't care if I don't get a cinema. I am going to get a tent and I know there are laws against you trying to do anything about that. We have got Whitleam on side and we'll do that too."

So, in a way, we didn't give them an alternative. Graham Burke [Roadshow] came to see the film and, as he came in, he said, "One of these days, one of these Aussie films is going to be successful and make some money", and I said, "Graham, you might be going to see it." Matt Carroll, to whom it had fallen to steer the film through its most difficult production and post-production periods, feels that it succeeded. Carroll defines the mood that the film creates through his enthusiasm for one scene:

The election of the union representative is one of the great scenes, and there are a number of great scenes in Australian movies, but it will remain a classic scene. It's totally fantastic. You can look at it time and time again. It's one of the key successes of the new Australian cinema. [...]

Sunday Too Far Away was a steep learning curve, and the film can be viewed as a paradigm case for the methods by which original Australian screenplays were to be developed over the following period of intense production. It seems simple enough in retrospect to see why the film succeeded, but at the time it was made the Australian industry lacked both a clear sense of direction, and a pool of experienced production people who had the confidence and the skill to realize such an ambitious project. The risks of failure were very high, and the industry was only too quick to turn on those who made serious errors in judgement. Gil Brealey's career was to suffer irreparable damage as a result of the action he took to complete Sunday, and the personal cost to him was almost intolerable.

The film was not a major financial success, given the problems and lack of experience in releasing Australian films, but it did achieve respectable arthouse runs in the UK and Europe. Confidence was restored in the fledgling SAFC, and production seemed assured for some time. Sunday probably did at least as well at the box office as the earlier Wake in Fright (1971), directed by noted Canadian Ted Kotcheff and produced with a far larger budget.

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Australian interests in collaboration with English producer-director Michael Robinson worked as a television executive and a documentary supervisor on the only Australian film project. Robinson also worked as a television producer on a range of documentary projects, and as production director and producer on a range of documentary projects. Following the collapse of Southern International, Robinson worked as a television executive and a documentary supervisor on the only Australian film project. Robinson also worked as a television producer on a range of documentary projects. Nevertheless, television which was going to lead to Lee Robinson's greatest success was television. Southern International was forced to go into feature production and, determined to build their capital, they and Rafferty kept their salaries pegged at $15 a week. Work for Lowell Thomas and hire of facilities kept Southern International afloat for a while. Robinson also continued to make documentaries — and indeed did so throughout his career. However, costs were beginning to mount. In Dust in the Sun (1958), he and Rafferty returned to the Northern Territory for a story again featuring stations and Aborigines. This time, they shot in colour with an imported English actress, but could not repeat the success of the U.S. was being rapidly eroded by television, while in Australia, in the absence of content regulations, television failed to provide the expected opportunities for independent production. Southern International was forced into liquidation. As Robinson told Graham Shirley:

We got out of feature production completely because there was a feeling there was no future in it. We came in at the wrong time, Chips and I. We were at our peak when television started in this country. If we'd been at our peak five years earlier, we'd have been consolidated by the time television came in. Nevertheless, it was television which was to lead to Lee Robinson's greatest success. Following the collapse of Southern International, Robinson worked as a director and producer on a range of documentary projects, and as production supervisor on the only Australian film released in 1966. They're a Weird Mob, with English producer-director Michael Powell. He then teamed up with John McCallum, who had represented the Australian interests in They're a Weird Mob, to become one of the principals of Fauna Films. By this time, local television production had managed to make the breakthrough to Australian audiences with the 1963 success of Crawfords' police series Homicide. Producing for television was potentially viable. Once again, Robinson carefully thought through the commercial considerations involved in this new area of production. He travelled to North America, South America and Europe — at a time when such trips were not so readily undertaken — studying the television markets. In Los Angeles, Robinson recalls, he discovered that the producer of Flipper was getting out of production to concentrate on theme parks and was shrewd enough thought there was a relationship just with a single parent and the boys — better mate ship availability.

