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Cinema Papers #118 July 1997

Scott Murray

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Cinema Papers #118 July 1997

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MTV Publishing Ltd, Abbotsford, 78p

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EVERYONE TOGETHER NOW

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Here we go again, with all the toys, trinkets and tricks a Techno Boy and Techno Girl could ever want!

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MELBOURNE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

It’s Year 46 for the Melbourne International Film Festival, and the Executive Director is Sandra Sdraulig. This is her first year in charge, and she’s found it a challenge: “It’s been fantastic. Because a festival has so many different demands, it’s pushed me personally, which has been a great challenge and a great experience.”

“T’ve tried to spend a bit of time identifying experts in the industry that can enhance my own programming style. Hence, I’ve opted for a more curatorial process alongside my own style. Hence, I’ve opted for a more eclectic mix of programmes and retro-fest.”

Says Sdraulig: “The theme is a good film is a great journey. It’s really about journeys to other spaces, cultural, stylistic spaces. Hopefully we’ll create an environment where people are exchanging ideas too, so the journey is about people learning as well; exchanges of information and knowledge as well.”

The Festival this year will include programmes focusing on Jazz Music, Spanish cinema, Theo Angelopoulos (featuring his 1995 film, Ulysses’s Gaze), Sergio Leone and Studio Ghibli.

The Melbourne International Film Festival runs from 24 July to 10 August, and will be screening at the Capitol Theatre, the Forum, and the State Film Theatre in Melbourne.

BRISBANE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

The Brisbane International Film Festival is entering its sixth year. Anne Démé-Gerse has been Festival Director since the beginning, and was instrumental in its inception.

Says Démé-Gerse: “I was the project officer who got the project together initially. In conjunction with a range of people, I got together a statement of what we were trying to do, and we drew up a programming grid, which still governs it.”

“What we’re really trying to do, because Brisbane doesn’t have the range of screenings and theatrical releases that Sydney and Melbourne do, is to broaden people’s cinema-going experience, to broaden their taste, and to give people access to things that they wouldn’t see here at all.”

Démé-Gerse believes that the Festival has actually broadened audiences’ taste, and that film distributors are able to screen films in Brisbane that they wouldn’t have been able to before.

As for highlights in this year’s Festival, Démé-Gerse has assembled an eclectic mix of programmes and retrospectives that include:

• Two silent films from Herbert Brench, A Kiss for Cinderella (1922) and Peter Pan (1924)
• A Dennis Hopper retrospective, Spotlight on Hopper, looking at him as both actor and director
• Hong Kong Kung Fu director Tsui Hark’s films at midnight screenings
• A Stanley Kwan retrospective, with a possible guest visit from Kwan himself
• A look at a selection of young Japanese directors
• A schlack horror midnight-to-dawn session

The Brisbane International Film Festival runs from 31 July to 10 August at Hoyts Regent Cinema in Brisbane.

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6TH BRISBANE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL
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2. Your film must include a set of wings (bird, plane, butterfly - any wings will do) other than in the opening and closing credits.
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You have 50 days - from the 22nd May 1997 to 18 July 1997 - to make your film. Contact the Festival office on (07) 3220 0444 to obtain an entry form.

BRISBANE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL GREATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGES THE ASSISTANCE OF THE QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT THROUGH FILM QUEENSLAND.
**1997 QUEENSLAND NEW FILMMAKERS AWARDS**

The Queensland New Filmmakers Awards were announced on 30 April, and, while the list of winners is extensive, the highlights are as follows:

**Best Overall Production**
Wake (Michael Badorek) & Fugalphinder (Michelle Warner)

**Best Overall Director**
Sarah-Jane Woulahan (Stomping Ground)

**Most Original Script**
Shut Eye (Stewart Klein)

**Outstanding Cinematography**
Ivan Sen (Sleepers)

**Excellence in Editing**
Kirsty Bruce (Web)

**Most Promising New Filmmaker**
Kui Jenkins (Sleepers), Michael Spencer (Tracks)

**Best Actor (Male)**
Sean Ryan (Tragic But True)

**Best Actor (Female)**
Liesel Badorek (Since I Fell For You)

**Best New Female Talent**
Sarah-Jane Woulahan (Stomping Ground)

**Best Sound Design**
Liam Price (Stomping Ground)

**Most Popular Film**
The TV Show (Naomi Just)

**ATOM WINNERS**

The Australian Teachers of Media Awards were announced during a function at the National Gallery of Victoria on 23 May, and the winners are:

**Best Children’s Television Book Bug – Ben and the Alien Invasion** (Mick Connolly)

**Best Television Series/Serial**
Wild Relations (Producer: David Luffman, Jeremy Hogarth)

**Best Television Drama**
G.P. – Cerimony of Innocence (Peter Andrikidis)

**Best Short Fiction**
From Sand to Celluloid – Round Up (Rima Tamou)

**Best Experimental/Innovative Production**
Faces 1976-1996 (Sue Ford)

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**SHORT FILM FORUM**
**ANA DZENIS REPORTS ON THE ST KILDA FILM FESTIVAL**

FORUM, "THE FUTURE OF SHORT FILM PRODUCTION"

Amongst its initiatives this year, the 14th St Kilda Film Festival introduced several programmes of international films. "New British Cinema", presented by the Australian Film Institute in association with The British Council, highlighted films from the British Film Institute and the Arts Council of England co-produced by the BBC and Channel Four. In addition, the programme "Confessions of a Filmmaker", selected by guest curator Lawrence Johnstoun, was a special retrospective of short films from Australian and overseas directors. Festival Director Peter Kaufmann expressed his hope that this international context would "provide audiences and filmmakers alike with a particular perspective from which to value the richness of our filmmaking traditions as well as to appreciate short film as a definitive form in its own right".

In this context, a forum chaired by Hugh Short (Australian Film Commission) was convened to consider "The Future of the Short Film", and to take the opportunity of comparing Britain and Australia in terms of government funding and the increasing role of broadcasters in the production of short films. Andy Powell (British Film Institute) spoke of a generously-government-funded BFI which was responsible for many new initiatives. His particular project, The New Directors Scheme, was predicated on a desire to create greater visibility for emerging artists, even though the ratio of script submissions to funded projects remained small. Powell argued that television was the most likely exhibiting medium and the best way for shorts to get to the maximum audience.

In a comparative Australian context, Carole Sklan from ABC and Joy Toma from SBS (Eat Carpet) provided examples of many innovative short film projects from their respective organizations. Sklan spoke of the Microdocs and The Short Wave series, Race Around the World documentaries and the LOUD initiatives. She suggested that increasingly the ABC wanted to form relationships with graduates from film schools. Toma spoke of SBS and Eat Carpet's commitment to the short film and described the success of such projects as Carpet Burns, Interventions and Auteur TV. Toma said that SBS purchased short films for $100 per minute and encouraged more submissions.

Cynthina Mann (Australian Film Institute) described a situation where short films were enjoying a higher profile, with more initiatives and diverse screening opportunities. She reiterated the fact that the AFI remained the only distributor picking up short films on a regular basis.

When it came to issues of funding, David Tiley (Australian Film Commission) described an AFC driven by a developmental agenda. In a time where new technology had become ubiquitous, he regarded the future of the short film being essentially linked to digital production. He did, however, conclude provocatively that "feral is fundamental" – the valorization, it seems, of some kind of essential, instinctual practice.

It was enlightening to be at a forum on the future of the short film which began with a screening of a short film, The Snag In Dog, directed and produced by Australia's Anna Tasla Zarnick, Adrian Martin (film critic and commentator) presented a thought-provoking paper titled "The Seconds Pile Up", which began by linking Zarnick's film formally and narratively with Jean Rouch's Gare du Nord, one of the episodes in the French New Wave anthology film (Paris Par V etc...) from the early 60s. Martin thereby focused attention on a different 'international context' – the international history of the short film in all its diversity – as well as foregrounding its artistic issues. Martin said, "I am fascinated by the aesthetics of the short film - an underdeveloped and underdiscussed area, if ever there was one. The artistic challenges of this area are very special, I think, very particular. Short films are most pleasing to me [...] when there is a fit between form and concept, between idea and substance. The short film is a very condensed, crystalline form. There are no seconds to waste, and yet to grab a spectator, to hold him or her, to make them feel as if they have journeyed through some kind of well-formed block of time and space and incident and emotion, that is no easy thing."

Martin noted that there are more short films around than ever before, and reminded us that directors such as Godard, Ackerman, Wenders, Varda, Jarmusch, Egoyan and Ruiz are constantly making shorts – at the same time as they are making their features. And yet, he argued, the short film remains undervalued, under-appreciated and not often a subject for close formal attention. We need to heed this call to revise the history of neglect, to stop marginalizing the 'short' in the context of the 'long' and to regard these 'jewels' as something more dense and complex than fleeting fragments or cracks between features.

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**SPEAK!**

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ABC Cuts

ABC budget cuts in May saw the axing of a number of film-related projects.

Radio National's long-standing film programme, "The Week in Film", currently presented by film critic Adrian Martin, will continue only until the end of the year. According to Martin, the show was seen to be dispensable due to its duration (15 minutes a week) and coverage of film on Radio National's daily arts programme. He adds that the show has more than 15,000 listeners per week, receives a lot of positive feedback and has been an institution for over 25 years.

Another film-related project to lose its funding is Pete Castaldi's proposed television series looking at the Australian film industry. The series, a mix of vox pops, reports on State and Federal film office productions, new media (with John Hind as Net Surfer), profiles on film-related jobs from caterer to executive producer, film reviews and reports from overseas correspondents, has been in development for four years, and as of late May, Castaldi was still waiting for confirmation of the ABC's decision.

Says Castaldi: "It's sad in a way because the ABC's decision reflects their attitude towards the film industry, and their blind ignorance to how real that industry is in our culture. They see film as 'fillem' - just light entertainment. It's their loss, but I think it's appalling that the ABC does not give the film industry the coverage it deserves."

If the funding cuts are confirmed, Castaldi doesn't see it as the end of the project. With 13 people already committed to the series, and interest being shown from pay-TV and in-flight productions, Castaldi believes the show will go on. "It's a big loss to the ABC audience, though", he admits sadly.

Marco Ferreri

Marco Ferreri, born in Milano on 11 May 1928, died in early May.

Ferreri made his first features in Spain, including El Pisto (1958) and the suppressed Los Chicos (1959). His third and final Spanish film, El Cochečito (1960), was a success at the Venice Film Festival, and he followed with an Italian feature, L'Aprè Regina, generally regarded as the first of his great satires on the couple - a theme that would find its greatest evolution in L'Ultima Donna (The Last Woman, 1976).

The first feature of Ferreri's to gain international notice was Dillinger e Morte (Dillinger Is Dead, 1969), which was followed by the equally-applauded L'Udienza (The Audience, 1971), a savage religious satire. Still, it was his 1973 film, La Grande Bouffe, that fearless, less-reckless look at food and sex, that made Ferreri internationally famous. L'Ultima Donna was also successful, though it was banned in many countries, and its electric-knife sequence is one which still causes great unease on reflection (at least to men).

Ferreri's eccentric next few films were picked up by major festivals (most notably Cannes, which remained typically loyal), but were not as widely seen.

Ferreri's cinema is one of bold ideas, an œuvre described by Uno Mirciché as one of "gentle ferocity". In this tepid era of filmmakers-as-gutless-careerists, Ferreri's courageous, political, idiosyncratic filmmaking will be greatly missed.

The Budget and the Film Industry

Total government funding for the film and television industry as announced in the Federal Budget in May 1997/98 totals $114.83 million, a drop of $6.8 million from the previous year's funding.

Says Cathy Robinson, Chief Executive of the AFC: "The Federal Budget is, unequivocally, a good news story for the Australian film and television industry. The Government has shown its commitment to industry."

For the Government's response to the Gonski Report however, the industry will have to wait until later this year.

Forthcoming European Film Festivals

The 42nd Valladolid International Film Festival in Spain will run a retrospective focusing on New Zealand cinema. "Land of the Long White Cloud" will include a selection of 15 features and short films from the past two decades, and continues the Festival's interest in Oceania, after its wonderful Australian retrospective last year. The Valladolid Film Festival will run from 24 October to 1 November 1997.

The 12th Umeå International Film Festival in Sweden runs this year from 19-27 September. It is the biggest film festival in Northern Scandinavia, non-competitive, and screens about 200 films over its eight days. Films screened are the usual mix of international films, short films, documentaries and new Swedish films, but there is also a focus on women filmmakers, a guest's choice programme, and silent films screened with a live orchestral soundtrack.

John Duigan's A Life in Film

Director John Duigan, whose most recent film is The Leading Man, talks about films that are important to him.

One film I would certainly cite is AMARCORD (Federico Fellini, 1974), which is a great favourite of mine. I love the kind of free-wheeling nature and structure of the film, and its affection for people in the world really. I think the great thing about Fellini is his exuberant humanism; he delighted in the variety of human foibles, and I think that Amarcord is perhaps the most completely-realised of his vision; for me anyway.

As somebody who come from a design background, the starting images in it stay with me, like the occasion when this huge ship - I think it's called the Rex - a modern liner, sails past the town, and all the townsfolk get into small boats and wait for it for hours. The water is completely flat, and they're all dozing, and suddenly out of the night comes this huge, obviously-artificial ship, with almost no attempt to make it realistic in any orthodox cinematic sense.

But that is such a perfect realisation of the moment, because they are seeing this thing as symbolic of an almost incomprehensibly rich and wonderfully magical world that's beyond their financial reach completely. So, it's perfect that it is such a theatrical image.

I love the moment where his mad uncle climbs to the top of a tree and is calling out in a lament: "I want a woman, I want a woman." I love the way the seasons are expressed, and the almost snowball-like puff seeds that blow through the streets, and many of the characters, like the seductive pouting girl and her green dress, leaning provocatively against street posts and strutting through the back streets of the docks.

Another one I might mention is Jiri Menzel's film, CLOSELY WATCHED TRAINS (Ostré Sledované Vlaky, 1966), which was made during the Czech spring. It is a black-and-white film about a young boy and his first job working on the railway station. Many images in that, but one which always stays with me is this enormous sense of yearning that the film has of this young man seeing women for the first time. There's a pretty girl who works as a conductor on one of the trains that comes through. It's a fabulous recurring element because the trains slip through, and she's there as a fleeting presence, smiling, and there's always a possibility of an exchange of kisses, but it's usually just her round, smiling face that you see, and the train's gone again. As an expression of teenage angst and the beginnings of understanding the world of politics, and external threat, it's a terrific evocation. I tried to express some similar themes in films that I made about teenagers, such as Flirting (1990) and The Year My Voice Broke (1987).

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Appointments

A new company, Australian Silicon Studio Training Centre (ASSSTC), has been launched in Brisbane, and has appointed John Gillies as its first general manager. ASSSTC is an international facility for training digital artists, and is one of three such centres in the world.
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Karen Swinburn joins Zero One Zero as a Designer/Editor, after 3 years as a Paintbox artist with Sky Channel.

Also joining Zero One Zero as a senior colourist is Les Rudge, recently of Complete Post, and Colin Tate as General Manager. Tate was previously National Advertising and Marketing Manager of Encore.

The non-linear post facility Gunpowder has employed film specialist Peter Bradstock as Facilities Manager. Bradstock has more than 16 years experience in film production and post-production. His last position was with Negthink, and he has extensive knowledge of Avid editing processes.

CORRIGENDUM

Transcription gremlins were at work in Peter Maloney's review of Lust & Revenge (Cinema Papers, no. 116, May 1997, p. 48). The relevant passages should read (with corrections in square brackets):

"Lust & Revenge is not exactly an understated title, but it heralds one of the most accessible of Cox's films, an amusing and entertaining blend of [Cox's] regulars who turned up briefly to contribute to the joke and to Cox's cause. [...]"

At the end, the Art Critic, plied with alcohol, fails to see that he is being set up as a pseudo-expert. He delivers himself of authoritative opinions on the commissioned statue, praising [the] tropes and style of the lines and curves of the sculpture. While the couple in the statue are wearing no clothes, Cox finally leaves us with the image of the Art (Film) Critic, who is wearing 'emperor's clothes' and whose opinions are threadbare.

In "Introduction" (p. 74), the director of photography for Amy was incorrectly listed as Keith Waggstaff. The DOP is David Parker.

In Barrie Smith's "Post for Anyone?" (Cinema Papers, no. 117, June 1997, p. 54), Mark Richards should have been credited at Animation Design, not Adimex.

The average for Stavros Andonis Ethymiou's True Love and Chaos in the "Eidetic Eight" should have been 7.

Cinema Papers apologizes for the errors.

10 TOP 10 FILMS

With the recent release of two films with numerical titles, Cinema Papers has compiled the definitive list of the top ten numbered films, starting with the first, and working our way through to the tenth, if not the last.

The First Legion (Douglas Sirk, 1953)
The Second Face (Jack Bernhard, 1950)
The Third Generation (Die Gritte Generation, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, 1979)
The Fourth Man (Die Vierde Man, Paul Verhoeven, 1979)
The Fifth Element (Luc Besson, 1997)
The Sixth Week (John Simeon Block, 1978)
The Seventh Seal (Det Sjunde Inseglet, Ingmar Bergman, 1957)
The Eighth Day (La Matinée Jour, Iaco Van Dornmel, 1997)
The Ninth Configuration (William Peter Blatty, 1980)
The Tenth Victim (Il Decimo Vittima, Elio Petri, 1965)

And finally, The Last Movie (Dennis Hopper, 1971)

LETTERS

Dear Editor,

When I read Scott Murray's review of Tunnel Vision (Cinema Papers, no. 114, February 1997, p. 39), my reaction was one of despair. Not because I think the review was negative; you have every right to say what you think. (I thought the script was much better than the finished film.) However, for you to say: "Tunnel Vision [...] helps dispel one of the great myths of Australian cinema: namely, that Australian-made American-style B-grade thrillers with imported lead actors were a product of the much-reviled 10BA era."

Scott, with all due respect, this point shows that you are either ignorant, biased towards this genre or have another agenda. I have always believed that you have been a shining star amongst the ignorant, stir-mongers or green-eyed monsters that surround this business. I also believed that someone in your position, and with your knowledge and background, would be above such a ridiculous comment.

Firstly, Tunnel Vision was never conceived as an "American-style B-grade thriller". It was pitched to me as a dark physiological thriller with an interesting twist. The writer-director, Clive Fleury, suggested an all-Australian cast but would entertain a British co-lead if it became a deal issue. It did. Beyond Films, which put up cold, hard cash, demanded it. It was a deal-breaker. They suggested that an "international name was necessary to protect their investment".

The other elements and setting were Australian. In short, the film never pretended to be anything other than a well-crafted thriller and it sold well internationally, unlike a lot of films that you have so highly commended.

Secondly, 10BA was not "killed off". It was revised; it is still very much alive and has been used to finance many films since. Ninety-nine percent of the other elements and setting were Australian. In short, the film never pretended to be anything other than a well-crafted thriller and it sold well internationally, unlike a lot of films that you have so highly commended.

Good - insomuch as it trained actors and technicians. Bad - as it attracted a lot of hungry 'bean counters' who were only interested in making a quick buck. However, those 10BA days employed and taught a lot of people.

As for your 10BA-FCC list, I would hope that John Dingwall, Posie Graeme-Evans, Craig Lahiff, David Eillick, Hugh Keays-Byrne, Lynda House, Ross Matthews, John Sexton, Ian Barry and the other producers and directors from that list will also respond to your critical comments.

Scott Murray replies:

There are several puzzling aspects to this letter from producer Phil Avalon, who has always been a good friend of Cinema Papers. Many of Phil's criticisms seem based on a mis-reading of the article; I suspect he and I are in far more agreement than he supposes.

1. Phil finds "ridiculous" my description of Tunnel Vision as "Australian-made American-style B-grade thriller with imported lead". But Tunnel Vision is "Australian-made"; it exclusively follows the narrative patterns, structures and trick devices of the "American-style" thriller; whatever the intent, it has sadly ended up as a "B-grade"; and it has an "imported lead".

Perhaps Phil concluded that I was "implying the film was set in America, which is not the case. 2. At times, Phil writes as if he believes I am criticizing 10BA. Nothing could have been further from my mind. 10BA was in several important ways superior to the largely single-door (i.e., government-controlled) policy we have now. (I have written extensively on this elsewhere.)"

Phil says 10BA was not "killed off" - well, in name only. The fact is 10BA was emasculated as a serious mechanism for funding independent Australian production, and is now a heedless and armless corpse expiring its last few sad breaths.

51-1 is great for American films, but, outside of the MovieWorld Studios, most features originated and made in Australia today exist only if they have substantial FFC or AFC involvement. They are not independent films like those of the true 10BA days, when investors and filmmakers had some power, not just film bureaucracies (however well-intentioned).

Phil's criticisms of 10BA ignore the fact that some of its worst offenders are still with us and are no doubt jockeying for a slice of the proposed FLICS action. Don't blame 10BA; blame those who exploited the system, for they will manipulate any system that a somnolent government allows to be ripped off.

It is for that very reason, and to maintain Australia's enviable record in developing fresh talent, that a balanced combination of controlled 10BA-like incentives and direct government investment would be the best of all possible worlds.

As for the list of films to which Avalon refers, I did not seek to criticize. All I did was cite ten titles and ask the reader which were 10BA and which were FCC. Anecdotal evidence suggests that most people thought most (if not all) of the films were 10BA, thereby proving my original point: "that much FCC product is indistinguishable from 10BA days".

HE 1997 FESTIVAL International du Film, Cannes, celebrated its fiftieth birthday with 50,000 attendees (actors, producers, directors, journalists, publicists, distributors, film technicians, etc.) flocking from all corners of the film world to pay homage to the Festival's popularity and importance.

The Cannes Festival has been a Mecca to filmmakers since it was founded in opposition to Mussolini's high jacking of the Venice Film Festival in the 1930s. Due to the outbreak of war in 1939, the first Cannes Festival was aborted. It took place later in 1946, and since that time, through the impact of the French New Wave on Hollywood and global cinema, Cannes has retained its status as the world's premier film festival, and Hollywood's favourite launching-pad for its product into Europe. (No Festivals were held in 1948 and 1950, hence the 50th Festival in 1997.)

Understandably, then, expectations were high this anniversary year. Everything from a café crème to a suite at the Majestic was inflated by at least one-third above last year's already-exorbitant prices. Shop pavements outside boutiques were lined with red carpet, and red banners sporting the Festival's golden palm insignia billowed gaily from hundreds of poles lining La Croisette.

Yet despite the hoopla, which this year included dragoons on horseback and a ludicrous threat by French police to shoot down a 40-foot tall effigy of Howard Stern advertising Private Parts in the bay, there were intimations early in the Festival that this year's may have trouble fulfilling its promise.

Most disappointing was Luc Besson's Festival opener, The Fifth Element, a clumsily put-together sci-fi spectacular starring Bruce Willis, Gary Oldman, Ian Holm and Milla Jovovich. Derivative and unappealing, with ideas filched from vastly superior films (Blade Runner, Star Wars, Dune, The Twelve Monkeys), it won brickbats from French critics for owing more to Hollywood culture than to French cinema.

Notwithstanding this poor reception, The Fifth Element went on to lead USA box-office receipts by taking $17.2 million the following weekend, and took an explosive two million admissions within a single week in France. This confirms what everyone knows: that Opening Night at Cannes is the most important slot in the Festival, but that critical acclaim (or its opposite) has little to do with how well films do at the box-office.

Similarly disappointing was Marco Bellocchio's static psychological drama, Il Principe di Homburg (The Prince of Homburg, Italy; Compétition). Based on Heinrich Von Kleist's last play about a young German prince during the Thirty Years War who wins a military victory but is sentenced to death for disobeying an order, it fails to explain to contemporary audiences the mind-set of the ruling and military classes who value honour and obedience above life.

A more interesting failure was Abel Ferrara's stylish but exploitative noir psychodrama, The Blackout (USA; Hors Compétition), in which Matthew Modine, convincingly cast against type, plays Matty, a debauched Hollywood star trapped in a downwards spiral of substance-abuse and vice. Ferrara, however, loses control of the film and sacrifices integrity by self-indulgently wallowing in his character's degradation, and by allowing Dennis Hopper to go over the top in yet another loathsome self-parody.

Another curiosity was Johnny Depp's début feature, The Brave (USA; Compétition), a bizarre fantasy about a Native American called Raphael (played by Depp) who agrees to his own torture and death to ensure that his family escapes from the cycle of poverty. The script of The Brave, which is plodding and pretentious, was co-written by Johnny Depp, his brother D. P. Depp and Paul McCudden, with the best intentions.

French President Jacques Chirac flew into Cannes for a celebratory lunch with Jury President Isabel Adjani and a host of former Palme d'Or winners, amid stringent security precautions that saw Cannes cordoned off and patrolled like a city under siege.

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French President Jacques Chirac flew into Cannes for a celebratory lunch with Jury President Isabel Adjani and a host of former Palme d'Or winners, amid stringent security precautions that saw Cannes cordoned off and patrolled like a city under siege.
Michael Winterbottom’s Welcome to Sarajevo (UK; Compétition) is a passionate, partisan attack on the apathy of the West to the war in Bosnia. It invites comparison with Kusturica’s Underground and Angelopoulos’ Ulysses’ Gaze, but is better than both, having a power and immediacy that is driven by palpable “buzz” that in the past has been generated by such Cannes discoveries as The Piano (1993), Underground (1993), Pulp Fiction (1994), and Secrets & Lies (1996). Still, several excellent films had been screened by that time.

Since its inception, there has been a political penumbra around the Cannes Festival. Born in opposition to Fascism, Cannes in its 50th year was also forced to confront the politics of totalitarianism (China), and religious fundamentalism (Iran). Chinese authorities forced Gilles Jacob’s Festival Committee to pull Zhang Yimou’s latest film, Keep Cool, from Compétition, and not until the Festival began was it certain that Zhang Yuan’s excellent Dong Gong Xi Gong (East Palace, West Palace) would be screening in Un Certain Regard.

Winterbottom lets the horror of war speak for itself through both real and simulated scenes of carnage. The storyline emerges gradually from the chaos of these events, centering eventually on an English television reporter, played by Stephen Dillane, who in real life smuggled a war orphan from Sarajevo to England. Gary Oldman’s début feature, Nil By Mouth (UK; Compétition), was one of several confronting films about violence, domestic and otherwise, that were at times difficult to watch. Others include Neil Labute’s The Company of Men (US; Un Certain Regard), a startling tale of male revenge in the workplace against a beautiful and unsuspecting deaf office worker; Michael Heneke’s Funny Games (Austria; Compétition), a nasty meditation on media violence which plays with audience complicity like Man Bites Dog; and Mathieu Kassovitz’s Assassins (France; Compétition), a poorly-executed, ugly film, lacking the invention of La Haine, which dwells on violence while purporting to analyze and condemn it.

Nil By Mouth is by far the most affecting film, its realism having the same shattering effect as Lee Tamahori’s Once Were Warriors, and Ken Loach’s Ladybird, Ladybird. Oldman, who wrote the script as well as directed, clearly hoped to excorize family demons in this deeply-personal film which not only draws heavily on his own recollections of family life with an abusive, alcoholic father, but also features his sister, Laila Morse, as one of a trio of tough, courageous women to whom Oldman pays tribute in the film.

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East Palace, West Palace, named for a public urinal in one of Beijing’s parks where homosexuals gather, was shot without the permission of the Chinese authorities in Beijing, and post-produced in France. Although Zhang’s film screened at the Festivals

PALME d’OR:
Unagi (Shohei Imamura) and Ta’m e Guilaod (Abbas Kiarostami)
PRIX DU CINQUANTIÈME:
Youssef Chahine
GRAND PRIX:
The Sweet Hereafter (Atom Egoyan)
PRIX D’INTERPRÉTATION FÉMININE:
Kathy Burke (Nil by Mouth)
PRIX D’INTERPRÉTATION MASCULINE:
Sean Penn (She’s So Lovely)
PRIX DE LA MISE EN SCÈNE:
Happy Together (Wong Kar-Wai)
PRIX DU MEILLEUR SCÉNARIO:
James Schamus (Ice Storm)
PRIX DU JURY:
Western (Manuel Poirer)
GRAND PRIX TECHNIQUE DE LA COMMISSION SUPÉRIEURE TECHNIQUE DE L’IMAGE ET DU SON:
Thierry Arbogast (She’s So Lovely and The Fifth Element)
PRIX DE LA CAMÉRA d’OR:
Suzaku (Naomi Kawase)
MENTION, CAMÉRA d’OR:
La Vie de Jesus (Bruno Dumont)
25RD EUCENICAL PRIZE:
The Sweet Hereafter
EUCENICAL JURY MENTION:
La Buena Estrella (Ricardo Franco)

Court Métrage (Shorts)

PALME d’OR: Is It the Design on the Wrapper? (Tessa Sheridan)
PRIX DU JURY:
Leonie (Lieven Debrauwere) and Les Vacances (Emmanuelle Bercot)
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val, Chinese Customs confiscated Zhang's passport ten days before it began, while the director was travelling from Hong Kong to his home in Beijing. Rumour had it that Zhang was under house arrest.

It was also thought prior to the Festival that Abbas Kiarostami's The Taste of Cherries, which had been banned by Iranian officials in and outside Iran, would not be screening in Competition because it deals with suicide, a difficult subject for religious fundamentalists. The threat was averted when Kiarostami took the matter to higher authorities, and The Taste of Cherries, classically simple and life-affirming, went on to win the Palme d'Or jointly with Shohei Imamura's Unagi (The Eel, Japan).

Another politically-controversial film was Al Masir (Destiny), from Egyptian director Youssef Chahine. A trenchantly anti-Muslim fundamentalist film set in 12th century Andalusia in Spain, Destiny was moved from its Hors Competition slot into Competition, where it was awarded the 50th Anniversary Prize, more in recognition of its humanism and uncompromising plea for intellectual freedom than its cinematic qualities.

Other popular films screening early in the Festival included two films in Quinzaine des Réalisateurs, Alain Berliner's Ma Vie en Rose (My Life with Rose, Belgium-France-UK), a magical film about a little boy who thinks he's a little girl, and Il Bagna Turco (Turkish Bath, Italy-Turkey-Spain); and Liv Ullmann's tender, beautifully-crafted telling of Anna Bergman's illicit love-affaire, Enskilda Samtal (Private Confessions, Sweden), in Un Certain Regard. Already Palme d'Or winners, amongst others.

To the disappointment of many, the Cannes Jury chose to play safe this year, and the awards showed a tedious evenhandedness, dictated by both the lack of any major discoveries in this watershed year, and political considerations.

Slettaune's Budbringeren (Junk Mail, Norway), an edgy black comedy about an Oslo postman screening in La Semaine de la Critique, was setting up a buzz in the marketplace. Hopes were still high in the countdown to the Official Birthday Weekend celebrations.

French President Jacques Chirac flew into Cannes for a celebratory lunch with Jury President Isabel Adjani and a host of former Palme d'Or winners, amid stringent security precautions that saw Cannes cordoned off and patrolled like a city under siege. Later that evening, fireworks emblazoned the sky as thousands of onlookers thronged La Croisette, popping cameras and straining necks for a glimpse of a galaxy of stars and filmmakers, who took more than two hours to ascend the red-carpeted staircase of the Grand Lumière to a fanfare of trumpets.

Inside the cavernous auditorium, Jeanne Moreau hosted a ceremony lasting barely forty-five minutes which honoured twenty-nine past Palmeiros: Francis Ford Coppola, Martin Scorsese, Emir Kusturica, Henri Colpe, Michelangelo Antonioni, Andrzej Wajda, Paolo and Vittorio Taviani, Francesco Rosi, Alan Bridges, Joel and Ethan Coen, Claude Lelouch, Richard Lester, Mike Leigh, Chen Kaige, Jane Campion, Mohammad Lakhdar Hamina, Serif Goren, Costa-Gavras, Bille August, Anselmo Duarte, Roland Joffe, Steven Soderbergh, Wim Wenders, Robert Altman, Jerry Schatzberg, Shohei Imamura, and David Lynch. A rare moment in cinema history, they gathered on stage to thunderous applause.

The planned highlight of the evening was to be the personal conferring upon Ingmar Bergman of the Palme des Palmes d’Or, in belated recognition of the great Swedish director whose work Cannes had always studiously ignored. Instead, Liv Ullmann, whose Private Confessions was scripted by Bergman, presented the award to Linn Ullmann, her daughter by Bergman, who accepted the Palme on her absent father's behalf.

However, for many the most fascinating and rewarding event of the Festival was the Colloquium on the future of cinema, "Rendevous du Cinquième: Le Cinéaste, le Cinéphile et le Critique". Chaired by Bernardo Bertolucci, the old chestnut about whether film is dead was given fresh life by the passions unleashed by the topic amongst the panel members, who included directors Jane Campion, Roman Polanski, Andrzej Wajda, Dennis Hopper, Theo Angelopoulos, Jerry Schatzberg and Mohammad Lakhdar Hamina, and film critics Derek Malcolm (UK), Annette Insdorf (USA) and Thierry Jousse (France), amongst others. By day eight of the Festival, however, it was difficult to ignore that the Festival was running out of steam. Wim Wenders’ eagerly-anticipated The End of Violence (Germany, USA; Competition), a confusing, ambitious attempt to explore the meaning and consequences of violence, using an LA setting, high-profile actors (Bill Pullman, Andie McDowell, Gabriel Byrne) and a jumble of genres, failed to inspire, although critics were generally indulgent. Just as disappointing was Palmaire, Frances Rosi’s La Tregua (The Truce, Italy; Competition), a lack-lustre and overly-restrained adaptation of Primo Levi’s account of the return to life of a Jewish concentration camp survivor (John Turturro), which is so lacking in liveliness that it requires the swelling strings of an orchestra to announce emotion.

Although Australian films fared less well than in previous years, there was still much of which to be proud. Samantha Lang’s impressive first feature, The Well (Competition), seemed to divide the critics, Janet Maslin of The New York Times and David Stratton of Variety praising it highly, while others found it pretentious. Stephan Elliot’s Welcome to Woop Woop (Hors Comptétion) baffled critics rather than divided them. Audiences were generally unprepared for what was accurately labelled the ‘weirdness’ of Elliott’s full-frontal attack on the ‘Ugly Australian’, which Elliott has masked ambivalently with affection. Screened as a work in progress, it is to be hoped that the final cut will make it home, too.

Australians Guy Pearce and Russell Crowe were well received critically as the leads opposite Kevin Spacey and Kim Basinger in Curtis Hanson’s Comptétion entry, LA Confidential, based on James Ellroy’s novel about police corruption in the LAPD during the 1950s.

In the Marché, Bill Bennett’s Kiss or Kill, Craig Lahiff’s Heaven’s Burning, Chris Kennedy’s Doing Time for Patsy Cline, Lee Rogers’ Dust Off the Wings, Cherie Nowlan’s Thank God He Met Lizzie and Stavros Andonis Efthymiou’s True Love and Chaos created steady interest.

Contenders for the Palme d’Or appeared thin on the ground until the screening of Ang Lee’s The Ice Storm (USA), Atom Egoyan’s The Sweet Hereafter (Canada), and Wong Kar-Wai’s Happy Together (Hong Kong). The Sweet Hereafter became the frontrunner, a judgement that was almost vindicated, but not quite, winning both the Ecumenical Prize “for exploring the vulnerability and mystery of the human condition”, and the Cannes Grand Prix.

To the disappointment of many, the Cannes Jury chose to play safe this year, and the awards showed a tedious evenhandedness, dictated by both the lack of any major discoveries in this watershed year, and political considerations. This saw Welcome to Sarajevo being ignored completely in the awards, most likely because it was viewed by many as taking sides in the Bosnian conflict, and Nick Cassavetes’ She’s So Lovely (aka She’s de Lovely and Call it Love) winning two awards, Sean Penn for Best Actor and Thierry Arnaud for Best Cinematography, a prize he won for both She’s So Lovely and Besson’s The Fifth Element.
Festivals

EW SHORT FILM festivals around the world have achieved the status of the Oberhausen International Short Film Festival. True, shorts festivals tend not to receive the same recognition as their feature-bearing brethren, but a handful have pushed their way to the fringes of public consciousness. In Europe, where shorts are treated with at least some respect, the two heavyweights are Clermont-Ferrand in France and Oberhausen in Germany. And the two couldn’t be more different.

Clermont-Ferrand prefers straightforward fiction films, with a particular fondness for anything to do with relationships between men and women - or any combination thereof. Experimental films and documentaries are barely, if at all, represented, and a lot of the work is longish (more than twenty minutes), with the structure of a mini-feature. Like many French festivals, there is a significant commercial dimension to Clermont and the Festival market is a major attraction. The market is attended by many of the wealthier European broadcasters, and a number of national film commissions and institutes from around the world, including the Australian Film Commission.

Oberhausen, on the other hand, sees itself at the vanguard of experimental filmmaking. Films are selected almost exclusively on their “artistic merit”, with originality and obscurity being the recurring themes. Both Festivals have an active policy to include work from as many countries as possible, but in Oberhausen, interestingly, a significant percentage of work is from Korea, Japan and other parts of Asia.

Oberhausen is a small city of around 250,000, located near the Rhine River in west central Germany. It is a manufacturing centre and part of the greater Ruhr industrial district - one of the most intensely developed industrial regions in the world. There is no university or art college in Oberhausen; it is a most unremarkable town and offers little of interest to the tourist - culturally or otherwise. So how did it spawn such a large festival?

Angela Hardt has held the reins at Oberhausen for eight years; this was her last Festival. According to Hardt, a lot of evening colleges and open university-style institutions opened up in Germany to rebuild the country after the devastation of the war. One of these was the Adult Cinema Institute, which began in the 1950s quite near Oberhausen. A lot of “leftists” and intellectuals were attracted to the institute because of its “working-class” character and from this various film clubs and societies began to emerge. One of these was the Oberhausen Festival.

It is hard to say how much of the character of Oberhausen today is Hardt’s vision and how much is a product of its history and the nature of the German film community. “In France, short film is fiction”, says Hardt. “When they talk about documentaries, that is something very different. Likewise, animation is animation and they run a festival just for that. Experimental film is seen as something in the art field. The Germans don’t see such a separation. For me, art is the most important element of filmmaking and experimental film expresses this the most.”

Regardless of their artistic worth, I have to say that for me it was almost impossible to sit through...
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To be remarked upon only by way of perceived shortcomings is an unfortunate fact of the projectionist's life. "Other people have white-out or delete keys, but everyone sees the projectionist's mistake", confesses projectionist Alan Butterfield.

Butterfield's skills can be evidenced — but preferably not noticed, according to his thesis of the job — nightly at Sydney's Chauvel Cinema and at the Sydney Film Festival. It's an occupation Butterfield has pursued since university days in Canberra in the early 1980s, via the National Library (before the succession of what was to become the NFSA), the AFI-managed Chauvel in the 'good old days' of the NFT, and the AFTRS.

A self-confessed film buff and aspiring filmmaker who "eventually decided I didn't have any stories to tell", Butterfield says he came to projection from sitting amongst the audience: "That's where my whole point-of-view comes from."

"It's quite easy to project", he explains. "It takes maybe two or three weeks of turning up a couple of nights a week to get a fair idea of what's going on."

The fundamental fact of projection is that a projectionist is a projector operator, but I get very stroppy when people call me an operator. The basic ethic of that is that you know which buttons to press and how to thread a film, but you don't know much more. You won't really know how your machinery works and, if it throws a spanner at you, you won't really know what to do."

A recent task Butterfield remembers fondly was last year's "Dawn of Cinema" programme of early silent cinema. The films weren't labelled head or tail. (Normally, the position of the soundtrack determines which way the film runs.) "I worked it out by text [in the intertitles], but, if I had come across a no-text reel, I might have had great trouble telling which way was left or right. If I came across a Hans Richter film, I'd have great trouble telling you which way is up or down."

As Butterfield tells it, the proliferation of multiplexes with their automated projection systems has led to a de-skilling of projectionists. "More and more knowledge is residing in the technicians, or not as the case may be, and less and less on behalf of the average projectionist. The city cinemas may still have some of the older projectionists who are worthy of being called technicians. In days gone by in mainstream cinemas, projectionists were considered technicians in their own right and the word operator was not heard so often. The projectionists had the experience, if not necessarily the equipment, to make adjustments, to fine-tune the lamp and the sound system."

"Cinema is a finny beast technically because it's a mixture of a clockwork mechanical device and, now, sound technology to the nth degree. Sound is the big area since Dolby appeared; it's where most of the technicians have their skills and where a lot of the investment has gone. The visual part is considered to be somewhat boring. The problems were solved in the '30s, '40s and '50s, the Germans keep making better and better lenses and Kodak makes sharper and sharper film."

Why, then, are so many Monday morning drink-fountain conversations about out-of-focus screenings and the furious hunt for the cinema manager (as happened at the premiere of Bravestreet, when a cinema manager unexpectedly found the star leaning across his desk while a cinema full of tuxedo-clad VIPs waited in the dark)? "What I think is happening is a lot of cinemas are below par in various aspects of their standards and there's no one in authority to say that, because people don't have the measuring equipment to say it's too light, or too dark, or it's distorting."