The series, of course, was Skippy (1967–69), the adventures of Matt Hammond and sons, assisted by the bush kangaroo. John McCallum and the other five partners scraped up the finance for a pilot. Each episode was to cost $18,200. Robinson, who had completely run out of money by this time, put in his labour: I wrote the pilot and directed the pilot and produced the pilot. We had to use a kangaroo from Kuringai Chase zoo, untrained, totally untrained. And it was a hell of a problem to get the kangaroo footage to make it work. Because you turned around and he said, "Well, how much are you asking for it? How many do you intend to make?" And I said, "Well, we want to make 39." Yeah, he said, "I'll give you six thousand dollars an episode. That's my best price." And we argued and we said, "Well, for seven years." And he said, "Alright, it's limited to seven years. I'll give you an option for three thousand for another three years." We said, "Aww, that's good. Now how many episodes?" He said, "I'll take as many as you like to make." And the contract was written that, so long as we kept making them, Frank would buy them [laughing]. Unending contract, yeah.

Thus, Skippy, again, was absolutely dependent upon international sales for its continuation. It proved to be Australian television's first major success. In its day, it was sold to more countries than any other television series in the world — the Americans couldn't sell to the Soviet bloc. Today, Skippy has sold to 126 different countries, often many times to the same country, and is still sold anew with each country to acquire television. Lee Robinson believes that Skippy's success is a result of its honesty:

It's got qualities in it that you don't see every day in other television things. If you read the Writer's Bible that we, Joy Cavill and I, designed to give to writers as a guideline, [it] laid out the code. Typical was: the police will always be our friend; there will never be conflict between our characters and proper authority; there will be no authoritarian attitude between Matt Hammond and his sons; there will be mateship and consultation; and so on. Thirty years later, the Bible goes on to say: an element that must be in every episode is freedom of childhood; it must always express not only for children the freedom of movement, but a memory for adults of what the freedom of childhood was. There was a reminder about Skippy in the Bible. It was: always remember Skippy is a free, wild animal. Skippy is not a pet of the Hammonds. And all through that series; Skippy could come and go as it pleased. It was never considered to be their property, because it's illegal to own a protected animal. In the new series, Skippy was their property. Wore a collar like a dog and, of course, the new series was less than successful; the whole concept we started out with had completely gone.

Skippy led to a feature spin-off, The Intruders (1969), and was followed by other Fauna series: Barrier Reef, Boney, Shannon's Mob and then Bailey's Bird (1976–77), shot in Malaysia. Bailey's Bird led to Robinson's ground-breaking but ultimately unsuccessful Asian co-productions, the war drama Attack Force Z with Taiwan and...
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AMERICAN CINEMATOGRAPHER * FILM SCORE MONTHLY
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It's a curiously reverberant tale for the Australian film industry. In the 1950s and '60s, many Australian actors and filmmakers left the country to search for the Brummie Billabong. Some, like Rod Taylor, thought that they found it somewhere else; but most returned, eventually. Lee Robinson chose to stay with the tribe, where the work of making something out of what we had and who we were was, in itself, the only reward a filmmaker could usually achieve. 🌟