"Modern technology has taken a lot of the variability out of cinema. But, to me, it's a devaluation of the importance of the audience's viewing experience that's the problem."

PHOTO: MARCO DEL GRANDE
Everyone Together Now...

here are lots of theories about what you need to make a movie. Bend an ear at your local café and you'll probably hear a few being discussed. "All you need is a girl and a gun", said French New Wave director Jean-Luc Godard. "All you need is charm and energy", said Charlie Chaplin. But what if you don't even have two cents to rub together?

At a directors' night at the BFI in London not so long ago, a young man said to Quentin Tarantino: "I really love your movies, and I really want to make a film, but I'm lazy. What's your advice?" Without batting an eye, Tarantino took the question on board: "Gee, I understand what you mean, man. I felt like that at one stage, too, but you've just got to go out there and make it."

There is a certain mystique to independent film directors. They are like magicians, conjuring up visions out of the thin air. People speak in hushed, admiring tones about the likes of Roberto Rodriguez, who reached legendary status for making El Mariachi (1992) for US$7,000 (although the real cost was much higher). Many of these tales seem to come from America, where the story of the individual overcoming remarkable odds to achieve success has a mythical status that is constantly reinvoked. But an independent filmmaker is not simply a lone star toting a gun, a guitar, a camera. Certainly, the low-budget director needs to be remarkably daring, committed and have a powerful motivating energy, but the truth about low-budget filmmaking, more than any other art form, is that it also requires a group of people, all dreaming the same dream and working hard to bring it to life.

Veteran film producer David Hannay suggests that the first-time director should get acting experience: "They should go to acting classes, go to the theatre. Learn about the craft and get to know actors. They will come into contact with actors who are practising their craft rather than talking about it."

When the time comes, you can quickly get together a cast of actors you have faith in. Getting a crew together - sound, camera, art direction - is also essential. But as a low-budget director you might have to take on many roles. "You have to get in there and act, edit, cut sandwiches if need be", says Hannay.

Then, of course, you need some money. A low-budget film is usually defined as being under a million dollars, but a true low-budget film, according to Hannay, is usually less than $300,000: "There are lots of misnomers about budgets, not the least those spread by the filmmakers themselves." Everyone is reluctant to tell you how much their film actually cost, sometimes inflating the budget because they want to sell it at a certain price, or underestimating it so they can market their film as a remarkable achievement because it only cost $7.50 and a couple of postage stamps. Emma-Kate Croghan's Love and Other Catastrophes might have only cost $45,000 to shoot, but needed a further $600,000 before it turned up on our screens.

Low-budget filmmakers are the ones who put their money where their mouths are. They mortgage their houses and their cars if they have them. They start limited partnerships and sell shares to friends, relations, their dentist. It is these truly low-budget filmmakers who will be most seriously affected by the Gonski Report recommendations on the eradication of 10BA tax incentive system and its replacement with FLICS. These new film investment companies are likely to ignore any film under $1.5 million, while...
Low-Budget Filmmaking in Australia
By Annemarie Lopez

making it harder to raise funds from individuals. But why is it that stories of true, low-budget, independent filmmaking seem scarce in Australia? George Mannix, who some years ago produced the low-budget Mad Bomber in Love (video feature, 1991) and currently works for the NSW Film & Television Office, speaks passionately about the role of independent filmmaking and is distressed by what he sees as the culture of dependent filmmaking in Australia: "It is good that there is public money to develop film, but young filmmakers shouldn't abdicate their right to develop as individual talents."

It was during a trip to Moscow in the late 1980s that Mannix found the inspiration for his own foray into low-budget filmmaking: "It was while Glasnost was being implemented but before the coup. Powerful censorship was still in force. Here I met talented, intelligent people and all they wanted was to make films, but young filmmakers shouldn't abdicate their right to develop as individual talents."

Producer David Hannay is an old hand at the low-budget film, having made his first feature film in the 1960s on the overdraft of a coal miner. Hannay has subsequently made films in many countries, from South Africa and Scotland to America. He believes that making a low-budget film in Australia is more difficult than in somewhere like America. In America, he found a completely different filmmaking culture. "People line up there to work for nothing and get fired if they're not working hard enough!" he says. This makes the American independent system, by nature, more elitist, Hannay suggests: "Only kids who have been in film school, then have parents to support them for a couple of years while they're getting experience and working for nothing, can make it."

As a result, they can make a feature in New York for what it costs the AFC to fund a short. Bureaucratic funding-organizations, such as the AFC and the FFC, mean well but they insist on dotting "i"s and crossing "t"s. "It is an unfortunate irony," he says, "that some of the things that make Australia one of the best places to live in the world are also the things that inhibit artistic development and risk-taking."

When it comes to true low-budget or "no-budget" filmmaking in Australia, Hannay points to Murray Fahey as one of the few "genuine articles". Fahey is currently completing his fourth low-budget independent feature film, Dags, a bogus comic documentary on the suburban dag. His first feature, Get Away, Get Away (1992), was shot in two weeks. He had no office at the time and had to write memos to the crew at the end of the day. They couldn't afford locations so they hired a car and made a road movie. Roads are free. Fahey borrowed a 16mm camera and filmed 60 minutes of the film, all of the outdoor scenes, because they couldn't afford lights. They used the sixty-minute print to show to investors and raise the rest of the capital. Get Away, Get Away screened in the Marché at Cannes and went on to be a hit in Brazil and Italy.

Fahey's second feature, Encounters (1993), an edgy thriller, premiered in Brussels at the Mystery and Suspense Festival. His third film, Sex is a Four Letter Word (1995) was billed as "an Australian The Big Chill" at the Montréal Film Festival and was shown in festivals all over North America and in Puerto Rico. Despite his international recognition, none of Fahey's films has ever had a theatrical release in Australia. Australian distributors are reluctant to spend the necessary cash on publicity and advertising unless something has had proven commercial success overseas.

Fahey continues to work with his tight-knit crew, including Peter Borisch as DOP, Andrew Crichton as art director and Dean Gawen in sound. He relies on their experience in the key departments, while the assistants are often people who want to learn new skills. Fahey insists that everyone involved likes the script, and is getting involved for personal satisfaction rather than money.

Dags was shot in nine-and-a-half days using a house that acted as four different locations in one. Peter Borisch was given five lights and had to work without a gaffer or tripod. The film was hand-held to give it a cinéma vérité style. Marrickville Metro kindly let them film for free. "It was great," says Fahey; "We were filming the guys with their donuts..."
and thick shakes and all around were real-life atmospheric dags." Because the filming and editing were done between Christmas and New Year, Lemac helped out with special rates and the filmmakers were able to use the down-time at Movie Lab. Fahey also worked as an actor on a McDonald’s commercial for some extra cash to pay for the fights. He spent $500 on wardrobe; fortunately, dag couture is cheap.

There were breaks during filming of Dags while members of the crew went to hand in their dole forms, and shooting was done at a video store next door to the DSS. Murray’s step-father, a dab hand at the BBQ, came along and helped out with catering. Fahey would meet with the production manager during lunch, edit rushes in the evening and do the accounts at night. His days were 16- and 17-hours long. "When you’re a low-budget filmmaker", he says "you wear many hats – sometimes more than you’d like.”

First-time low-budget filmmakers Mark Thackray, a SBS publicist, and Susannah Thackray, a journalist, met several years ago and fell in love, with each other, and with the idea of making a film. For two years they spent their evenings and weekends working on a script for The Truth about Taro. It is the story of a young Japanese man who is told that he cannot marry his fiancée because she is Burakumin (a scarcely acknowledged untouchable class in Japan). He attempts to persuade her to run away with him to Australia but she refuses. Taro embarks on the trip anyway and finds himself in an unconventional share-house in Glebe. Here, Taro is compelled to face the truth about himself and find the courage of his convictions. It is a gentle and lyrical story, strong on visuals but with limited locations and a dialogue-driven script which made it suitable for the low-budget approach.

"The key was developing the script", says Thackray. "We discarded 90 percent of what was written, constantly sculpting the story. For the last 6 months of the process, we worked with a cinematographer, Anthony Jennings, mapping it out in a storyboard format.

The next crucial stage involved building up a crew. Thackray: "We sent the script out to people we admired for advice and support. We showed it to people who we wanted to get involved, people who had had some filmmaking experience but wanted the chance to improve their skills and experience. You have to build up momentum for your project, and that involves getting a team of enthusiastic people together. Then, when you have doubts or setbacks, they are there to spur you on. Eventually, we had a crew of 40 who supported the project and pushed it along."

A budget was drawn up in terms of departments: sound, camera, lighting, production design and catering. The Thackrays used their credit cards, personal loans, savings, superannuation and everything they owned that they could sell to raise the necessary $200,000 to fund the project. "If you really believe in your project", says Thackray, "you don’t drive around in a luxury car saying to people, ‘I need money to make my film.’"

Taro was filmed in 16mm and is cut with a temporary soundtrack. Thackray Productions is currently looking for funds to complete the project and is showing the print to potential distributors. Having made it this far, there is "no stopping them now."

Murray Fahey's Worlds

From psycho-thriller to road movie to Generation X talk-iest, writer, director (and sometime star) Murray Fahey's low-budget œuvre is many and varied, writes DEBORAH NISKI.

Murray Fahey’s films are crafted to suit their budget levels. The films tend to favour character over action, and dialogue over special effects, while plots revolve mainly around a few central players. Yet within these limited parameters, Fahey has been able to flourish. He has three films to his credit — Get Away, Get Away (1992) Encounters (1993) and Sex is a Four Letter Word (1995) — and a fourth, Dags, currently in post-production. Fahey’s first film, Get Away, Get Away, is the story of a “loser” whose life is on the downward slide. Fahey plays Rick, a bank teller whose part in a bank robbery traumatized him so much that he was fired. Adding insult to injury, Rick’s abusive girlfriend, May-Ling, dumps him, and his best friend wants to send him to a far-off country town with a dubious package. Sceptical and depressed, Rick decides to deliver the package and take his mate’s advice to get away for the weekend. The package is not due until Sunday night, so Rick has the other two days to drive around as he chooses.

In his driving, Rick comes across a feisty, New Caledonian hitch-hiker, Suzette (Annie Davies), who is distrusting of men and antagonistic towards Rick. The couple, after a spat, go their own separate ways, but end up together again at a road-side diner. When Rick bails Suzette out of a nasty situation, they begin their relationship over again, this time on a better footing. While Rick and Suzette begin to open up to one another, a parallel story unfolds: that of the bank-robbers responsible for Rick’s branch’s robbery. The two bandits are travelling cross country in roughly the same direction as Rick, using a combination of roughly the same roads. Although Rick and Suzette are an unlikely couple, they develop a trust-
Working Dog Productions, the creative partnership which is responsible for the popular *Frontline* series, recently made its tilt at the low-budget film world. The Working Dog team had been wanting to make a film for a while, and it was only a matter of finding an idea in which everyone had confidence.

Michael Hirsch, who describes himself as "the guy who wears the suit", says: "We also wanted to do it on our own. As soon as you get money from others, you start losing independence." The team decided that they didn't want to have to answer to anyone but themselves.

Using the goodwill and confidence they had built up from their television shows, they were able to draw together talent from outside while relying on the core creative team (Tom Gleisner, Jane Kennedy, Santo Cilauro and Rob Sitch). Most of the actors and crew involved accepted below-normal rates or a series of deferments. Working Dog had enough money from the overseas sales of its programmes to get the basics of a film together — to shoot it on Super 16 and edit a print. From conception to first cut, *The Castle* took six weeks. In Rob Sitch's words, "We just went out and made a movie."

In order to make a low-budget plan of action is to re-visit the house where Madeline grew up. They take to the road and expect to be at the country house by lunchtime, but a couple of detours lead the couple into uncharted territory. Madeline has persistent hallucinations, visions and anxiety, while Martin is at the end of his tether trying to deal with his fragile wife.

A trip to a nearby waterfall turns to disaster. Enter Harris (Martin Vaughan), a shady figure from Madeline's past. She feels she cannot trust him, although he is the only one there for her in the dead of the rainy night. Tension builds as the evidence against Harris builds, but is Madeline in the right frame of mind to be judging anyone?

*Encounters* has a somewhat familiar ending, one that serves its purpose well and one that maybe not all will recognize.

"We were trying to make a low-budget film, Hirsch feels you have to make it fast: "You pre-plan before you spend the money; you don't make plans while you're spending it."
The team was encouraged by a pre-sale to Showtime/Foxtel from an idea on paper. Bob Donoghue at Showtime had been a programmer on the ABC. He knew Working Dog's track-record and "knew we were crazy".

They were able to keep everything to a minimum, budgeting for catering, insurance and a list of deferments. A small cast with no extras and no night shoots also kept down the costs. Hirsch describes the piece as "a simple suburban fairytale, a feel-good film". They showed the print to the people at Roadshow, who were so impressed they bought it up immediately for theatrical release.

Hirsch emphasizes the need for low-budget filmmakers to come up with inventive ways to tell their story within their means: "If you can't afford stunts, don't have them. We made a dialogue-based film. We were trying to make a good Volkswagen, not a cheap Rolls Royce."

Wile the stories of Fahey, Working Dog and Thackray show that making a low-budget independent film is possible in Australia, according to Hannay, "We still tend to stick to 'straight' filmmaking in this country. But a true low-budget filmmaker has to cut corners and take risks."

Many of the low-budget filmmakers I spoke to admitted to resorting to dubious tactics to get their films made. Some of them stole shots. One admitting to posing as a television news crew to get images of the Opera House without paying the $2,000 levy. Another said that they made their film on an insurance cover note.

So what do you need to make a low-budget movie in Australia? Certainly charm and energy, both on-screen and off. A trip to Ireland, to kiss the Blarney Stone, might pay dividends. Malcolm X's catchcry, "By any means necessary", might also be a slogan for low-budget filmmakers to write on a 3-by-5-inch card and paste above their Steenbecks. As George Mannix points out, "There is an unlimited reservoir of goodwill out there, only you have to make some deposits every now and then."
What is the storyline?
Hayden [Craig Adams] is 18 years old, and an apprentice for his father, who is a fanatical Fitzroy [football club] supporter. Hayden is apprenticed as a bricklayer, but he wants to study astronomy and the best place for that is at university. He meets this girl, Jude [Kate Atchison], and gets caught up with the Alive Tribe, an environmental action group who combat environmental abuses – eco-terrorists, if you like. He joins them on an "environmental action", because he's interested in Jude. But they've bitten off more than they can chew. They all have their pieces in the plot which come together in the end.

What was the scripting process?
The Alive Tribe came as a combination of seeing it in my head and from techniques of structuring. I wrote four drafts over a period of two months, and it went through further drafting and refining during the production period.

About two years ago, I took structure on board; now it's instinctive or subconscious. I've pushed the academia into the background and now I just get down to the writing. I do go back to [Joseph] Campbell; he's like a tool-box. I've read just about everything there is on screenwriting. I prefer Michael Hoag's Writing Screenplays that Sell. I find Syd Field really condescending. Those books are a tool-box; they are just there to help you out and unlock stuff. You still have to do the writing. You have to overcome the resistance to write and the refusal to sit at that desk. I didn't read books on low-budget practice. I learnt all that from my time with Michael Andre at the Ivanhoe Film Club.

Like its arthouse predecessors, Everynight ... Everynight (Alkinos Tsilimidos, 1995) and Love and Other Catastrophes (Emma-Kate Croghan, 1996), the film was shot without the support of funding bodies, and by deferring wages and hire payments. Unlike its predecessors, The Alive Tribe looks like a $2 million action movie, unashamedly made for a popular or mass market.

Why didn't you pursue script-to-screen funding?
I knew I could make The Alive Tribe without funding. I was confident of markets. I knew I could sell the finished product. Deferred wages and equipment fees meant that we could pay after completion. With my background in cinematography, I knew that the director of photography, Darrell Stokes, could get a product that looked like two million bucks just through lighting. I have no problem with funding; I just knew I could do it without it.

Where did The Alive Tribe come from?
There were two motivating factors. I have always been passionate about the environment. My Swinburne film, Burning Daylight, was on this subject. I wanted to make a film about the environment and the catastrophe we're all going to be coming up against.

The second was that I was brought up with a Fitzroy-fanatical family. I saw these themes coming together. You have this unwilling death of the Fitzroy...
Football Club with a merger. And then through all this you have the Alive Tribe. It sort of mirrors their crusade to fight apathy and environmental collapse in this bizarre way.

The main theme is either you have to evolve or be left behind. That went through the Fitzroy subplot with their merger and with the members of the Alive Tribe, where it runs through every character.

**Were you compromised in the writing process by budgetary concerns?**

As crazy as it sounds, my philosophy in the writing was that whatever we need, we can get. In fact, through letters of introduction and general freebies, we got much more than I could have expected. We rarely compromised and we never compromised on locations. There was a major rewrite between drafts, not because of compromise but because of a bonus. That bonus was Scienceworks [in Spotswood]. Scienceworks has been host to Mad Max and Spotswood – it was Toecutter’s tower and Ball’s Mocassin Factory. It’s such a wonderful location.

**Where did you find your cast?**

My leads are Craig Adams (Holidays on the River Yarra, Love in Limbo) and Kate Achison. Kate, who plays Jude, is fresh out of the Victorian College of the Arts and comes from a stage background.

Eighty percent of the actors I’ve worked with before, people like John Arnold, Susie Dee and Ian Scott. I found the other twenty percent through audition tapes. The agents and casting agents were very supportive, even in the light of deferred payments. The Media Entertainment Arts Alliance had some reservations, they also came to the party.

**Why did you shoot on weekends?**

As it was, deferred payments meant we had to shoot weekends but weekends ultimately suited the project. We shot around fifteen set-ups a day, with at least two location changes every day. We were very mobile; we descended, shot and disappeared.

You can’t ask people to give up their day job for five weeks of deferred or unpaid work. Shooting weekends had drawbacks and bonuses. The drawbacks were that it was spread so far apart. We could have lost momentum, but we couldn’t have shot such a complex script in five weeks; we needed those weekdays in between.

I knew what was coming. From shooting a lot of stuff in the past, I knew when the highs and the lows are. I knew when a crew was going to burn out and when they were on a high. You have to know these things, especially when you have to shoot at least sixteen hours a day, sometimes more.

**Are there benefits to deferred payments?**

We made The Alive Tribe for a small sum, but sooner or later there has to be this big injection of money. We need that injection right now, as we speak, to pay wages and to get the negative matched and the film blown up from Super 16 mm to 35 mm for a release print. To blow up to 35 mm is $90,000, and that money has to come from somewhere, whether it’s at the beginning of the shoot or the end.

If we’d had the money up-front, we would have had a crew working full-time. There could have been more commitment from some people, maybe in the assistant roles, the people whose names weren’t going to profit too much from the movie’s release. As it was, everyone gave it their best shot, but I had to accept they had other commitments, too.

**How did you use deferred payments?**

The most important thing on The Alive Tribe was to treat the cast and crew fairly, so that they would all get paid off before the film’s release. If sure made it easier dealing with the unions who are openly against this sort of production. Although Media Entertainment Arts and Ball’s Mocassin Factory. It’s such a wonderful location.

**How did your experience as a DOP influence the look of The Alive Tribe?**

I’ve known Darrell [Stokes, DOP] since the Ivanhoe Film Club and Darrell DOPed my third-year film and my first feature, See Jack Run. I met Steve Welch, the camera operator, through Darrell. They met earlier in the year on another low-budget feature, Pearls Before Swine. I knew Steve would work quickly because he had a solid background in television news. Gary Scott was an exceptionally-skilled focus puller.

We’d usually set up a rehearsal and, once they were set, I’d watch through the lens – we didn’t have a video assist – and then Steve would do his thing. If he liked the take, we’d go for it. Having my experience with cinematography, you just know. The camera can be sitting on the lens – we didn’t have a video assist – and then Steve would do his thing. If he liked the take, we’d go for it. Having my experience with cinematography, you just know. The camera can be sitting on the lens – we didn’t have a video assist – and then Steve would do his thing. If he liked the take, we’d go for it. Having my experience with cinematography, you just know. The camera can be sitting on the lens – we didn’t have a video assist – and then Steve would do his thing. If he liked the take, we’d go for it. Having my experience with cinematography, you just know.
CINEMA PAPERS • JULY 1997

Lizzie (Cate Blanchett), Guy (Richard Roxburgh)
and Director Cherie Nowlan

Thank God He
Thank God He Met Lizzie, the romantic myth is exposed for Guy (Richard Roxburgh) when he is plagued by memories of Jenny (Frances O’Connor), an old girlfriend, on the day of his wedding to Lizzie (Cate Blanchett).

Producer Jonathan Shteinman is extremely happy with the cast: “We have great leads. These high-profile actors are potentially international stars now.” Richard Roxburgh is in Children of the Revolution and the upcoming Doing Time for Patsy Kline, Frances O’Connor in Love and Other Catastrophes and Kiss or Kill, Cate Blanchett in Paradise Road and Oscar and Lucinda.

Thank God He Met Lizzie is the feature début of director Cherie Nowlan, scriptwriter Alexandra Long and DOP Kathryn Milliss. Nowlan says: “People have reacted to the script by saying, ‘That’s my story.’ If the audience does that and they walk away having laughed and cried, I’ll be satisfied.”

The $2.5 million feature was shot in July-September last year and premiered at the Marché in Cannes this year.

1 Quoted by Andrew L. Urban in Moving Pictures.

Photos: Elise Lockwood
Terry Rawlings talks with Frans Vandenburg and Ken Sallows


Rawlings is also a great advocate for cutting on film. While most editors have swapped their Steenbecks and Moviolas for Avids and Lightworks ("the machine" as Rawlings has it), Rawlings has bucked the tide. And he even got Phillip Noyce to change his mind!

Interviewed by fellow editors Frans Vandenburg (The Sum of Us) and Ken Sallows (Love and Other Catastrophes), the following is a revealing insight into the special world of editors.

The Saint

Rawlings: One of the things that backfired on us with The Saint was that we managed to get the romance to work so strongly. The relationship between Simon Templar [Val Kilmer] and Dr Emma Russell [Elisabeth Shue] was fantastic. It came across so well on the screen that you got involved with these two.

In the original concept, Emma gets killed just before the last act starts. We finished the film and took it to the States to run it for [Paramount CEO] Sherry Lansing, who thought it was wonderful. She was sitting there in tears, very moved by the film. She grabbed Phillip and said, “You are the new David Lean”, and gave me a hug and a kiss. She had nothing but praise for us.

We felt very good and Phillip said, “Yeah, but we really haven’t faced the enemy yet.” And he was right. The audience didn’t like it. They completely switched off when Emma dies. They weren’t interested in the film at all. They said, “It has changed direction. We liked the fact that it was a love story with adventure.”

Obviously, Sherry’s commercial mind then came into it. She insisted that certain things were done, which she had to do. She was the boss.

We tried five times to change things around to make it work with the original concept, but it wouldn’t. I then decided to try a version with her living out of what I had, which wasn’t the best; it had too many holes. But I got it to work to a certain degree.

We took two versions back to the States with us and we got a pretty good response. The studio liked it and gave us the money to shoot the extra 14 days and make this work.

Vandenburg: Did you request to see Phil Noyce, or did they ask you?

He asked to see me. I knew The Saint was going to be made, like you get to know which films are going to come in, but I’d never really made any overtures for the film. I got a call to meet with Phillip, which is one of the best things that has happened to me. I really loved him!

I don’t know what you thought of The Saint, but I’m very proud of it.

Vandenburg: I liked it very much. I saw it in early February with Phil at...
A preview at Paramount, before it was locked off.

Did she live?

Vandenburg: She did. It was pretty much the completed version. You'd removed the original end material and incorporated the new footage. It had a temp mix, which was very good, too. Everyone enjoyed it. And the execs seemed well pleased!

And you had that fun scene in the lecture hall with him flashing his eyes and blowing her kisses when she is trying to be serious?

Vandenburg: Yes, which was really appealing. Phil always talked about the difficulty of the chemistry between Sharon Stone and Alec Baldwin in Sliver [1993], whereas in this you really feel the heat between Val and Elisabeth.

Obviously, they didn’t like one another in Sliver. After the first weeks, they hated each other.

On The Saint, these two virtually fell in love, I think, and it paid off. While they were shooting in Australia, they hated each other. Then I thought, “I can’t start this in the morning watching the rushes. I should get a couple of weeks, shooting the Red Square sequence.

Phillip shot six-and-three-quarter hours of material on that, and the scene runs for four-and-a-half minutes. I looked at all the rushes and thought, “I really don’t know where to start. I have no idea what angle to get.” I then worked on it, of course, and got it to work. But it takes time, as we all know.

Then, of course, the concept changed. Elisabeth Shue had to be involved in it, so it became something else.

While they were shooting in Moscow, it was very difficult to cut anything. They were shooting every day, and all night, with seven cameras. We would sit there from 5:30 in the morning watching the rushes. Then I thought, “I can’t start this here”, so I went back to London with tonnes of film that I hadn’t really cut. That put me behind a bit.

The sequence that no one is ever going to see is this big, big scene where the place gets blown up. It is the fight between Val Kilmer and everybody. This massive sequence, which has cost a million and a half and took 12 days to shoot, is not in the film any more.

On Film

Vandenburg: Phil mentioned to me that you cut on film.

I think I’m the final advocate of film.

When I first met Phillip, we had this 8am meeting at his London hotel. Having never met this giant [laughs], I immediately felt a great affinity with him, with the way he talks and the way he feels about work generally.

Phillip said, “I did my last three films on Lightworks”, and I said, “I’ve played around on Lightworks and it is fine, but to me it is like home movies.” I’m not being funny; I play around like that at home on a couple of video machines with bits and pieces of stuff I want to do for myself. I then said, “It might sound like bullshit to you, but I classify myself as a craftsman, and to me a good craftsman uses his hands.”

It is a very tactile business we are in and you feel it. I am reasonably fast at what I do and I don’t feel that going on the electronic system is going to make what I do any quicker.

At the same time, I’m not as fluent in that as I would like to be, because I’m having to think about what I’m doing, rather than with film, where I have all these years of experience tucked away.

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At the same time, I’m not as fluent in that as I would like to be, because I’m having to think about what I’m doing, rather than with film, where I have all these years of experience tucked away.

Then, of course, the concept changed. Elisabeth Shue had to be involved in it, so it became something else.

While they were shooting in Moscow, it was very difficult to cut anything. They were shooting every day, and all night, with seven cameras. We would sit there from 5:30 in the morning watching the rushes. Then I thought, “I can’t start this here”, so I went back to London with tonnes of film that I hadn’t really cut. That put me behind a bit.

The sequence that no one is ever going to see is this big, big scene where the place gets blown up. It is the fight between Val Kilmer and everybody. This massive sequence, which has cost a million and a half and took 12 days to shoot, is not in the film any more.

On Film

Vandenburg: Phil mentioned to me that you cut on film.

I think I’m the final advocate of film.

When I first met Phillip, we had this 8am meeting at his London hotel. Having never met this giant [laughs], I immediately felt a great affinity with him, with the way he talks and the way he feels about work generally.

Phillip said, “I did my last three films on Lightworks”, and I said, “I’ve played around on Lightworks and it is fine, but to me it is like home movies.” I’m not being funny; I play around like that at home on a couple of video machines with bits and pieces of stuff I want to do for myself. I then said, “It might sound like bullshit to you, but I classify myself as a craftsman, and to me a good craftsman uses his hands.”

It is a very tactile business we are in and you feel it. I am reasonably fast at what I do and I don’t feel that going on the electronic system is going to make what I do any quicker.

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Phillip shot six-and-three-quarter hours of material on that, and the scene runs for four-and-a-half minutes. I looked at all the rushes and thought, “I really don’t know where to start. I have no idea what angle to get.” I then worked on it, of course, and got it to work. But it takes time, as we all know.

Then, of course, the concept changed. Elisabeth Shue had to be involved in it, so it became something else.

While they were shooting in Moscow, it was very difficult to cut anything. They were shooting every day, and all night, with seven cameras. We would sit there from 5:30 in the morning watching the rushes. Then I thought, “I can’t start this

wheel. And I said, “So, is this a different story that you have been telling me for the last three or four years, that if I don’t learn how to use non-linear I’ll never work again?” And he said, “That is Then, but this is Now!”

[Everyone laughs.]

That’s right. Phillip was excited about it. After being on the machine [on previous films] for so long, he said he had fallen in love with film again.

[Phillip Noyce then enters the room.]

Noyce: It is all bullshit.

Yes, I tell lies all the time. Noyce: Don’t believe a word of it.

Vandenburg: He was just saying what a great guy you are.

[Laughs.]

Noyce: He edits on film!

Yeah, I’m one of those old fogies. Noyce: Did you ask him about that?

Yeah, we’ve been talking about that. You’ll read it all in the magazine.

Noyce leaves.

Vandenburg: What is heartening was the fact that Paramount was prepared to say, “Terry uses film. Great, leave it on film.” In Australia, there would be pressure to do it in a certain time, and a lot of producers are not prepared to do it on film as there is a perception that it is slower and more expensive. But it doesn’t mean to say you are going to do it any quicker! You still have to go through the same processes, eventually.

I know from friends that when you translated this thing back onto film, you want to change a lot of stuff because the timing feels odd. It is very hard to explain. People ask, “Why can’t you translate a

screen.” It is something built into you for all the years you have been doing it. You do translate that into the screen, and then put the thing on the Steenbeck and sit back across the room like you’re in the audience.

I always invite my crew in whenever I’ve finished a sequence and say, “Criticize!” If they say “Great”, you feel good because you’ve obviously got across what you want. If they come up with suggestions, you mull them over. You don’t necessarily do them if you don’t agree, but I think putting yourself there like an audience is a great process.

Vandenburg: It is fantastic to know that in this day and age, with all this financial pressure, that you were able to do it the way you wanted to. But as soon as I said this, they knocked $300,000 off my budget. They said the machine costs more, the translating back costs more. It is a money-saver doing it on film.

Sallows: The current film I am editing has a budget of £3 million. To cut it on a Steenbeck was £50,000 cheaper than to do it on Lightworks or Avid. On that scale, $50,000 is a lot better spent on the screen.

Continued on page 45

Continued, on page 45
Here we go again, with all the toys, trinkets and tricks a technoboy and girl could ever want. Barrie Smith reports

WHEN FIRST SEEN in 1984, the Society of Motion Picture Engineers Exhibition & Conference made a large splash. Sydney SMPTE was the only place to see the newest in technology, techniques and developments. Today, many individuals journey to events such as NAB and IBC in the Northern Hemisphere, so the importance of Sydney SMPTE has been whittled away. Similarly, the rise of similar congresses across Asia has tended to alter the balance.

1-4 July

SMPTE '97 will be held in Sydney from 1-4 July, with the actual exhibition running at Darling Harbour while the conference papers are delivered at a Pitt Street auditorium. This splitting of exhibition and conference is a first.

The '97 theme of “New Technology, New Opportunities” aims to give broadcasters, film makers and programme producers invaluable insights and practical demonstrations of where the industry is moving in the digital age.

SMPTE '97 session subjects will include Capture, Storage, Archive, Post-production, Distribution and Transmission.

SMPTE chairman John Maizels says:

Our theme is most appropriate as the year 2000 Olympic Games approach ... the time for the industry to be investigating and formulating strategies for the delivery of services that will apply to the Olympics in Sydney.

Squaresly placed

This year sees a difference in the set-up and “marketing” of Sydney SMPTE. Maizels admits the committee is actively positioning the conference and the exhibition very heavily in the international market and placing it squarely as the feature event for Asia-Pacific.

Recent years have seen similar industry trade shows appear in Asia attempting to usurp Sydney SMPTE's role in the region. Maizels sees the Australian show as a very major event ... probably more akin to IBC in this part of the world in that it is an exhibition and a forum for discussion – and it's a forum run by the industry for the industry rather than a commercial venture.

An interesting comment on changes in technology is John Maizels' position (with IBM) as chair of Sydney SMPTE. Maizels:

I think there is a recognition now that the traditional computer suppliers have [a role] to play in broadcasting. And that role is no longer back-office information technology. Players such as IBM, Silicon Graphics, Hewlett-Packard, DEC – names long known as IT suppliers – are now very much ‘business’ suppliers in the sense that the traditional, like Sony, are.

When asked if the pattern and delivery of the information is different this year, Maizels replies:

People can come for sessions knowing that they're more likely to have information targeted to their particular interests. There is a smattering of ‘futures’ and of learned pronouncements and pure research work, but the vast majority of the papers represent ‘just now’ or 'just across the hill' technologies and uses of technologies for the industry.

So what we're trying to deliver is practical ‘just in time’ education and information – stuff that is relevant right now and translatable into use on the job.

Does he consider Sydney SMPTE less of a buying venue? Maizels recognizes that key recommenders are able to float information upwards to make it a major part of the buying decision. The importance of having regional conferences can't be underestimated, because it's really the only way you can reach the vast majority of end-users. Maizels: It reaches the doors. The guy with the cheque probably wears a suit and tie, but the people who actually have to bear the responsibility for using the equipment and turning it into creative output are the people in the jeans and T-shirts.

Exhibition

The technology exhibition will feature the industry's leading players, including... Adinex • AC&E Sales • Advanced Automation • Amber Technology • Amtech Australia • APA Production • Audio Sound Centre • Audio Telex Communications • Australasian Broadcasting Services • Australian Tel-Tec • Avid Technology • Belden International • Bicast Communications • Broadcast Systems Australia • Butterworth-Heinemann • Cable Labels • Canon Australia • Comsys • DB Audio • Digital Studio Processing • Digleyes • Draco Systems Australia • FP Focusing • Future Reality • GEC Video • Gemini Video • Hako-Hagemeyer • IBM Australia • Inscriber Character Generator • IRT Electronics • John Barry Group • Leitch Technology • Lemco Film and Video Equipment • Magna Systems • McKenzie & Holland • Medialvision Australia • Miller Professional Products • MITEC • Nightlight Music Group • Optus Communications • Philips Broadcast Television • Pracet Sales International • Production Music Services • Quantegy International • Quantum Pacific • Quinto Communications • Radio Frequency Systems • Rohde & Schwarz Australia • Silicon Studio • Sony Australia • Sutter • Syncro Technology Systems Designs • Syntec International • Tali Sound and Vision • Techtel • Tektronix Australia • The AV Group • Trace Pacific • Yamaha Music • Zomba Music •

(As at 13/3/97 – subject to change)

Conference

The technical papers will be given at the Wesley Centre, 220 Pitt Street, Sydney (opposite the Sydney Hilton). The monorail conveniently links Wesley Centre and Darling Harbour venues.

The subjects, the speakers

The SMPTE conference programme will run as follows. (Speakers and their organizations in brackets)

ENGINEERING & ARCHITECTURE – SESSIONS 1 & 2

The traditional role of SMPTE is well-known, but where to from here? Plus, addressing the relevant issues of today: compression, signal switching, standards and standards process, and architecture.

TUESDAY 1 JULY, 10-11.30AM & 2-5PM

- Standards – The Impact on the Next Millennium (Pete Schirling, ISO/MPEG3)
- Down and Dirty with Digital (Peter Symes, Tektronix)
- Switching and Routing in a Congested Analog, Digital-Linked and Networked Studio Environment (Mohammed Marey, Philips Broadcat Television Systems)
- Aspects of Video Quality in MPEG-2 Compression Systems (Robin Wilson, DiviCom)
- Cable and the Cutting Edge (Steve Lampen, Belden)
VTR drop-in or new architecture. Plus what’s new in tape storage; and the writeable CD?
• Advances in Server Technology (Chris Bennett, Hewlett-Packard)
• Digital Servers in Broadcast (Bob Blackburn, IBM Video Server Development)
• Digital-S Component Digital Video Format (Neil Neubert, JVC Professional)
• FARAD, A New Generation of Post-production Servers (Stuart Monksfield, Sony)
• Servers: Distributed or Central Storage? (Jeff Stewart, Quantel)
• SPACE – A Disk Array with VTR Emulation (Thomas R Goldberg, Pluto Technologies)
• Storage with DVCPRO-based Servers (Stuart Pointon, GEC Panasonic)
• The Writeable CD for Audio-Visual Authoring, Distribution and Archiving (Gary O’Brien, Kodak)
• Video Disk Recording from Edit Suite to Supermarket (Mark Muirhead, Digiteyes).

**BROADCASTING AND THE OLYMPICS – SESSION 7**

**WEDNESDAY 2 JULY, 2-3PM**

The Olympic Games will occupy the attention of the entire Media and entertainment industry in 1999 and 2000. Broadcasting and the Olympics is an umbrella session of the conference. Geoff Healy, Head of Technical Operations and Engineering for Sydney Olympic Broadcasting Organisation (SOBO), will chair an invited panel of special guests who will explain what SOBO is and what it will do, as well as shedding some light on the sheer size of the project.

- Tall tales and true from the Atlanta Olympic Games, and the big picture on the plans for Sydney!
- Broadcasting and the Olympics (Geoff Healy, Sydney Olympic Broadcasting Organisation).

**ARCHIVE – SESSION 8**

**THURSDAY 3 JULY, 9-11AM**

Through the merging of database and storage technology, archived material becomes more readily accessible. But what of the issues of format change, electronic transfer, and loss of quality, loss of content, and loss of media?

- Archiving with DVCPRO (Stuart Pointon, Panasonic)
- Asset Transfer and Management in a MulDisk Server Production Environment (David Bancroft, Philips Broadcast Television Systems)
- Continuous Media Indexing Applied to Videotape Archive Systems (Michael Schwartz, IBM Research)

**DIGITALLY-EFFECTED CINEMATOGRAPHY – SESSION 5**

**WEDNESDAY 2 JULY, 9AM-1PM**

“The camera never lies” is a familiar phrase, but it’s becoming less and less true every day. Moreover, what you see on the screen is tending to have less to do with the DOP, and more to do with digital effects, whether it’s recolouring with Da Vinci on telecine, 3D characters appearing on Softimage, or storm clouds gathering on Flame or Cineon. This seminar will look at digital effects from the DOP’s point of view. Are they a threat to the DOP’s point of view. Are they a threat to the established control of the image, or an opportunity for more creative solutions? Whose vision is it that ends up on the screen? What should the DOP know about the technology used in post-production?

- Digitally-Effected Cinematography (led by Dominic Case, Atlab).

**STORAGE – SESSION 6**

**WEDNESDAY 2 JULY, 9AM-1PM**

While the application of disk-based technology for field acquisition/storage continues, much activity abounds in the area of studio video server technology. Trends developing include: big to small, single to multi-disk, and GEC-Panasonic will be showing the new AA-L170 laptop editor in DVCPRO format.

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(Mohammed Marey, Philips Broadcast Television Systems)

- Automatic Quality Factors for TV Time Compression (Bill Hendershot, Prime Image)
- Broadband Internet over DVB (Marcello Vitalietti et al, IBM Research)
- Communications at Atlanta (Alan Brill, Drake Electronics)
- Digital Audio and Video Cable (Steve Lampen, Belden)
- Implementation of Compressed Digital Video and Interchange Circuits (Ray Reynolds, ABC Federal Engineering)
- Management of Multichannel Digital Services (Barry Goldsmith, Drake Automation Ltd)
- Migration Strategies for HDTV (Peter Dare, Sony)
- Monitoring SDI Signals (Tom Waschura, SyntheSys Research Inc.)
- Networking Tomorrow: How is it Different from Today's? (Orly Stettiner, ECI Telecom)
- Widescreen Production at 360 Megabits (Derek Allsop, Practel International).

Where

The expanded SMPTE '97 technology exhibition, the largest yet staged, will occupy all of Halls 1 and 2 of the Exhibition Centre at Darling Harbour. More than 70 of the industry's leading manufacturers and suppliers will be participating, providing a unique display of competitive technology all under the one roof.

Info

For further information on SMPTE '97, contact Expertise Events on: phone (61.2) 9977 0888; fax (61.2) 9977 0335; email exhibitions@exevents.com.au. Or visit the Web page http://www.exevents.com.au/smpet97.htm.

In more detail

As this story was compiled, many exhibitors had yet to fine up on the specifics they would show. But some were quite happy to spill the beans as to what would be on their stands in July.

**Miller**

Professional Products will be exhibiting its full range of equipment, including Miller fluid heads, Anton/Bauer camera batteries and chargers, Avenger/Manfrotto lighting stands and grip accessories, Gamcolor lighting gels, KATA bags and vests, Lowell lighting.

Also prominent on the stand will be Balcar fluorescent lighting units. The Balcar units were one of the first fluorescent lights for studios supplied with a multiphosphor tube (seven phosphors), allowing for a more even colour spectrum.

Balcar has been taken up by 90 percent of the Pay TV stations - including Optus, Galaxy and Foxtel, as well as Skynews. The main benefits of fluorescent lighting are that they work with standard SCR dimmers.