1 Filmo News, October 1971.
3 This matter has been discussed in a very interesting way by Bill Roast in his essay, "On the Expression of Colonialism in Early Australian Films - Charles Chauvel and Native Cinema", in Albert Moran & Yom O'Regan (eds), An Australian Film Reader, Sydney, 1995.
4 Not released in Australia until 1953.
6 Eureka Stockade was shot in 1947; dates of first release are used for all films mentioned in this article.
7 Cecil Holmes directed sponsored documentaries and his two features, Captain Thunderbolt (1953) and Three in One (1957). For Film Australia he also directed Gentle Strangers (1972), originally 75 minutes, but cut to an hour by Film Australia to remove controversial material.
8 Carroll's feature credits include: The Strayway (1955), associate producer, co-writer; Dust in the Sun (1958), associate producer, co-writer; The Restless and the Damned (1959), associate producer; The Intruder (1969), co-producer; Nickel Queen (1971), co-producer, co-writer; Dwarf (1979), writer, producer.
9 As is inevitably the case various principals involved in a successful project tend to claim credit later for its origin. The Sydney Morning Herald (14 March 1996) reports John McCallum as saying that he decided to stay in Australia in 1947 because he 'just thought of a good idea', the television series Skippy. Given Robinson's record, I'd go with his account as representing more or less what happened, although no doubt there may have been a significant input from others, also.
10 This script appears to be a re-working of a more unstructured and very much less detailed novellette by Bill Harnay, the famous bushman storyteller with whom Lee worked on occasion in the Northern Territory. Entitled Brummie Billabongs, it was written as the protagonist's first-person true account by Harnay, 'On Patrol' (as he signs the introduction), in 1945 and published in 1947. Apparently, Harry Watt attempted unsuccessfully to interest Ealing in producing the film for Robinson.
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• Synopsis of Project (indicating stage of development)
• Budget

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FFC Funding Decisions

Following a Board meeting on 28 August, the FFC has entered into contract negotiations with the producers of the following projects:

**Feature**

**Television Production**

**Production Survey**

**Features in Pre-production**

Dead Letter Office

**Features in Production**

**The Well**

**The Alive Tribe**

**The Big Red**

**Black Ice**

**Dark City**

**Diana & Me**

**Doing Time for Patsy Cline**

**Heaven’s Burning**

**Joey**

**Oscar and Lucinda**

**Paws**

**Stunt Deluxe**

**Sound of One Hand Clapping**

**Features in Post-production**

Blackrock

**My Blessings**

**Scream**

**Thank God He Met Lizzie**

**Documentary**

**Changing Heart**

**Shorts**

**The Dane**

**Othervoice**

**Puppety**

**Tessie Bochevina**

**Your Move**

**Television Production**

**Kangaroo Palace**

**14 Ever**

**Spellbinder II: The Land of the Dragon Lord**

**Fable** (120 mins)

P: Bill Hughes, Susan Hughes

Distributor: Seven Network

Director: Malcolm McDonald

Writer: Ian Coupland

Cast: Simon Westaway

At the July Board meeting, funding was approved for:

**Feature**

**The Well**

(95-100 mins)

**Xanadu Southern Star**

D: Samantha Lang

P: Sandra Levy

**Commercial Television Production Fund**

The Commercial Television Production Fund has approved funding of a new adult drama, two projects from the Children’s Drama Initiative and the Fund’s first documentary project.

**Telefeatures**

**99.9 RAW FM**

(D) Michael Case

P: Box 300

E: Sue Masters

W: Jacqueline Fredrickson

**FEATURE**

**Production**

**Survey**

**Features in pre-production**

**Dead Letter Office**

**Features in production**

**The Well**

**Production Survey**

**Features in pre-production**

**Dead Letter Office**

**Features in production**

**Dark City**

**Diana & Me**

**Documentary**

**Changing Heart**

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**Othervoice**

**Puppety**

**Tessie Bochevina**

**Your Move**

**Television Production**

**Kangaroo Palace**

**14 Ever**

**Spellbinder II: The Land of the Dragon Lord**

**Fable** (120 mins)

P: Bill Hughes, Susan Hughes

Distributor: Seven Network

Director: Malcolm McDonald

Writer: Ian Coupland

Cast: Simon Westaway

A current affair host becomes obsessed with the supernatural after the death of his family.

**The Adventures of the Balanced Particle Freeway**

P: Zelda Rosenbaum, Oscar Whitehead

Director: Paul Macintyre

Written: Caroline Williams

A grumpy old dragon crashlands into a children’s cubby house and needs the help of the children to restore his power.