**GEC-Panasonic**

This company will exhibit DVCPro as the main product, including the current range: the AJ-D750, the AZ-E700 and the Hyper Journocam and the AJ-D650.

Also on show will be the laptop editor AJ-LT75 and a likely starter is the QuickCutter non-linear news editor. There will probably be the AJ-D230, a little office-type DVCPro machine and the AJ-D200, a corporate type camcorder. Plus a chance of the AJ-D800, a 2/3-inch camera, as well as the A-Q23, a digital 16/9/4:3 camera system.

Prime has just bought more DVCPro equipment to place in the Orange, NSW, station - cameras and VCRs - basically to fit out their news area.

Many freelancers have bought the AJ-D700 camera and, since introducing the AJ-D650, each new shipment has sold rapidly.

Journocam has been taken up widely: from Water Rats (Nine Network) to the wedding videographers - even Frontline has switched to DVCPro.

IBM

The flavour of the month certainly for IBM is Digital Video Broadcasting (DVB). Australia and Asia-Pacific generally is leading the world in digital deployment of digital broadcasting.

IBM is positioning itself as suppliers in that industry. In September last year, the company was responsible for the first full end-to-end digital deployment of DVB technology in Italy - with near video on demand.

On show will be mixed-server technology, near video on demand, solutions, content management and use of a digital library. Likely to be shown is a new content-creation workstation called the Intellistation - an Intel-based platform, very high-end, with very fast dual engines, boosted graphics, running on NT. As an Intel platform, it can be more tightly integrated into the existing work place environment.

Quintel will be very visible, as always, with its high-end digital video and film hardware. The company's Greg Turner hopes that Hal and Henry will be showing, all going well: "We don't stock Henry normally, but we'll be showing it in all its glory with V6. A Henry unit was installed in Omnicon in February 1997."

According to Turner, an event like SMPTE can expect systems such as a top-of-the-line Edibox to be shown in an editing environment where people can see not just a demonstration but are able to get a discussion going with the editor. This will be shown with the version 5 software, now being picked up by virtually all operators of Edibox.

Turner adds, "We'll be showing the new Bravo Brushes on Paintbox, which gives some very interesting calligraphy effects that haven't been seen previously. You have the interaction of the pen, the colours and the paper, which produces some very, very nice effects."

Quantel should have a Picturebox in operation, currently installed in a number of locations around Australia for graphics generation and transfer within facilities.

Scitex - IMMIX - Abekas

Scitex, an Israeli company very well known in the pre-press area, has created a new division separate to the printing division - Scitex Digital Video - comprised of two companies. One is Abekas Video Systems and the other is IMMIX. Abekas makes DVEs, CGs, etc.; IMMIX makes non-linear systems.

IMMIX is well-known for its real-time effects, such as page turns and real-time DVEs, in its non-linear system. A new product Sphere is the merging of the two technologies: Abekas DVE effects and IMMIX non-linear editors.

In the Sphere family masterplan, all the components link together under a scenario called Video Workgroups. The interconnection is going to be SSA (Serial Storage Archiecture), originally developed by IBM and with an effective bandwidth of 80MB/sec - fast enough to handle real-time video with Motion JPEG 3:1 compression.

**Barry's & Sammies**

SMPTE '97 will see John Barry Group and Samuelson Film Service operate a combined stand.

JBG Managing Director, Ben Vanderlinde, explains this to be a sales and rental presence at the show. Sammy's will be displaying some of the latest updates on rental equipment, which will include Arrifan and Panavision.

John Barry Group's key agencies' presence will be emphasized at the show.

One is IDX batteries and chargers. The company is about to introduce a Lithium-Ion battery in an NP shape, a type expected to eventually replace Nicads.

John Barry stand: Chimera Lightbanks.
Now with Henry V8 and Inferno on board, just watch Willy, Caro, Mark, Justin, Geoff, Mike, Warren and Michelle turn your job into a flaming Bobby Dazzler. For more information about our people or our machines phone us on 612 9439 6600.
Mr Frazier’s tight little lens

by Barrie Smith

And, just to rub it in, whereas it is recognized that the wide (for time) 35mm lens was invented specifically for director Orson Welles and DOP Gregg Toland on Citizen Kane, this time around a film is being created for an ultra clever lens. Perhaps I should explain. Currently, there are 30 Panavision-Frazier lenses for hire worldwide. The deep-focus system has cost millions to get to this stage. Each optic costs US$50,000 to manufacture. Invented by Jim Frazier ACS, and sometimes called the “Swiss Army Knife of Lenses” by American cameramen, the system is constantly in use to not only perform such neat tricks as holding constant sharp focus from the front surface of the lens to infinity, but, as a by-product of Frazier’s innovation and ingenuity, it can plunge the camera’s POV to floor level, pan and tilt with the nodal point at the lens tip, and rotate the screen image 360 degrees within the optical path. Its images seem to be shot by a Liliputian camera and operator, as the system captures the action from impossible POVs.

Already, because of its powerful versatility in tight close-up work, US rental houses are seeing hire of macro lenses drop off, while crews are re-rigging odd shots, such as Dutch tilts and periscopic angles, in seconds instead of half hours. Panavision consider the lens system to be the only new optical system to appear on the scene since the zoom lens.

Uni days

Jim Frazier’s working life began as a cabinetmaker, then he became a technician in the University of New England’s zoology department. A move to Sydney in 1971 saw him land at the Australian Museum and, as a side activity, he began making wildlife films with Densey Cline, solving “all the problems as they occurred” in committing sundry bugs, caterpillars and spiders to film.

FRAZIER: It was tough in those days. Film was 100ASA and anything above that was too grainy. It was tough in those days. Film was 100ASA and anything above that was too grainy. I had problems with hot lights on my subjects; the problems were vast. I started playing around with optics and my first foray was to tape a mirror on a stick on a lens so I could get low-angle stuff. But every time the animal went left, I had to pan right. Then I thought, “Oh Jesus, I’m missing too many shots here.” I thought, “If I can get a lens out on the end of that thing….” and that’s when it sort of started.

No talkee

Asked to explain the principle of the lens, Frazier replies quietly, “I can’t do that really.” But he acknowledges he has done something which is unusual, and I guess it was trial and error that brought it around. The lens has really evolved over a very, very long period and evolved from my wildlife work in 16mm.

Macro lenses could work very close, but you couldn’t hold the background in focus. And I found everything I was doing was very claustrophobic. There was no margin for error. When you’re in macro, you are continually trying to chase focus and it’s a very difficult thing to do. And while I became quite adept at it, there were still a lot of pitfalls.

The deep-focus stunt the lens achieves is due in part to the 16mm. Number one is the deep-focus effect. The lens focuses the action from impossible POVs. Already, because of its powerful versatility in tight close-up work, US rental houses are seeing hire of macro lenses drop off, while crews are re-rigging odd shots, such as Dutch tilts and periscopic angles, in seconds instead of half hours. Panavision consider the lens system to be the only new optical system to appear on the scene since the zoom lens.

Three innovations

The first working prototypes were configured for 16mm cameras, but Frazier found there was demand from local television commercial producers for a 35mm version. This is the basis of the current Panavision product. The Panavision-Frazier lens delivers a combination of three major innovations.

Number one is the deep-focus effect. The lens system is different to any other lens system: if you want depth, you have to stop down. But it makes use of that unused area in front of the lens from the edge of the minimum focus range to the front element. It fills in the missing gap and extends the focal distance forwards.

From about 60cm in front of the lens to infinity, it behaves like any other lens. Close down one stop to halve that, and you stop down a further stop to halve...
Flame / ONYX
Henry V8
Flash Harry
SGI Network
Alias / Wavefront Software
Motion Control Studio

Design • Animation • Computer Graphics • Visual Effects
integrated digital production and digital post production
Internet: design@gmd.com.au
166 Willoughby Road Crows Nest Sydney Australia 2065
telephone 61 2 9438 1002 facsimile 61 2 9439 6730
At the visual effects frontier there are no boundaries; no precedents; only quiet achievers.

To forge ahead into these unchartered places demands confidence and insight that only experience can provide.
For over a decade, our film-illusionists have proudly continued the timeless tradition of crafting images and telling stories by blending imagination with light.

Masters of the art and science of illusion, Photon Stockman continues to lead in dramatic Film & TV effects for Australia.
that again – until at about T22 you can get right up close to the front element of the lens.

Frazier: Get to T16 outside and you can get some pretty amazing stuff. The lens system itself is effectively T7. I did a shot in the Panavision demo film where a girl comes up and kisses the lens – and leaves a beautiful lip print on the lens. She then steps back and stays in focus.

Secondly, Frazier knew that if he could get an orientable tip on the lens, it would lend itself to many more applications. So I devised a swivel tip for the want of a better word. And there are two axes of swivel on the front of the lens. So, without ever moving the camera, you can point the tip of the lens in any direction – even retro. You could film yourself filming.

It converts to anything from straightforward view to periscope to any odd angle you can dream up by using both axes.

To correct the image – because, when you start playing around like that with optics, the image spins all over the place – I devised an image rotator, which is the third major offering in this lens. The image rotator, as far as I know, has never been offered in a lens system like this. There’ve been lenses that swivel on one axis, or there’s been very difficult devices like the Kenworthy snorkel, where they rotate a mirror on the end. But this is a totally-enclosed lens system that offers complete orientation very rapidly, combined with image rotation.

Because of the swivel tip design of the front section and the image rotator combination, Frazier explains you can put the camera on the ground upside down, sideways, any angle you like, and you can dial up a correct-way-up image. Doesn’t matter what combination you select; you are totally unrestricted as to perspective and where you can put the camera/lens combination.

As a system, the lens can accept various modules on the front end to change focal length. At present, there are seven different focal lengths – from 12mm to 35mm – and included in the kit are two Canon slant-focus perspective-control and Nikkor 35mm PC lenses. The lens has an internal, rotatable filter slot – and can accept polarizers. According to Frazier, it’s not going to stop there. They’re already talking about producing a couple of short-range zooms and maybe two or three longer lengths. So, from this point of view and all the feedback we’re getting, it’s quite obvious that the lens is very much in its infancy.

Discovered!

In 1993, Frazier addressed an imaging conference in Rochester. There his tape was seen by Victor Kemper (ASC President) and John Bailey ASC. Kemper approached the Australian and said, “Hey man, you have something here. Any chance of borrowing your tape so we can show our mates at Panavision?”

Frazier agreed, came back to Australia and was actually on a job in the USA for 60 Minutes with Jeff McMullen: I got this phone call from John Ferrand, CEO of Panavision, saying they were very interested in my optics and would I be prepared to talk to them. I said to Jeff, “What the hell am I going to do?” He replied, “The first thing you do is get a good lawyer”, and he introduced me to one.

The lawyer was actually a high-tech international contracts lawyer and he negotiated the pathway to Panavision. For instance, they sent out a three-page confidentiality agreement. My lawyer countered with a 30-page one. And, if they wanted to see my optics, they had to sign it, and anyone that came into contact with the technology.

Next stop on the trail for a rather nervous Frazier was a meeting in Hong Kong: I met with Mr Ferrand of Panavision and their chief optics guy, Iain Neil. Before anything was pulled out of locked cases, they agreed to sign this whole agreement. When they got to see what constituted my devices, they appeared to be bowled over. Their optical guy thought there was nothing like it – and he couldn’t work out why it was doing what it was doing. At that stage, neither did I!

The unconventional lens caused numerous discussions with the technical staff at Panavision. After all, as the inventor/DOP admits, the whole lens came about in an empirical way by sheer trial and error. The need came first and my methodology, while you might laugh at it, was so simple. I didn’t have optical benches and test gear and all the normal things that one would expect. I had a board with some plasticine on it, and I would simply sit elements on it and spend hundreds of hours looking through a viewfinder, and literally shifted elements around all over the place – and then one day something clicked.

But they took it!

Frazier: I had only ever shown Panavision the deep-focus effect lens. And when all the negotiations were nearly complete, I pulled out this other design I’d made two or three years before, with an image rotator and a swivel tip on it – a design too tricky for me to build. And I said, “If you really want to create a whole new optical system, this is the one to go with.”

They were pretty stunned. Iain Neil doubted it would work. In his wisdom, Ferrand committed funds for their head research engineer to build a skeleton mockup. So, when they saw that it did work, Ferrand committed further funds to a Mark 1 prototype. Once he saw it would be a feasible product, he committed further funds to a Mark 2.

Their patent?

Under the agreement, Panavision will actually own the patents. Frazier admits he “could never defend them. My lawyer said it is quite acceptable to let Panavision own the patents, leaving me with all royalties and anything out of it as inventor.”

A lens with legs

While currently it will cover the wide Super 35mm frame area, there are plans for an anamorphic version – plus there’s interest to produce the lens for IMAX. The lens obviously has legs.

Frazier: The image rotator is motorized. That means you can plan moves very accurately, spin it at high speed or simply use it for a Dutch tilt or a slow rotation. Future units will have the swivel-tip pan motorized, which will directly link with the image rotator in order to keep the image constantly upright.

It can be linked into a motion-control system with the pan part of the swivel tip linked in tandem with the image rotator.

Martin Cayzer, new GM for Samuelson Film Service in Sydney, said: Panavision is very excited about this lens. They’ve given Jim a whole set of additional optics to experiment with to try and come up with new things.

It is understood Frazier will develop a number of ideas over the next year or so, which may be taken up by Panavision. The possibilities of the lens are almost endless.

With encoded drives fitted for the various axes, then it may be adaptable to motion control. If an Arri or Panaflex is linked with a Lyrix motion control, it could be something very similar to the Kenworthy snorkel – at about a fifth the price.

Cutting change

The lens is already affecting editing styles, reducing the number of cuts in a sequence.

Frazier: If you have a fight scene in the background, you can do a slow tilt down, still holding the fight scene, to reveal something in the foreground, like a pistol or a knife. Normally when you do that you have to rack focus, but with this system you can keep going and keep a number of planes of action running.

Recent feature credits for the lens are The Rock, Mousehunt, The Lost World: Jurassic Park, Leave it to Beaver and Volcano, plus numerous commercials.

Footnote: Funding may come through before end of 1997 for the “dis-Abeling” feature film to be shot entirely with the Frazier lens. Naturally, the man who knows most about the lens will be the DOP. At this stage, considerable help is input by Panavision in the USA. The aim is to outdo Citizen Kane for innovative shooting. It will be shot here, based on an Australian story. The script is currently at first-draft stage.
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Who is the true ‘author’ of digitally-enhanced cinematography? Dominic Case listens to the debate.

Digitally-effected cinematographers

Who is the true ‘author’ of digitally-enhanced cinematography? Dominic Case listens to the debate.

At the same time, there are practical questions: What control should the DOP have at the digital work station? These issues are to be discussed in Los Angeles at a recent seminar entitled “Cinematographers and Digital Artists – Friends or Foes?”.

Cinematographers and Digital Artists – friends or foes?

Chairled by Robert Prime, vice-president of the American Society of Cinematographers, this was indeed a panel of luminaries, it included cinematographers Dean Cundy (Jurassic Park and Apollo 13), Alan Daviau (E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial, The Color Purple, Empire of the Sun and Avalon) and Stephen Goldblatt (Cotton Club, Prince of Tides and Forever, commonly called “Batman Forever”); and digital-effects specialists Scott Frankel, technical director of Industrial Light and Magic, which produced effects in Twister and Mission Impossible; Price Pethel, creative director of Digital Domain (Interview with a Vampire); and Chuck Comisky, freelance visual-effects supervisor, who produced Terminator II 3D, the ride movie at Universal Studios.

Goldblatt started the session by describing his approach to Forever. If this is successful it’s because there was tremendous collaboration between the designer, myself and the visual-effects and miniatures people. They insisted that I have 4 months’ preparation time with everybody else. If I’d had the time, they’d have given me six. The way the work combined together gives it that seamless nature: you can’t tell where one ends and the other begins because of that prep time.

Prime: How did you communicate with the visual-effects people over the colour palette?

Goldblatt: We went to New York before the shoot and did a massively-expensive test on location using those colours, using maybe a third of the final lighting package. I lit buildings up to about 20 storeys with different colour effects.

Then we came back to L.A., looked at it and chose what fitted in with the production design. From that, a colour palette has emerged which went through the whole of Forever, and will go on into the next of the series – Batman and Robin – which we’ve just finished. What was great was that everyone was present: John Dykstra, who did the visual effects, was present at the time and so was Barbara Ling, our production designer, and our director [Joel Schumacher]. So, because of the ideal way it was set up, I don’t think there was ever any conflict in these areas.

Prime: Did you visit the digital post house? Did you look over the work stations?

Goldblatt: I had very little involvement at that stage. We had such an attenuated post-production. They gave us all the pre-production we needed. Then there was something like 8 weeks to finish it, which was 24 hours a day. I don’t know that it would have been necessary. I mean, once you have collaborators, then you have to entrust your work with them. I had the great good fortune that I chose the colours – the gels – and from that we evolved a consensus. So, from the point of view of authorship, I’d say that the visual style definitely came from the cinematography, not from the other direction.

Comisky: As a visual-effects supervisor, I’ve always viewed it that the digital house, or the traditional effects supervisor’s job, is to complement – in the sense that the original look isn’t lost, whatever visual-effects pyrotechnics are added to it. So, it’s essentially the cinematographer and the director who have authorship of the images. That’s not to say there aren’t some very talented digital artists, whom I work with all the time; but, again, it’s to fit in with what the DP has set.

Daviau: Authorship of a movie is always hard to define. It’s such a collaborative art that, when you see the final result on the screen, it’s hard to say who really made it. While a single visual effect – the castle on the hill – may be an isolated effects shot, which is just blended into what the cinematographer did on the entire rest of the film, now, more and more, we’re seeing films that may have 400 effects shots instead of just one or two. So, it behoves us as cinematographers to understand the process and to learn the language so that it doesn’t become a friend-or-foe situation, and that we are all aiming toward authoring the single piece of work instead of just isolated elements that happen to magically blend.

Alan Daviau then introduced his clip: a commercial spot shot for ILM, directed by Joe Johnston (Jumanji, Honey, I Shrunk the Kids, The Rocketeer).

Goldblatt: This was a wonderful piece of planning. It came out of the ad agency for GM for the Saturn electric car project. The agency presented its storyboard to Joe. We had meetings, then he did his own set of storyboards. So, the images were very well-defined. Then we had a good pre-production period.

The spot shows a set of electrical appliances coming to life, culminating in an electric car.

Daviau: What was really nice about this is that it isn’t just digital effects. ILM has a philosophy that, if they can use something simpler, they do. So there’s puppeteering work in there. Some of those are motorized, other cases there are wire rigs or arm rigs. One of the greatest things about digital effects is that they can take our wires. If I ever have to see someone running a black pen up and down a piece of monofilament again ...
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all think of the hours we’ve spent trying to erase wires with light.

For me, what was really a joy is the idea that in 90 seconds we were going to take you from pre-dawn all the way to the first light of sunrise coming through the trees, and we had to maintain the lighting continuity through all the effects shots. We did dusk for dawn. It works much better that way, you know what you’re heading towards instead of trying to keep it from happening.

What was really fantastic was this sense that we could try several different approaches in the shot. I was taken back in memory one time to standing on a stage in England, watching Dean Cundy carrying Roger Rabbit around so his operator would have some idea of how high Roger might jump in a shot. In this case, it was “How high does a Mixmaster go when it jumps off a counter onto the floor?” The animators would actually move the appliances through the shot, even though what we would shoot would be empty plates, so that we could get a sense of where the appliances would be through the shot.

Prime: I have a question for the animators. Price Pethel, how can a cinematographer screw things up for digital post?

Pethel: You want me to answer that one? I’m sitting between Alan Daviau and Stephen Goldblatt here.

Prime: Well, present company excepted then. Pethel: Not communicating or not talking about it, and not collaborating are most of the sins that you see. It’s important to remember that, because of the complexity of the sort of shots that we’re doing nowadays, the digital-effects artist is often working in more than one area that is usually the DP’s domain. As an example, there’s camera motion. From a digital point of view, you have to attach digital objects to those scenes and have them look as though they happened at the same time. You cannot do those effects without a complete understanding on the part of the digital artist and of the cinematographer as well. The case we see too much is where we do not have the collaboration that we’ve spoken of, and it becomes impossible to make something track, or to match the lighting and so forth. No professional wants surprises, but we have to work with them all the time.

Comisky: I’ve found that many digital artists do not come from the traditional film background; a lot of them just do not understand film language. Although the question was how can DP’s screw things up, it’s a two-way street. There are some basic things like not understanding depth of field continuity, contrast levels and so on. The ones who have an innate love for movies and have been seeing them since they were kids probably have a clearer feel for these things than the college graduates who can write the programmes.

In terms of problems with cinematographers, the only trouble I’ve had is on smaller films where there hadn’t been pre-production planning because they only planned to have five effects shots and now, “Guess what? There’s a fix-it for 25 shots.” It’s not a problem with the cinematographer, it’s just that the shots weren’t designed for these things.

Daviau: It’s interesting that you talk about digital artists and where they might have come from and what their background was. We’ve had a programme at USC, in collaboration with Price and Digital Domain, and we did one at ILM, where cinematographers come over and do lighting demonstrations, and talk about how you think photographically.

I did one thing that’s a favourite of mine: showing the law of inverse square in action. This shows why somebody gets a certain amount hotter walking towards a window when the light is closer to the window as opposed to further back, and what makes it more naturalistic is to have a larger source further back. Anyway, we went through this whole demonstration and, at the break, one of the digital artists came to me and said, “But we don’t have to follow the law of inverse square. We can do anything we want.”

But the point is that you’d better know that the law is there, because if you break it thoughtlessly it’ll show.

Cundy: As cinematographers, we come through those laws that we can’t break – inverse square, depth of field – and we have learned to live with them. And so have the audience. They accept that that is the grammar that they use when they are watching the movie. And if the digital effects do not duplicate that, then the guy in Des Moines may not say, “Why!! That violates the inverse square law”, or “A 50mm lens can’t hold that much depth of field at that stop”, but he is going to say “That looks funny.” It’s not real life; he’s been tricked.

Pethel: You cannot ignore the looks that have been evolved and that we accept as standard – things like motion blur. We use them as creative elements in filmmaking. But the digital artists generally only use them as a result of trying to match in to existing material to achieve a look that has already been established by the film medium.

We found the simplest kind of things, such as digital filtering that mimic camera filters, are really indispensable. If you don’t use them, it all looks like a video game – everything is in focus, everything is lit perfectly, and even the guy in Des Moines is going to say “This is not real.”

These are things that I find as a digital artist that we have to train our new people into understanding. You might consider them as artefacts, but they’re really part of the look of the film. Even the grain itself is part of the character of the film.

But there is a problem, despite all this optimism: the reason most cinematographers don’t go forward into the post-production process is because of the producer. They don’t want to pay the guys. So, as soon as the shoot is over and they’ve sent the equipment back, that’s it. Sayonara.

Goldblatt: I pay for my own hotel, airfares, time – and often for many weeks of it – so that I can keep the collaboration going. I know that Alan does, and I’m sure that many of my other colleagues do as well. In the overall context of the budget, it’s such a small sum of money, but we are forced to do it.

Prime: Is there coming a time when we can really enhance the photography? Mostly what we see now is just compositing. Can the photography be extended?

Cundy: I’ll make a different kind of forecast: I believe that before long we will be able to take a test shot, then go into a digital suite and reshape the characteristic curve of the film – desaturate certain colours – and find a look that works for a picture that you are about to do, and then go to the manufacturer and say, “Make me 500,000 ft of this.” Then you are seeing it right out of the lab in that condition, rather than seeing it way further down the line.

Daviau: I see digital effects as the darkroom of the future. You make a simple pass of something, then, like Ansel Adams, you burn in areas and so on, so you actually make a better image.

Cundy: One of the things I learnt working with Bob Zemeckis was this: we’d work through a script and come to a scene, and he’d say, “Here’s what I’d like.” And we’d push the ideas around, and say, “We could hang this on a wire, and do that”, and so on and then turn to Bob and say, “What do you think?” and he’d say, “Huh! Anyone could do it that way. How are we going to do it?”

The lesson is that all the tools we have are pretty primitive and it’s up to us to be creative every time, and to extend the envelope.

I also feel that, besides effects movies, the impact of what you could do is in a period film: to put something there that no longer exists – not blow it up! – but to rebuild it. To put a skyline of a city that no longer exists; to do very quiet, well-researched effects that open up a whole new world from the past. We tend to see a whole lot of futuristic films; I’m sure there’s a whole new lot of films that we haven’t really done yet.

Prime: I’m sure it’s just a matter of cost, it’ll come.

Pethel: We’re at a paradigm shift: people are coming into the industry who don’t have the background that these gentlemen have, who haven’t worked at a time when all the effects were strictly chemical or optical. And so I think we’re coming to a time where everyone who’s coming into the industry will be working with the same set of tools and the same backgrounds. The Hollywood perspective is clearly the “big picture” picture. The concession that not all digital effects are for “effects” movies – that wire removal and skyline insertion are also things that are worth taking note of – sounds strange to us, in a local digital-effects industry that has been founded upon just that sort of work. Perhaps, in the long term, the fundamental question is whether digital imaging will continue to model itself upon the artefacts and the grammar imposed by photography, which has been established and consolidated by a century of filmmaking and viewing – or whether we will see a new style of imaging in its own right, which will only seek to emulate photography when the director demands that it does so. Keep watching.
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Continued from page 28

When you are working on a Moviola or a Steenbeck or a Kem, whatever, there is built-in thinking-time. You have an idea and you translate it.

On a machine, you have all this built-in indecision. Because I can do anything I want with the stuff, and then the director – not necessarily Phillip, because he is a man of great decision – never knows what to decide on. You end up with all these versions and then you still have to figure out what you are going to use. And you then have to put it back into film.

If you are doing a film of this size, the studio wants to preview it endlessly. They want to change the whole film around in two days. You can do that on film much quicker than you could possibly do on machines.

**Sallows: You mentioned the thinking-time when cutting on film. A number of years ago I did this book with Walter Murch, in The Blink of an Eye ... I've got that book. He loves film, too!**

**Sallows: In it, he says how inevitable it is that the shot that you want is always at the 800 ft mark, at the end of the roll. As you wind back, there is thinking-time. You are also able to look, even though you may not be concentrating all that much, and see something there that you can keep in mind for later.**

It is true what you say. As you are flashing by, you see things that jog your memory about something else.

There is something magical about film. I’ve been in it a long time and I just love playing with it, feeling it. It is true what you say. As you are concentrating on a piece of very high-technology equipment but you can’t see what you are looking at properly.

The only way you can is if you cap the storage down, take that piece out, put it back in. When you are working on a Moviola or a Steenbeck or a Kem, whether it is in focus or if you have any problems until you’ve had it conformed.

**Vandenburg: Do you cut on Steenbeck?**

On a Moviola, I use the Steenbeck as a viewing machine. If I want to do minor touch-ups, I do them on the Steenbeck. But if I find there is something I want to trick around, because I always overlay lots of dialogue – the last words are always floating over the next cut and stuff – you can give yourself a lot of problems doing it that way. If you want to do changes, then you have to re-think it. So, I usually just run it down, take that piece out, put it on the synchronizer, work it out and then put it back in.

**Ways of Learning**

**Vandenburg: On The Saint, you had a four-person crew. Is that your common package?**

I have a regular first, Tim Grover, who looks after special effects as well for me.

On this one, I said I wanted to do with one first and two seconds and that is what I did do. Then we got a trainee in who wanted to ...
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A bug panorama
Jane Freebury finds that Microcosmos: Le Peuple de l’Herbe, the spectacular wide-screen documentary on insect life in a French meadow, restores one’s sense of wonder.

On the shelf
Michael Holms locates treasures and disappointments on the video shelves (and in the mail-bag!), including premier releases by name Australian directors.

And now, the bit players
Brian McFarlane likes the four-hour William Shakespeare’s Hamlet even more than the widely-seen shorter version, and delights in all those minor characters (and major stars) not previously glimpsed.

In search of light
Harvey Keitel is a director of the independent sector, an actor who Experimented for his carving to be his earliest images of an up-and-down career that would have tested the patience of a saint. Margaret Smith celebrates Marshall Fine’s biography of this controversial actor.

Film

RIVER STREET

River Street is the third feature from production team House & Moorhouse. It is also the feature début of director Tony Mahood, after an impressive track record as First AD (Malcolm, Rikky and Pete, The Big Steal, Until the End of the World, Proof, Muriel’s Wedding). In Mahood’s treatment, our hero is Ben (Aden Young), a real estate agent too charming to be labelled a shyster, but whose moral slipperiness tests the audience’s sympathies for much of the film. Just when you think that Ben has begun to see the world from another’s point of view, he acts solely for his own benefit.

Early in the film, Ben visits his sister, whose impoverished flat contrasts starkly with his own Mercedes Benz-Rolex lifestyle. She observes, “Nothing’s ever a problem for you, is it?” Used to getting things his way, Ben’s journey of self-discovery is prompted by a sudden loss of control over his life and finding himself confronted with problems he doesn’t know how to solve.

Jungle Choir
Beresford is a director who employs his skills in making accessible films with unobtrusive style. He is at his best with a strong narrative and placing characters in a challenging environment. He is not a director of flashy technique or spectacular flair.

Chris (Sullivan Stapleton) and Wendy (Essie Davis), River Street.
Films
continued

success. Ben’s family history is only sketchily drawn, but it is implied that his mother led an impoverished existence and he tries to explain his life philosophy to Wendy: Without money and success, what’s to stop one’s eyes – Ben’s growing attraction to Wendy and his mateship with seventeen-year Chris (a powerful performance by newcomer Sullivan Stapleton) are the necessary agents of change here. In this way, the choices that Ben faces become a choice of loyalties: Vincent and Sharon versus Wendy and Chris. It becomes, literally, a life-or-death struggle.

The character of Ben recalls the high achiever-turned-soft heart of Jerry McGuire (Tom Cruise): he throws away his all-too-cozy career and remixes himself with the help of a good woman (Renee Zellweger’s Dorothy Boyd; Davis’ Wendy) and best mate (Cuba Gooding Jr’s Rod Tidwell; Stapleton’s Chris). This is not to imply that River Street can simply be reduced to a series of tropes or stereotypes. It is largely due to the dramatic range of the performances and Mahood’s sensitive handling of key confrontations – between Ben and Chris; between Ben and Wendy; and, finally, between Ben and Vincent – that the film becomes more than just a modern morality tale. Hunter plays Vincent, a self-made man, as an Aussie bloke with a malevolent side, recalling his character in Mortal’s Wedding (P. J. Hogan, 1994). Hunter is most interesting to balance the inconsistencies and two-faced nature of Ben with his charming side and well-meaning attempts at grocerosity. His scenes with Chris are both comic and moving.

One of the strengths of River Street is its depiction of the drop-in centre, for which Mahood drew on his own experience running a drama programme at a centre. He used a multi-roomed warehouse with gaudy, chaotic interiors and a cast of real street kids. Mahood poses some questions about ‘family’ by contrasting Ben’s ready acceptance into the centre’s collective with his entry into the privileged nucleus that surrounds Vincent, which is conditional upon proof of his (financial) worth, not his love for Sharon.

Even Ben’s feelings for Sharon are tested by his interest in Wendy. It would have been easy for Mahood to square off his two female leads in this respect, but Ben’s dilemma is rendered more meaningful by the fact that the character of ‘career-woman’ Sharon is as equally attractive as the ‘mother earth’ character of Wendy. One offers him moral integrity while the other offers material integrity. Ben knows he cannot have both.

Another highlight is a stunning underwater sequence, one of the most astoundingly cinematic moments I have ever experienced. It is a technical and artistic achievement, both visually beautiful and viscerally discomfiting.

On the downside, the David Brdie and John Phillips soundtrack is disappointing, in contrast to their evocative score for their first House & Moorhouse film, Proof (Jocelyn Moorhouse, 1991). It fails to add anything to the action or emotion on screen, and the most arresting moment comes from the use of source music, with Leonard Cohen’s ‘Hallelujah’ over the closing credits.

River Street is an impressive début by Mahood and a solid, polished third feature for House & Moorhouse. However, it is unlikely to repeat the commercial success of either Proof or Marty’s Wedding. Despite a flawless performance from Young, it is neither a crowd-pulling comedy nor ground-breaking arthouse production.


L et us not underestimate the magnitude of the task Kenneth Branagh has set himself – or the astonishing degree to which he succeeds in pulling it off. To commit oneself to sitting through a full-length theatrical performance of William Shakespeare’s Hamlet is rather like marriage: not to be entered upon lightly or ill-advisedly. Not many stage directors have risked keeping audiences in their seats for over four hours, and some of the cuts have become almost orthodoxy. Who, for instance, has ever seen Reynolds receiving his instructions from Polonius or the second grave-digger? Well, in this film, Branagh has spared us nothing and the result is pretty remarkable: a film considerably longer than Laurence Olivier’s or The English Patient, and much more entertaining than either of them.

My review of the two-hour version praised it as “a fine, vigorous, cinematically-aware film”, which deserves a wide success with a big popular audience. Nevertheless, one had misgivings about the uncut version. Perhaps it would be just too much of a good thing. Perhaps the star-spotting, with several big names unglued in the two-hour job, would reveal mere opportunism at work. Perhaps there would be revealed good reason for the usual cut scenes. All right, four hours is a long time, even with an intermission, and there are some miscalculations, but those studying Hamlet or those who think they know all it can possibly have to offer should certainly take advantage of the brief season it is being given.

What does this longer version contain that the two-hour one doesn’t? The play’s opening scene, for one, in which Nicholas Farrell as Horatio gives an intense, intelligent, intelligible account to the officers of the watch of the details of the second grave-digger? Well, in this film, Branagh has spared us nothing and the result is pretty remarkable: a film considerably longer than Laurence of Arabia or The English Patient, and much more entertaining than either of them.

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A significant feature of historical studies, ethical studies and biblical studies is the telling of and listening to 'women's stories'. Politics has been the preserve of men; ethical controversies have been largely fought by men; biblical stories are interpreted in the light of male figures, like the Hebrew patriarchs (Abraham, for instance, with scant regard for Sarah's story). We, all of us, men and women, need to acknowledge and appreciate the 'women's stories' and the fresh perspectives they bring to interpreting the human condition.

Paradise Road, though written and directed by Bruce Beresford, is a movie of women's stories. The final credits refer to the screenplay's being based on 'reminiscences' of survivors of the Sumatra prisoner-of-war camps. These reminiscences are the women's truth — truth with intense feeling. We are familiar with the movie and minor-series versions of A Town Like Alice,1 or of the British espionage stories from 40 to 50 years ago, like Odette (Herbert Wilcox, 1950) and Carve Her Name with Pride (Lewis Gilbert, 1955). Gayle Preston's documentary war reminiscences of New Zealand women offered a significant contribution, War Stories (1995). But they are comparatively few. Paradise Road shows how we need more.

The movie is advertised 'From the director of Driving Miss Daisy'. We recall his sensitivity in directing The Gifting of Wisdom (1977), Puberty Blues (1981), Crimes of the Heart (1986), The Fringe Dwellers (1986) and Rich in Love (1993). But Beresford is also the director of such men's stories as Don's Party (1976), Money Movers (1979), Breaker Morant (1980), David Williamson's The Club (1976), Mister Johnson (1991) and Black Robe (1992). But there is no doubting Beresford's report on the strong cast that has been assembled from both overseas and from home. The effect of the survivors' story is felt in his direction, and in the contact that several of the cast had with the women they play.


Reports from the USA seem to indicate that American audiences (and authorities?) took umbrage at the film and the way it presented the Japanese, dramatizing their cruelty and portraying atrocities. The present climate of pro-black 'armband' and anti-black 'armband' views of history may mean mixed reactions to telling such war stories in the 1990s and showing the past cruelty of current trading partners. But black armbands are signs of mourning, not emblems of guilt. Current generations inherit the evils of the past: they are not guilty of the acts of the past, but they inherit the consequences of the evil and have a responsibility towards redressing the evils. Paradise Road is a movie of mourning.

But it is also a movie of inspiration. "Inspiration" is a word that seems fitting for the kind of communication that makes them characters: Pauline Collins' decent missionary, Cate Blanchett's country-girl nurse, Pamela Rabe's disaffected outsider. Close's Adrienne Partridge is the good woman (light years away from Madame de Mourel or Cucuela de Villal). But Frances McDormand's tough German doctor (minus cigar and riding crop) may be too much of a tour-de-force for the balance of the film. Johanna Ter Steeg gives a robust performance as Sister Wilhelmina, one of the Dutch nuns imprisoned in the camp (basing it on discussions with an 84-year-old surviving nun in Holland).

Peter James' photography has a luminous beauty — vistas of mountains and mist, lush jungle — which makes us wonder how this cruelty can be perpetrated in such surroundings. He and Beresford did the same with Black Robe and its beautifully-ruled Cana­dian settings, telling the story of a harsh physical journey and a spiritual awakening of conscience and soul in isolation and even through torture. One might also make these comparisons with his African duo, Mister Johnston and A Good Man in Africa (1994), although they lack the obvious high-spirited heroism.

The difference between the journeys in Black Robe and Paradise Road is that, in the former, Laforgue (Lothaire Bluteau) is self-sacrificing for others and his instrument is the Christian Gospel, while, in the latter, the women's instrument for saving themselves is music, is singing. The spirituality of the music is represented as able to lift the human spirit out of misery, able to unite women of differing sensibilities and overcome friction. It is also shown as transcending ideologies as the Japanese captors succumb to beauty. The unexpected sequence where 'Snake' (Clyde Rusatts), the sadistic guard, takes Adrienne out into the jungle at gunpoint, and then quietly sings a traditional Japanese song, is surprising and surprisingly moving.

Music and prisoners was also the subject of Arthur Miller's Playing for Time (Daniel Mann, tele-feature, 1980), with Vanessa Redgrave and Jane Alexander. It has an Auschwitz setting. Beresford is a director who employs his skills in making accessible films with unobtrusive style. He is at his best with a strong narrative and placing characters in a challenging environment. He is not a director of flashy technique or spectacular flair. Paradise Road is one of his satisfying dramas, intelligent and moving, that communicates with the audience rather than drawing attention to itself.

This is one man's review of this film of women's stories. It is now time to stand back and listen to and appreciate a woman's review. — Peter Malone

1 A Town Like Alice (Jack Lee, 1956) and Neville Shute's A Town Like Alice (David Stevens, mini-series, 1981).
Films continued

as characters in a play, but as if we are not here, to listen to, but even if Gielgud could never be less than eloquent, riveting to watch and, moving in what they reveal of his capacity for pleasure and genuine affection.

Others in the ranks of the famous who make it only into the longer version are Richard Attenborough, who delivers his half-dozen lines as the English ambassador ("The sight is dismal"). He sums up the final cartridge with dignified gravity, and, most outrageously of all, Gérard Depardieu as Reynaldo. In none of the fifteen or moreHamlet’s court and the pain of his affections. All of these contradictions are rendered with a passionate sense of their incompatibility, which cinematic practice reinforces in the alternation of intimate close-up and echoing long-shot, or of glittering interiors and bleak landscape.

Not all the wild and whirling camerawork serves a useful purpose, and sometimes in Branagh’s own performance in the longer version there can seem to be too much physical ferocity, but these are essentially glibbles in assessing a film in which so much is achieved with breathtaking confidence.

Branagh appears often to have been subjected to the tall-poppy treatment in Britain: this can only make one ponder the old adage about one poodle the old adage about prophets in their own country, for in this vast enterprise he has created a fast, busy, witty, moving, hugely-entertaining version of a play which is all too easy to emblazon with reverence.

MICROCOSMOS: LE PEUPLE DE L’HERBE


Microcosmos quickly establish that this European co-production (Swiss, Italian and mostly French) is not your usual wild-screen documentary delivered with earnest, self-effacing discipline. Microcosmos is much more on the creative narrative side of the documentary spectrum and delivers its observations with a beguiling humour.

Camera tilts up and down stems and pans across twigs reveal the movement and behaviour and the totally bizarre and eccentric appearance of these little ‘people’ of the world underfoot, with a dramatic high-definition magnification that fills the screen. Microcosmos, awarded for technical excellence at Cannes last year, is unreservedly recommended.

Explanatory asides are non-existent in Microcosmos. The sole voice-over briefly encourages the audience to enter another dimension, where the smallest pond is an ocean, a stone a mountain and a season a lifetime. Nothing more is said and we are left on our own to wonder at it all. The only explanatory graphics are the closing credits that list the creatures as though they were the cast, in order of appearance.

Only several shots in the entire film offer a human perspective, with the ‘people’ of the grass—the bees, the ants, the spiders, the dragonflies, the caterpillars, the beetles, etc—and, as we float down the stems, we have suddenly shrunk, like Alice, to the same size as a caterpillar on a toadstool.