**AMY**

Director: Nadia Tass

Written: David Parker

The story of an eight-year-old girl who can hear only music and communicates by singing.

**Documentary**

**BARRY HUMPHRIES’ FLASHBACKS**

Director: David Mitchell

Distributor: Seven Network

P: Andrew Sauer, Liza Gardner

E: Andrew Sauer, Liza Gardner

J: John Mary, Rienda Mary

P: Seven Network

**Information is supplied as and adjusted as of 1 September 1996**

**Features in pre-production**

**DEAD LETTER OFFICE**

Production company: ARTIST SERVICES

Production office: 201/37 Oxford St

**Feature**

**The New HHB Dat Tape**

**THE BEST GETS EVEN BETTER**

**FREECALL 1 800 675 168**

**Television Series**

**Cosmo Kids**

**Good Guys, Bad Guys**

**Skippy**

**20,000 Leagues Under the Sea**

**THE ALIVE TRIBE**

**Tribal**

**THE BIG RED**

**(Working title)**

**BARRY HUMPHRIES’ FLASHBACKS**

Director: Barry Humphries

Written: Barry Humphries

Produced: Andrew Sauer, Liza Gardner

**Documentary**

**Changing Heart**

**Shorts**

**The Dane**

**Othervoice**

**Puppety**

**Tessie Bochevina**

**Your Move**

**Television Production**

**Kangaroo Palace**

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THE NEW HHB ATT TAPE
THE BEST GETS EVEN BETTER
FREECALL 1 800 675 168

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producers: clean ace
production survey continued

BLACK ICE
Production company: WIDGETEL FILM MANAGEMENT Ltd
Rupert St, Melbourne
Principal credits
Director: James Richards
Producer: David Greenaway
Screenplay: Bill Mutter, Ron Williams
Associate producer: Ron Veenker
Screenplay: James Richards, Ron Greenaway
DOP: Kevin Lodge
Production crew
Post-production supervisor: Karen Brandt
Choreography: Ron Veenker, James Williams
Assistant editor: Adrian Weis

CAST
John O'Siecle, Tony Bonner, Timo Vellina, Tara Kane

Nathan Vaugar, an austere man, has a clipped spring ready to explode, is recruited by Detective Andy Riddle to help him out in his own form of right justice.

Vaugar begins working for criminal Riddle, finding a new best friend in the Australian boy who shares the same name and birthday as the Princess of Wales. Obsessed with her royal namesake, he wins a trip to London and comes close to shaking her hand, but is allowed out of the way by a pushy paparazzo photographer.

DIANA & ME
Production company: Matt Carroll Films
Production: 28/8—18/11/96

Principal credits
Director: David Parker
Producer: Matt Carroll
Line producer: Greg Braket
Production manager: Greg Coote

THE NEW HHB ATT TAPE
THE BEST GETS EVEN BETTER
FREECALL 1 800 675 168

Cast
Richard Reardon (Boy), Shinichi Sen (Ricky), Jack Day (Ralph), Gus Mercudo (Trevor), Betty Bossert (Connie).

A very tall about a reluctant hero who defeces his dreams for love and desire.

HEAVEN'S BURNING
Production company: DUJO ART
Pre-production: 27/8—27/9/96
Production: 30/9—22/11/96
Post-production: 25/4—4/5/97

Principal credits
Director: Chris Lawler
Producers: Al Clark, Helen Lame, Executive producer: Andrew Horley, Gorogina Pope
Written by: Louis Neva
DOP: D. P. Ruan
Sound recordist: Timo Lammi
Editor: John Scott
Production designer: John Vincent
Costume designer: Anne Marshall
Casting: Anne Marshall

Marketing:
Government administration: Paul McGowan

Cast
Heaven's Burning

Production survey continued

DARK CITY
Production company: DARK CITY PRODUCTIONS
Production: 5/8—18/11/96

Principal credits
Director: Alex Prisco
Producer: Andrew Mason
Screenplay: Alex Prisco, Lou Dobbs, David Silver
DOP: Darrell Wijesinha
Editor: Ben Howard
Production designer: George Lucide
Costume designer: Liz Kedib