From these ethereal beginnings, the next sequences on the ground in a summer’s day and a night. At the start, the dew of early dawn is an obstacle for a passing ant, but then the water shrinks in time lapse. Ants and other creatures brush sleep from their faces— as they perform an early morning toilette? A tendril is waving around reaching for a place to land, a flower is opening in a poppy field. When everything has arranged itself, the moment for action and take-off has arrived. A bee bolts for lavender stems waving in the field.

MICROCOSMOS

© Brian McFarlane

Microcosmos, its inhabitants are spectators at the circus we wonder: are heard on the soundtrack. Like ing from the ground and cymbals briefly halted. The boulder has round clod of dung), toiling away pushing a boulder along (a tiny Leroux. A beetle-like Sisyphus is Philippe Barbeau and Bernard Coulais, final music from Bruno reverberates with the pecking of a Thud, thud, the ground knock-down, knock-out competition. Thud, thud, the ground stings to explain is perhaps for one's interest. However, this disin vation. Jim Henson's Creature Shop has produ incing nothing on this world of creatures. Night lives of the weird and the wonderful are observed. Jim Henson's Creature Shop has produced nothing on this world of cuties. Trust the French to do it well. A wildscreen doco isn't a product that sells readily in the cinema, but Microcosmos is much more than that, and it needs to be seen big. It works without a guiding presence, without the infectious exuberance of a David Attenborough (Life on Earth), but leaves you stunned anyway. As its makers anticipated, Microcosmos restores a sense of wonder. SILENT TRIGGER Directed by Russell Mulcahy. Producers: Silvia Muraglia, Nicolas Clermont. Screenwriter: Sergio Altieri. Director of photography: David Francis. Production designer: Gilles Ardi. Editor: Yves Langlois. Music: Stefano Mainetti. Cast: Dolph Lundgren (Shooter), Gina Bellman (Spotter), Conrad Dunn (Supervision). Christopher Heyerdahl (O'Hara), Emma Stevens (Target Woman). Australian distributor: Buena Vista Home Video. USA. Video. 1999. 90 mins. Almost 15 years after he was chasing all sorts of pigs around a strangely-lit Broken Hill, director Russell Mulcahy was shooting modern action-man Dolph Lundgren in Silent Trigger against a similarly wild-coloured Montréal. After The Shadow, the highly-underrated, lavish and decidedly-beste feature from 1994, it was perhaps inevitable that the next step would be to disappointment. Silent Trigger, a low-key and perfunctory revenge scenario actioner, apparently shot indepen dently with only a production design budget, does so with megafacce - sometimes at 1,500 rounds per minute. Of course, Silent Trigger is an ocular feast (and, while we're at it, sounds awesome), as we've come to expect nothing less from Russell Mulcahy, but ultimately it remains hard to recommend to anyone besides absolute diehard enthusiasts of ballistic bal let, or Dolph fans. Unfortunately, not even the fact that it revolves around the inability of Shooter (Dolph Lundgren) to pull the trigger at the required moment could save this flick from a premature date with video-shop shelf dust. The details go like this: Shooter, a gun/to-face stand-offs. A sex scene. Shooter's arch-enemy, the previously-unknown technology, the previously-unknown sniper weaponry. With or without diehard enthusiasts of ballistic ballet, this flick from a premature date with video-shop shelf dust.
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Leprechaun 3

Some of this writing about Leprechaun 3 happened late on 17 March, St Patrick's Day. No green liquids were consumed during the course of the review. Tri-Mark Pictures really got lucky when it released the initial piece of blarney, Leprechaun (Mark Jones, 1993), to a grateful American public. It's actually a wonder that no one hadn't already launched a global leprechaun horror franchise. It's not like we're totally lacking in mainstream celluloïd leprechauns to react to, either. Whatever, box-office gold, especially when it comes in pots, often creates the urgent need for a sequel and sometimes a second and third produced back-to-back. Enter Brian Trenchard-Smith, well-rounded Australian action director now working out of L.A., who could've been slaving on his television war epic Sahara when the first Leprechaun sequel cruised through North American cinemas. Deserting the desert, he stepped into helm Leprechaun through its second and third sequels (both of which received US theatrical releases), one again working for producer Henry Seggerman, for whom he'd made Night of the Demons 2 (which, incidentally, was scored by expatriate Aussie, Jim Manrie).

All Leprechaun movies so far have featured a prosthetic-coated Warwick Davis as the titular fantasy creature. All Leprechaun movies so far and in the future will have to straddle that uneasy void between fear and laughter. The first Leprechaun careers into the latter attribute easily on and stays there, although, of course, it was strong enough to firmly establish the manic character. The second (directed by Rodman Flanders) we can't wouch for. As presented by special make-up effects designer Gabie Barolos (Frankenhooker), Davis looks evil (and even rorting) throughout Leprechaun 3. A lesser concentration on the one-liners allows for a greater focus on the well-engineered acts of mayhem (which this time includes, amidst your usual chainsaw disembowelment, a prop being turned to shit, and a woman's breasts, but and lips swelling as far as the skin will stretch until they pop). An Elvis impersonator even gets the best line!

Appropriately set in Las Vegas (Leprechaun 4 is set in outer space), where Davis is led in a frantic search of our mean, green anti-hero. We're saddled with a mouthful of toe, amputated through the teeth. A single pair of fingers. ©

Leprechaun damage not previously mentioned includes a strangulation, live eyeball removal, a sledgehammer to the balls and fun in hospital with a patient printout. Sadly, there's no gaudy Vegas chapel ready for the service to put his ashes to rest when he meets the Master Film Corporation. Leprechaun 3 deserves to play endlessly at the Crown Casino's 24 hours-a-day Gambling Filmfest. Eight shillings out of 10.

Also noted:

Monolissa and Naza
You never know what's going to turn up in the Cinema Papers mailbox, like these twin samplings of tedious Asian trash cinema. Both infamously destined for eternal play on some desperate 'adults only' cable station, Monolissa and Naza are products of the Master Film Corporation. Master Film is headquartered in Singapore but maintains a registered office in Bangalore, which in all likelihood is the vicinity where the performers for both films were discovered. Both films, devoid of any hardcore footage, also lack seriously technical ability but remain hard - hard to watch, even on fast-forward. Jiggling cellulite falls off the screen at odd angles and a great lighting effect is achieved by just leaving the room dark! The camera is often lucky to capture any sort of image.

Monolissa and Naza are undated (they feature apparently Indian opening credits titles), but weren't shot recently. Monolissa, we think, is a reference to its (barely audible) music soundtrack. However, it does share beefed-up audio effects with its stablemate. Naza actually does get nastier when they break out the leather and rubber appliances. Naza also sports a louder music track that's pure Asian disco. Both films were produced by Winston Wong. The casts include Rumitean, John Ann Marie and Abilie.

In the world of rock-bottom soft-porno video, Monolissa and Naza aren't even in the ball park - or, should that be, inner-city video grindhouse.
**in review**

**Books**

**HARVEY KEITEL**

_The Art of Darkness_

Marshal Fine, Harary Collins, 288pp., Illus., $16.95

**When Martin Scorsese was casting Mean Streets in 1973, Harvey Keitel and Robert De Niro were friends, and they discussed between them who should play the major and minor rôles. Keitel was to play the lead, Charlie, a sympathetic character struggling with conflicting emotions. De Niro was to play the minor part of the Bashy, more outrageous Johnny Boy. They nearly swapped rôles, but Scorsese wouldn’t agree.**

**De Niro said later of Johnny Boy, “I hadn’t thought of playing him at all, but Harvey somehow made me see it in another way.”**

The reviews came out, and all the rave notices were about De Niro, and the rest, as they say, is history. De Niro’s career went into overdrive, and Keitel was more or less left on the shelf to play bit parts. But even then, Marshall Fine writes, Keitel was playing characters so feverishly caught up in their own lives that he nearly gave off sparks — he created that much friction and tension in the darker side of masculinity.

**It was while Keitel was a court reporter that he was invited by a colleague to attend some acting classes. He resisted at first but went along as a kind of daredevil exercise. Keitel stayed in acting classes for years whilst he kept his job in the courts.**

In the 1960s, Keitel first appeared as an understudy and then an actor in Edward Albee’s play, _The American Dream_. By 1965, he had a part in Sam Shepard’s Up To Thursday on Off-Broadway, and later that year he met Martin Scorsese and his life changed forever. Keitel says, Marty and I discovered when we met and became friends that we shared a very similar life. It didn’t matter that I was raised Jewish and that Marty was raised Catholic. Scorsese recalls, “We became friends and found we had the same feelings about the same problems.” Scorsese cast him as the lead of Scorsese’s alter-ego, a young Italian man too anxious to get on and confused by what he feels for a young woman. The film took months to finish whilst the director searched for finance, and some of the script was improvised as they shot.

The gritty black-and-white film was screened at the Chicago Film Festival and had moderate reviews, but didn’t do well at the box-office. Keitel went back to the theatre, but by 1972 Scorsese was offering him the lead in Mean Streets.

In retrospect, it’s hard to say whether Keitel’s life would have been different had he played the more flamboyant Johnny Boy. Here was a man who was doing the job of a pimp and a girl who was working as a prostitute. It’s monstrous. It’s horrible. But that wasn’t my approach to it. My approach was as a working man. The guy I worked with taught me about how the girls were treated. Again, when the reviews came out, De Niro was lauded and just a few mentioned Keitel’s work.

One major change to become a star again came his way when Francis Ford Coppola offered Keitel the lead role in _Apocalypse Now_ in 1978 in The Philippines’ jungles. Keitel had been a Marine and he was anxious about some of Coppola’s script. He wanted to ensure that “they wouldn’t use the film as propaganda.”

Keitel’s career into a nosedive that lasted from about 1978 until 1991. Keitel admits, “There was a time when I couldn’t get any work. It was beyond weird — it was hell.”

Even _The Duellists, Blue Collar, The Border, Bad Timing: A Sensual Obsession and The Last Temptation of Christ_, in which Keitel played Judas, couldn’t turn his luck around. But Keitel’s replacement on _Apocalypse Now_, Martin Sheen, was generous in his praise when he said that Harvey Keitel was “always searching for new ground to reveal the implication was that Keitel somehow “wasn’t up to the job”. It was this humiliation that turned Keitel’s career into a nosedive that lasted from about 1978 until 1991. Keitel admits, “There was a time when I couldn’t get any work. It was beyond weird — it was hell.”

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Enough: make your own films. Do not wait to find their own voice: "I can't urge people over thirty years, and told young filmmakers to the 1993 Film Festival. He had appeared in sixty films and Keitel went on to win the American film Sarajevo. Keitel helped his wife's career, but in 1990, when she was starring in a film alongside Edward Jones Odom, she fell in love and left the marriage, taking Stella with her. It was the bleakest time in Harvey Keitel's life, and he thought he wouldn't recover. But help was round the corner in the form of Quentin Tarantino, who came on the scene and wanted Keitel in Reservoir Dogs. Keitel heard this on the New York grapevine and rang the young man, and a new partnership and genre were born. Tarantino confessed, "I always had Harvey in mind as the perfect guy to play this character, but I never dreamt he'd do it." Keitel hustled for Tarantino and helped him cast the film and raise the money.

Keitel was also offered a starring part in Warren Beatty's Bugsy, for which he received his first Oscar nomination, and in Ridley Scott's Thelma & Louise, where he played an honest, sympathetic cop. When these films came out there was no looking back.

One American critic now wrote of Keitel, "That kind of risk-taking in a career is unusual: working with first-time directors, working overseas instead of building a career in Hollywood. But Harvey's done that a number of times."

Janet Maslin of The New York Times also wrote, in what might be an overstatement, "He is one of a hall dozen people who are essential to keeping the independent sector alive. He's as important as John Sayles. In the last chapters of Marshall Fine's biography, he chronicles a more public Keitel whom we've come to be familiar with, especially when Jane Campion approached him to play the role of the gentle recluse, Baines, in The Piano (1993). The film won the Palme d'Or and then Keitel went on to win the American Film Institute award for best actor. In 1994, Tarantino's Pulp Fiction, which Keitel also appeared in, also won the Palme d'Or."

Bad Lieutenant, Smoke and Clockers followed, and in 1996 Keitel was honoured with a Tribute at the San Francisco International Film Festival. He had appeared in sixty films over thirty years, and told young filmmakers to find their own voice: "I can't urge people enough: make your own films. Do not wait for Hollywood. Hollywood is a myth!"

Keitel found out the hard way what it takes to be independent. He has helped pave the way for younger actors and directors, and will probably continue to take risks and be unpredictable. There is still a home to the, and there are only a dozen or so of his films where he reveals his sensitive side, which he spoke about all those years ago when James Dean's movies were hits. Marshall Fine believes Harvey Keitel is "an actors' actor," and his well-researched biography is a pleasure to read.

In contrast, Keitel's personal life improved and in 1982 he met the Italian actor, Lorraine Stella. Keitel found out the hard way what it takes to be independent. He has helped pave the way for younger actors and directors, and will probably continue to take risks and be unpredictable. There is still a home to the, and there are only a dozen or so of his films where he reveals his sensitive side, which he spoke about all those years ago when James Dean's movies were hits. Marshall Fine believes Harvey Keitel is "an actors' actor," and his well-researched biography is a pleasure to read.

The latest Panavision cameras come out for a production and ground straight back. At best, they stay for a few days on display at local trade events, all of which makes the task harder in promoting the Panavision product to the local DOPs. There have been Australian productions who wanted to use Panavision gear and who have resorted to bringing it out to Australia direct. This has meant that the role played by the Samuelson Group as Australasian agents for Arriflex cameras and lighting gear has been an important part of the company's business. How Arri will see the future is an open question. The company report says that the sale was prompted by disappo...
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Censorship and the film festival

by Gabby Stein

ATHY LUMBY, AUTHOR of Bad Girls, writes that pornography can be usefully understood as “a blinder spot on the social skin which marks a point of friction”. This social wound has recently been exhumed (does it ever go away?) and picked at by the zealous fingers of the bureaucracy in the name of censorship and moral reprehension. Censorship is back on the political agenda and in the public arena and, with the recent furore over the classification of X-rated videos, some may be wondering about the future of film classification in Australia. As Australia’s film festival season approaches, there are growing concerns about festivals and the application of the recent Federal censorship legislation in a climate of conservatism and moral “panic”.

The new Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995 (the Act) which came into effect in January 1995 unified the censorship process across Australia. The National Scheme now complements the State legislation which provides for the enforcement of the classification of films, using the National Classification Code (the Code) as guidelines. Presently, film festivals can import films directly without classification from the Office of Film and Literature Classification (OFLC) if certain conditions are met. The Director of the Classification Board, however, retains the power to, firstly, revoke approval for an organization to conduct film festivals and, secondly, not approve a film to be held in the particular festival. In order to meet the conditions enabling an organization to hold film festivals, the organization should submit details of its aims and conditions of screening, among other criteria (i.e., the audience is over 18, the reputation of the organization and its cultural focus). The organization then must submit titles and synopses of all relevant films. The Director can decline to grant approval (or an exemption from classification requirements) for a film and request the organization to submit the film for classification to the OFLC for approval. If the film is classified as X or refused classification, then the Director will not grant an exemption. When making a decision about whether the film is to be exempt or not, the Director will have regard to section 11 of the Federal Act, which takes into account standards of morality accepted by reasonable adults, artistic merit and the intended audience.

On the face of it, the process, now unified and regulated by the Federal Act, does not seem to be different from what happened with festival films in the past. In fact, John Dickie, Chief Censor, remarked that there were “no changes at all”, that this situation had always been thus. Ross Tzannes, former president of the Sydney Film Festival, suggested that in substance this might be the case; however, the requirements detailed above were previously administratively in character. The Customs (Cinematograph Films) Regulations allowed for the importation of films into Australia for the purpose of festivals without being classified. This administrative “arrangement” was implemented by Don Chipp (Commonwealth Minister for Customs and Excise 1969-1972), who told the film festivals that they did have to submit their titles and synopses as well as meet certain conditions, but if these were met he would turn a “semi-blind eye”. It was understood that if the films were abusing the “privilege” that this arrangement gave them, then their rights to hold film festivals would be cancelled. Tzannes remarks that this was a “strike one and your out” policy. What is fundamental to recognize here is that previously it was thought that the OFLC could reserve the right to look at any film for informative reasons only. The rationale was that this acted as a kind of check on the festivals: i.e., made sure they weren’t showing snuff movies every week, for example. The recent Federal legislative changes do two things. Firstly, they embody this process or arrangement in State Enforcement legislation complimented by the National Scheme. Secondly, the Director now has the right to approve or disapprove film in a manner not previously formalized; in other words, to censor.

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On the face of it, the process, now unified and regulated by the Federal Act, does not seem to be different from what happened with festival films in the past. In fact, John Dickie, Chief Censor, remarked that there were “no changes at all”, that this situation had always been thus. Ross Tzannes, former president of the Sydney Film Festival, suggested that in substance this might be the case; however, the requirements detailed above were previously administratively in character. The Customs (Cinematograph Films) Regulations allowed for the importation of films into Australia for the purpose of festivals without being classified. This administrative “arrangement” was implemented by Don Chipp (Commonwealth Minister for Customs and Excise 1969-1972), who told the film festivals that they did have to submit their titles and synopses as well as meet certain conditions, but if these were met he would turn a “semi-blind eye”. It was understood that if the films were abusing the “privilege” that this arrangement gave them, then their rights to hold film festivals would be cancelled. Tzannes remarks that this was a “strike one and your out” policy. What is fundamental to recognize here is that previously it was thought that the OFLC could reserve the right to look at any film for informative reasons only. The rationale was that this acted as a kind of check on the festivals: i.e., made sure they weren’t showing snuff movies every week, for example. The recent Federal legislative changes do two things. Firstly, they embody this process or arrangement in State Enforcement legislation complimented by the National Scheme. Secondly, the Director now has the right to approve or disapprove film in a manner not previously formalized; in other words, to censor.

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and film festivals sensed their vulnerability for the first time in over ten years. Queer Screen appealed the decision to ban *Tras El Cristal*, but the Federal Court upheld the original banning. Rebecca Huntley, in an article entitled "Queer Cuts: Censorship and Community Standards", cites from the judgment of the majority: "the depictions presented in [Tras El Cristal] are gratuitous and exploitative to the extent that they are likely to offend against the standards of the reasonable adult person". This judgement reflects the crux of the censorship debate at its most esoteric. The standards of the 'reasonable person' have been long debated in legal history. When it comes to applying these criteria in film censorship, what the 'reasonable person' may ingest is a complex and difficult issue. If festivals are to be thought of as synonymous with a more culturally-specific audience, then is that audience better able to see what the rest of society can't? Is the reasonable person any one of a number of people sitting quietly in the dark at the State Theatre during June (or are they watching *Star Wars* at Hoyts)?

Huntley quotes the Director of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Film Festival, Jeff Mitchell, who expressed concerns over the government's "stepping in to control what a film festival can and cannot show, a move that has ramifications for all film festivals in this country". Despite assurances from the OFLC and a sympathetic Attorney-General in NSW, the apparently-safe existence of festivals was threatened by the *Tras El Cristal* experience. In light of this, Paul Byrnes comments that, "We are more vulnerable now. It is only a matter of time before we butt heads again."

The recent censorship battles about X-rated materials have created a general climate of unease about the direction the government may take. The OFLC guidelines state in the National Classification Code that "adults should be able to read, hear and see what they want". They also suggest the need to take into consideration community concerns about violence, particularly sexual violence and the "portrayal of persons in a demeaning manner". The question is: What adults exactly are they referring to? These guidelines reflect a certain homogenizing ethos that permeates any discussion of censorship. In a new technological era, there is a plurality and diversity of voices and listeners (readers) that make any attempt at creating a cohesive "community" problematic.

The establishment of Community Assessment Panels (to act as a kind of added voice to the OFLC) by the Federal Attorney-General Daryl Williams, which has the backing of Senator Brian Harradine, suggest a more conservative approach to this issue. Cathy Lumbly, in a recent article, suggests that it is time to abandon the fantasy of "community standards" and "recognise that our society is made up of diverse communities with often incompatible tastes". In this way, what becomes the most important consideration in light of implementing some sort of structure of classification is, as Lumby points out, a matter of "respecting difference". Lumby suggests that if materials are labelled in such a detailed way as to give the reader or watcher enough knowledge to make a reasonable decision about whether they would appreciate such material or find it offensive, then it is for them to make an informed decision on that basis.