Production Crew
Production manager/Line producer: Mark Robinson, Mike White, Libby O'Hanlon
1st assistant director: Steve Andrews

Marketing
International sales agent: NEW LINE CINEMA
Publicity Fiona Stasions, DDA

CAST
Rufus Sewell, William Hurt, Kieth Sutherland, Jennifer Connelly, Richard O'Brien, Bruce Spence and Colin Firth

John Murdoch awakens alone in a storage hotel room, accused of a series of brutal murders that he cannot remember. Indeed, most of his memories have vanished altogether. He soon discovers that his memories and reality as he knows it are in fact artificial creations controlled by a friendship unique and unusual beings collectively known as The Strangers.
Virtual unreality available on Quantel Henry from Zero 1 Zero post production, design graphics and special effects. Phone (02) 9417 5700. Fax (02) 9417 5879.
OSCAR AND LUCINDA
Production company: Marion Films
Distribution company: First Search
Production: September-December 1995
Budget: $18 million
Director: Geoffrey Rush
Producers: Tim White, Robi Dalton
Scriptwriter: Larissa Jones
Government Agency Investment: FFC

Based on the novel by Peter Carey, a story about fate, love, gambling and faith.

PAWS
Production company: LATE NIGHT PRODUCTIONS PLLC
Distribution company: PiXstar Films
Production: 14/10-9/12/96

Principal Credits
Screenwriter: Ken, Zedky
Executive producer: Robi, Penny-Head
Sound engineer: Harry Crimp
Director: Stephen Evans
Co-ordinator: Dave Roule

Planning and Development
Mailing: Marcia Fay & Associates
Concepcion: Anne Fay
Extra casting: Malisa Fay & Associates
Dressmaker: Nick Latham
Sound recordist: näm Chiles

Production Crew
Production manager: Bhendi Pari
Production co-ordinator: Sammy Steverson
2nd assistant: Lennie Streak
Production secretary: Cassandra Sampson
Location manager: Richard Montgomery
Assistant: Scott Lavelle
Production accountants: John May, Amanda Ross
Costume designer: Tanya Love

Government Agency Investment
Distributor: Film Finance Corporation Australia
Production: Film Finance Corporation
Marketing
International sales agent: PiXstar Films (UK) Ltd
International sales agent: PiXstar Films (US) Ltd

CAST
Nathan Caravelle (Zac), Eminem Francois (Emmanuel), Jan Petrie (Sophie), Caroline Gilman (Suzie), Rachael Bland (Amy), Sarah Goss (Danya).
THE NEW HHH DAT TAPE
THE BEST GETS EVEN BETTER

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WET RAINING WIND.
Tales from Afar

Kangaroo Palace

Production company: Artist Services
Principal credits:
Director: Rod Marchand
Producer: Kevin Burnett
Executive producers: Andrew Knight, Steve Vizzoux, Rebecca Girvey
Screenwriter: Andrew Knight, Deb Cux
Director of photography: Kim Batterham
Sound recordist: John Merkow
Other credits:
Focus pull: Troy Keating
Costume designer: Louise Williams
Production co-ordinators: Kim Travis, Magnus Mandie
Production assistant: Susan Cawney
Production supervisor: Anna Blair
Location manager: Tim Scott

Directed by: Yoram Gross
Production designer: Michael McColl
Costume designer: Julie Moddell

Government Agency Investment
Production: FFC, Film Victoria

CAST

KANGAROO PALACE:

The children's fantasy series.

See previous issues for details on Simon de Beauvoir's Babies - The Territorrians Whipping Boy.

Television series

Cosmo Kids

Production company: B-12, 24/7

Running time: 22 minutes

Produced by: Novak Entertainment

Directed by: Todd Entertainment

Script supervisor: Carolyn Alperin

Fictional "when you are 13-years-old it's never easy. Especially when you're trying to save your planet and cope with parents who just don't always keep the most important things that are you from different galaxies, you can sometimes seem worlds apart. And for Zenath and Zelda, they see her as an intergalactic heroine determined to find a solution to her planet's problems. He is a typical Australian boy - more interested in surfing and hanging out than in girls. Together they will save their planets from good and evil destruction and in the process discover something even greater - friendship and real adventure!

Good Guys, Bad Guys

Running time: 60 minutes

Production company: Beyond Distribution

CINEMA PAPERS • DECEMBER 1996

Yoram Gross

Pre-production: 12/96 - 6/96
Production: 6/96 - 5/97
Post-production: 5/97 - 12/97

Principal credits:
Director: Steve Jojoziel, Brendan Manak, Piers Austin
Producer: Verlie Simpson, Roger Le Messure, Ron Take
Executive producer: Michael Bousfield, Joan Kent

Writers: Graeme Koeysl, Elizabeth Celeman, Peter Baier, Anthony Ellis, Mac Eudon, Chris Messina, Matthew Bates, Damon Parsons, Everett De Riche, Graham Hartley, Ed. Gann, Ray Beely, Andrew Kelly
D.O.P: Craig Bardon
Editor: Peter Caronelis, Stephen Evans

Distribution company:
B-12, 24/7

Production company: B-12, 24/7

Production associate: Yoram Gross

Production design: Michael McColl

Assistant editor: Andrew Knight

Post-production: 12/96 - 6/96
Production: 6/96 - 5/97
Post-production: 5/97 - 12/97

Principal credits:
Director: Peter D. Smith
Music: Peter D. Smith

Music: S.A. Film Corporation

Government Agency Investment
Development: S.A. Film Corporation

The spinoff Danni, Fally and Frances find they have a lot in common and through Frances' psychic powers and shared adventures, in an ethos cruel and intolerant world, an unbreakable bond is produced - a pact to be 3-EV.

SPELLBINDER II: THE LAND OF THE DRAGON LION

Production company: Film Australia Network

Produced by: FCA/93-97

Principal credits:
Director: Noel Price
Producer: Neil Price

Executive producer: Rod Saunders

Associate producer: Ziz Wiike

Screenwriter: Mark Smithers, John Thomas

Director of photography: Dianne Batterham

Production design: Rod Saunders

Costume designer: Julie Moddell

Government Agency Investment

Production: FFC, Film Victoria

CAST

Heathcote Ditchell

Children's fantasy series.

See previous issues for details on Simze de Beauvoir's Babies.

THE TERRITORIANS WHIPPING BOY

Television series

Cosmo Kids

Production company: B-12, 24/7

Running time: 22 minutes

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Directed by: Todd Entertainment

Script supervisor: Carolyn Alperin

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Production: FFC, Film Victoria

CAST

Heathcote Ditchell

Children's fantasy series.

See previous issues for details on Simze de Beauvoir's Babies.
## The Critics Find Heavenly Peace in Kansas City; The Rats Rank Second

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<thead>
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<th>Tom Ryan</th>
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### Notes

- "Nihil obstat: Latin, "nothing stands in the way" [Words appearing on the title page or elsewhere in the preliminary pages ... indicating that it has been approved as free of doctrinal or moral error]."
- 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).

### Credits

- The critics are: Bill Collins (The Spectator), Barbara Creel (The Age), Sandra Hall (The Sydney Morning Herald), Paul Harrde (The Green Guide), The Age), Stan James (The Adelaide Advertiser), Adrian Martin (The Age, "The Week in Film", Radio National), Tom Ryan (The Sunday Age), David Stratton (Variety, SBS); and Brian Williams (The Australian).

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**Image:** Image of the page from the Cinéma Papers issue, December 1996.
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