Lesley Stern points out an interesting contradiction in the present censorship culture of Australia: "On the one hand there is a phobia about the masses, about new manifestations of the media in realms of popular culture; and on the other hand there is new attention to an anxious scrutiny of high culture - the Film Festival." However, it is perhaps the more marginal events, fringe films and technologies that attract the most reprehension. It is always at the periphery or borders of society that such transgressions are noted as a symptom of societal damage. The two festival films banned in Australia's history have been from the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Film Festival and the recent controversy over *Hustler White* suggests a general trend in censorship criteria. Why is it that such films attract such scrutiny? What 'community' are they offending? With new Federal legislation, the ramifications may be greater for festival films as the political climate intensifies. The policing has been stepped up. Although both the State and Federal laws take into account the perspective of a particular audience and the artistic merit of the film, film festivals should continue to be a safe house where any person, reasonable or otherwise, in the knowledge of what they are getting, can see whatever they want.

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an entire session of the international competition. But the local audience would tell another story. At French or Italian festivals, if a film is too dull, or in some way offensive, the audience will give voice to their discontent en masse. The German audience is more reserved, but I think genuinely appreciative of the selection, so subjective is the process of watching films. That is not to say that there were no good films in competition; some I would say were excellent. The Red Tag is a forty-minute documentary from The Netherlands that struck me as extraordinary both in terms of filmmaking and subject matter. The film traces the lives of two now elderly brothers whose mother, still living with them, took them from Holland in the 1950s to lead a life of almost total isolation in a deserted village in the south of France. The filmmakers are perhaps guilty of questionable ethics when the camera witnesses some heated scenes with newly-renovating neighbours, but this is certainly a fascinatingly-intimate account.

Other films worthy of note were David Fourier's Majolettes in Space (France), a lighthearted social comment, and the haunting Telephone Line from Argentinian director Marcelo Brigante, which tells the story of a young man who calls a friend only to find his call has become mysteriously twisted in time to be received by a girl in his own apartment, twenty years earlier.

Australian films selected this year were Lucy Lehman's hypnotic Five Hundred Acres, which I enjoyed seeing for a second time; Michelle Maher's grainy, gothic Urban Fairytale; the stylisbome As You Are, directed by Emma-Kate Croghan and New Zealander Brad McGann - slick, even if the subject matter is a little dated; and the odd but entertaining video Low Job from German-Australian director Jan Bruck.

HyperMedia and the Democratization of Cinema

If the programming at Oberhausen is a little on the demanding side, the Festival is not without its highlights. This was the third year I have visited Oberhausen and each year it has focused on a particular issue, bringing a number of “experts” together to present their work in forums and discussions. This year, the focus was on what they have called “HyperMedia”: non-linear narratives presented on CD-ROM or other digital media with the random-accessibility of Hypertext and the Web. According to Hardt, the move toward non-linear narratives is both culturally and politically significant: “The linearity of cinema is considered today to be a hindrance. Viewers are no longer satisfied to merely be told a story, but want to help shape it themselves: this demonstrates a desire for democratization and individualization. The Internet [for example] is an enormous democratizing machine.”

Whether the practitioners of non-linear filmmaking are savvy to the political implications of their work remains to be seen, but certainly there were some interesting presentations made. The most engaging, in my view, was the work of Christopher Hales, Senior Lecturer in Art, Media and Design at the University of West England. Hales’ presentation was based around an installation he had arranged in the Festival, “Electronic Café” – an area set aside with lots of terminals with fast ISDN Internet Access and the possibility to view some of the CD-ROMs which were presented. The installation was simply called “Four Interactive Films” and consisted of a glass display some eighteen inches across and about twelve high. The display was mounted on a gothic-looking steel structure and the image was projected from the rear by a hidden video projector. The result had a genuinely surreal quality to it, oddly out of place among the confessional terminals and screens that were buzzing around it.

Eventually, all the “films” in Hales’ installation returned to a kind of menu presented as a four-way split screen. The viewer is prompted to touch the screen on one of the images to select which film s/he would like to see. That film then begins at some arbitrary starting point. The viewer can alter the dramatic structure of the work by touching various elements which appear along the way. Interactive elements are indicated by some kind of highlight or distortion of the image. There are also audio “cues” to guide you through and acknowledge your decisions.

Of the four films, the most engaging was a piece called “The Twelve Loveliest Things I Know”: a collection of delightfully-dissimilar objects chosen by a group of children who were interviewed and asked to describe what would be the twelve “loveliest things they knew”. Says Hales: “When viewed through the eyes of adulthood, this [work] forms the basis of a personal documentary which attempts to provide emotion and thoughtful reflection.”

Extending the Documentary Tradition

Another approach is that taken by Glorianna Davenport, Director of the Interactive Cinema Group at the MIT Media Lab. Davenport has a background in documentary filmmaking and her work is primarily concerned with up view of an American-Italian community in the heart of Boston. Presented on the World Wide Web, it can be experienced as “a collection of intimate portraits, or as a story of one neighbourhood striving to preserve its identity and traditions in the rapidly changing urban world”.

Davenport’s description reminded me of Sydney’s Tropfest’s growing out of the Darlinghurst café scene: “The project began in a popular North End café where local restaurateurs, unemployed actors, local personalities and various shady characters drink spiked espresso and swap stories. Two years of shooting and editing resulted in over sixty short vignettes that can be strung together like haiku poetry into various stories.”

The audience navigates these stories through an interface constructed as an irregular collage of faces and icons which represent elements of the narrative. The intention is to avoid conventional buttons and text by “recreating the experience of the vibrant North End streets, so unlike Boston’s modern Metropolis just a mile away.”

The End of Celluloid?

So, does the digital interface spell the future for cinema? According to Martin Rieser, also a lecturer at the University of West England: “It is my contention that so-called interactive media contain the potential to liberate writers and artists from the illusion of authorial control and in much the same way as photography broke the naturalist illusion in art, exposing it not as an inevitable form but as another set of conventions.”
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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learn, who is still with us. She is wonderful, Marianne.

This was a big film, so you have lots of rushes and stuff to deal with. You have them do that. But Tim is invaluable, like my right hand. He knows what I’m going to do next. He is prepared for me. He forces me into things that I don’t want to get started on! He says, “There, you have to do it.”

Vandenbreg: One of the concerns of the Australian Screen Editors’ Guild is what are we going to do with the assistants of the present. Where are they going to go? How are they going to learn?

Sallows: The three of us learnt through an apprenticeship system.

When I first got in the business, it was 1954 or 5, I worked for a little advertising company. I arrived down at what was then Associated British Pictures, a studio in Elstree, which was a wonderful school. They just classified you as a trainee, but you would work with a sound editor on one film, with the editor on another, and so forth.

How are they going to do that today when, as far as I know, the assistants on Lightworks and Avid are really the night-birds who prepare you for the next day. How can they ever get the feel of editing a film? They are machine-minders. They just put in stuff for you to create and work with, which is wonderful for you. But what is going to happen when your day ends, when you don’t want to do it any more? How are they going to know the feeling of editing?

You can’t teach people editing. It is an instinctive thing. When you give a lecture or get involved in a discussion about editing, how can I tell you why I did something?

Vandenbreg: I know that everything I learnt was by staying in the same room with the editor and the director, asking for comment.

If you are an assistant, you see how the editor achieves it. The director might say, “I want it all upside-down and sideways” and the assistant thinks, “How is the editor going to do that?” You watch him achieve it.

My hero was the famous English editor from years ago, Jack Harris. Jack was David Lean’s editor. He was like God to us all. I worked with him as an assistant on Indiscreet [Stanley Donen, 1958] with Cary Grant and Ingrid Bergman in 1960.

Watching him and the way they worked was fascinating, but I don’t think they could cope with today’s industry, as good as they were. They never had the complex material that we have today, where directors shoot gods knows how much footage and a thousand set-ups and what have you. They didn’t have that then.

Vandenbreg: A director like Phil is very good in post-production because of his experience; he crosses both sides of the editing timeline, from solefly film to film and/or computer editing.

Phil is the most dedicated film director I’ve ever worked with, and I’ve been lucky enough to work with some very interesting people. Phil never gives up on anything, but he doesn’t interfere, which is wonderful. He just doesn’t come and tell me what I should do. He would always say, “Why don’t we try so and so?” He would come up with a great idea that had been staring us in the face, but he wouldn’t tell me how to do it.

I’ve been very lucky in my career. I’ve worked with a lot of directors who are very demanding, and I think I can only work that way. I’ve worked on two or three films withlazy directors. They really don’t give you what you need; they don’t put in the time.

As for Phillip, he will be there at 6 am, sleeping in the next room. You just tug him on the shoulder and he will come in and look. He won’t go away. You will bend over backwards for him; you would do anything to try and achieve what he is after.

Vandenbreg: Looking back through your filmography, that early grounding in sound editing seems to have really paid off for you.

Impressive. I think you cut without thinking for sound. Sound editors give you the sound you want to create.

When I was doing sound, the thing that used to get to me all the time was I felt the editors were never really concerned about anything other than their pictures. They wouldn’t think of the overall thing, of what is going to happen when they finished with it. They got these nice smart cuts, but there was no way you could translate that into sound, and sound is 50 percent of the movie. If you get that right, it really makes the movie work.

That is one of the reasons I wanted to make the transition.

When I finally did make that transition, I never found it complicated or difficult. I started doing things without thinking. Sound was behind my thinking, because music is one of my great loves; always has been.

When I’m doing a film, having read the script a few times, I start listening to music that I imagine this film will have.

I never cut to music because I think that is completely wrong. You have to play for the scene. But it is amazing when you put the music that you have been listening to back to it how close it works. It is part of a rhythm that you can build up for yourself.

Sallows: It is also the way the actors are giving their lines. You can change the pacing of lines and stuff, but in a two-shot it directly relates to the pacing of the dialogue. When I’m cutting on a Steenbeck, I start assembling a scene backwards to know where I’m finishing.

I do it a different way. I find each cut motivates where I’m going next. Sometimes you end up in a cul de sac and can’t get out.

Vandenbreg: I know what you mean. I like to keep moving forward towards an anticipated end.

When I’ve looked at it, I know what I want to achieve, and then I will start. That cut then motivates where I’m going from there, and then obviously you are going to play it again and change things around. I work it that way.

I love dialogue scenes more than anything. The thing that is very hard to get across to directors is handling their looping sessions.

They do take after take after take, and wear the artist out and lose it. Then they will say, “What we’ll do is use this line from here and this line from there, because I love the way the actor said that” and so on.

You say, “The reason that that line he said sounds perfect is because it is related to the one before it. If you take that out and put it with the one that you like, it is not going to be the same”, and it isn’t.

Vandenbreg: Yes, I think our favourite scenes are dialogue-driven, too. The hardest thing I find to adjust to after scenes have been chopped is that the rhythm of the original dialogue performance can be thrown out of balance.

I worked with Karel Reisz quite a bit. On Morgan! A Suitable Case for Treatment [1966] all those years ago, I got called in to handle the dialogues, which were in a terrible state. He was one of these guys who would say, “We will use that piece from one track, that piece from there”, and we would spend all day on a tiny two-minute scene, piecing together words. Then we ran all this stuff and he’d say, “Ah, I like that.” Then I’d say, “But Morgan wouldn’t have said it like that.”

He was another one who would never leave it alone, but he was an exciting man to work with.

Ridley Scott

Vandenbreg: The last film you did sound editing on was The Duellists [Ridley Scott, 1977], which had a wonderful soundtrack and uses a lot of natural sound, as well as fantastic effect work, especially what you did with the swords.

I had great fun doing that. I was a sound editor for about 16 years. In that time, I did some films I’m very proud of. Women in Love and The Duellists are my two favourite achievements.

The Duellists was great because I could take great liberties with the sound. I had to replace the sounds of all the swords, which I did with crystal glasses. We went out and bought all these seconds. They got so upset because they cost a lot of money, but you just had to touch them to get that ring. It was great.

Vandenbreg: Was it a harder film to do than Blade Runner?

Blade Runner wasn’t a hard film technically; it was a hard film politically. Ridley is a very tenacious bugger. He won’t give up and he will do exactly what he wants to do.

We had the pressures because he was going over budget. Our completion bond was with Tandem, the big TV group. Tandem ended up putting in nearly as much money as the company making the film. Tandem took over and said, “We are going to get rid of Ridley Scott.”

They then said to me, “Now we can do the film we want to. Put up these reels.” I said, “You can’t have these reels because they have been broken down for people.”
I tap-danced for three weeks. I said, “You can only work on this piece.” Then, of course, Ridley came back.

Vandenburg: There have been so many stories about that film. One is that Harrison Ford read the voice-over very badly in order for it not to be used.

Yes, I think that is true. He really didn’t want to do it. For Christ sakes, it is a dreadful reading.

Vandenburg: Did Ridley want to do it?

I don’t think he did, but I don’t know his real thoughts.

The original concept of the film is what is now out as the “Director’s Cut”. That is what we took with us to America.

Vandenburg: Which doesn’t have the voice-over.

No voice-over. It ends as they walk into the elevator and the doors shut. But people didn’t like it. They didn’t understand it. They were confused and used to say, “But it is raining all the time, and there are thousands of Chinese everywhere.”

Without the commentary, the film makes far more sense. The commentary was never right; it was never done in the right way. Harrison did it two or three times and got more pissed off as he was doing it. You can tell when you hear it.

Alien

Vandenburg: I’ve always wanted to know with Alien[1] (David Fincher, 1992) whose idea was it to bend the opening 20th Century Fox logo fanfare?

Mine.

Vandenburg: It works so well. I wanted you to play the whole thing like mono. I’ve done it twice on the logo. We talked to the composer and had him do it for us, because we wanted to change the whole concept. They didn’t like it to start with. Studios don’t like us playing around with their logos.

Vandenburg: The music is really effective.

That was Elliot Goldenthal. We gave him the idea, he created it.

Vandenburg: Vincent Ward was going to originally direct Alien[2]. I met with Vincent Ward and with this guy who was going to produce it. It all seemed to be reasonably amicable and I left. I then heard the film had been cancelled, so I didn’t give it any more thought.

Some time later, I got called up again, this time to meet David Fincher, whom I really liked. He is a talented man and was only 27 or 28 when he did that film. He had all the arrogance of a 28 year-old. He never let that studio walk over him, and the pressures were horrendous, as you can imagine.

The only problem was at the end the studio really did take over. They insisted on certain things being removed and what have you. It was an even stronger film in the original form, but interestingly it made more money for Fox around the world than the other two did.

Vandenburg: The second one with James Cameron was very simple by comparison.

I agree.

When I was doing a film called FX [Robert Mandel, 1986], James Cameron and Gale Anne Hurd came into the cutting room and asked me if I would be free to do The Terminator [1984] I couldn’t because I was tied up. Then I got a call about Aliens [Cameron, 1986] and I couldn’t do that.

Some time later, Gale Anne Hurd called and said, “Are you going to be free to come to Australia?” It all worked out perfect to come over here. I met with Martin Campbell for the first time on No Escape, and that was a good experience.

Alien took a long time to make because we had to re-shoot stuff. Paramount was very good actually, whereas 20th Century Fox has these vast committees that you have to get through. You would say, “We need to do five or six things” and they would say, “You can only do three.” And when you had done the three, they then wanted you to do the other two.

GoldenEye

Vandenburg: Immediately prior to The Saint, you did GoldenEye [1996]. A Bond film, it has big action sequences and lots of witty lines, and romance. It is similar in some ways, but the approach is quite different.

The Saint is a much deeper story, much more serious, and the relationship is a serious one.

When I was asked to do the Bond, I didn’t really want to because I’ve never been a James Bond fan. But I did No Escape [1994] with Martin Campbell in Australia and he asked me if I’d like to do GoldenEye with him.

Once we got into it, it was great.

Yes, I think that is true. He really didn’t want to do it. I just wanted you to stand. I just want you to stand.

The more still Martin could do.

Alien

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We really enjoyed it because we all decided, along with the cameraman Phil Meheux, to make it different. We wanted to make it a little more dirty than the others.

The thing that bothered me always with the Bond films was like they were made in a laboratory; everything looks so pristine and clean and tidy. I never believed any of it. At least we got a bit more down and dirty with this one. That is what Martin wanted, but they were very concerned to start with because they thought he was going away from the image. However, I think the film resurrected the whole series.

Vandenburg: Before seeing it, I wasn’t sure about how Pierce Brosnan would be. I’d only seen him in television. In this he was great. He did all the deadpan stuff very well.

Martin would say, “I don’t want you to act. I just want you to stand there.” The more still Martin could get Pierce, the better he was, because, like any actor, he wants to act. So, “Don’t move your arms, don’t move your eyes”, Martin said. “Don’t give me Roger Moore.”

Pierce got to really be a cool cat, which was good.

Sallows: You have worked in Hollywood and other places, but you mostly cut your films in London. Is there any pressure for you to go to Hollywood?

Every now and again. When we did Alien, they said it would be five months’ shooting and that they needed me to come to America for six months. I said, “Fine” – I’d done Blade Runner like that – but I was there for more than a year. It just went on and on and on.

I don’t mind going to America, but I’d never want to live there, ever. It is not my favourite place, though I have some good friends there and I like working there. In fact, if the deal comes together, I might be doing US Marshals [the sequel to Andrew Davis’ The Fugitive, 1993] in Chicago in June. A friend of mine, Stuart Baird, is directing it. He did Executive Decision [1996], if you saw that.

We were editors together. On Tommy, he cut the picture and I did the music. He was also the first assistant on Women in Love, The Music Lovers and on The Devils [1971], while I did the sound for those three.

We both said to each other that if we ever got the chance to direct anything, the other one would cut it. And when he got Executive Decision, he asked if I would be free, but I wasn’t. Now that he is doing this one, we are going to try and do it. I’m sure we will fight like mad if we do [laughs].

Sallows: Tommy is interesting because it was released with a magnetic track.

“Quintaphonic” sound. That was the only one ever done in a five-channel system.

Sallows: And the prints wore out incredibly quickly.

Oh, it was terrible. You’d open it and then you’d have to take it off and restrip it all the time. They had to run it hard on the heads to get the dynamics.

I actually did the first ever Dolby stereo optical film, Lisztomania [1975], for Ken Russell. So, when we did Tommy, we tried this experiment. We threw the encoder onto optical and had it decoded into five. It was fantastic. We could have put the damn thing onto optical anyway, which would have been better for us.

Vandenburg: Is Ken Russell up to anything at the moment, and would you work with him again?

I’d love to. I like Ken very much, but I don’t think he is going to do anything else. I was talking to Stuart, who is a close friend of Ken’s, and he was saying Ken doesn’t really want to do any more. He just likes to play around with these weird things he does for television. When you are with him, you wouldn’t know this guy was into all the stuff that he wants to show.

Ken is a great music lover. When he was going to do Escal at one point, I was invited up to his house in the Lake district. We hadn’t seen each other for a while, and we had a great night there. He was running around his house conducting Mahler all the time.

Ken is fantastic to be with. We have a great thing with music. You learn a lot from all these people, you know. It is like doing the Music Lovers, delving into Chaikovsky. Everyone just thinks of his Pathétique or his Piano Concerto, but the other stuff that you begin to learn about these people is fascinating.

1 Also known as The Penal Colony and Escape from Absalom.
Following a Board Meeting held in May 1997, the FFC has entered into contract negotiations with the producers of the following projects:

**Features**

**IN THE WINTER DARK**

(95 MINS)

RB Films

D: JAMES BOULE
P: ROSSMANN BAILY

W: PETER RASMUSSEN, JAMES BOULE

O: THE GLOBE FILM CO., SOUTHERN STAR

For people, four uneasy associates: farmer Maurice Stubbs and his wife, Jacob and the young, pregnant Ronnie. At another time in their lives, the incidents which characterize their relationship might not have meant anything, but for these four people their interaction stirs up more than any of them could have imagined.

**Adult Television Drama**

**INFERNO**

(90 MINUTE TELE-FEATURE)

BARKON TELEVISION

D: MICHAEL CARSON
E: PAUL BARROW
P: PAUL BARROW, JULIE MONTON
W: DAVID PHILLIPS

PRODUCERS: SEVÑA NELSON
DIREC: PEARSON TELEVISION INTERNATIONAL, SOUTHERN STAR

Australia's genie Bruce is still crying freedom, but this time he will seek freedom through the love of stuck-up Penelope's mother, Diana. If Diana loves Bruce enough and has the opal in her possession, perhaps she'll set him free. Through five thousand years of servitude, no master has ever been selfless enough to free their genie. And it is Penelope who has the magic opal which makes her the master of Bruce and Baz, not her mother. Naturally, Penelope will do everything within her power to keep the opal out of reach. The last thing she wants is for her genie to be free.

**Children's Television Drama**

**THE GENIE FROM DOWN UNDER SERIES 2**

(13 x 24 MINUTE SERIAL)

AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN'S TELEVISION FOUNDATION
De: TBA
E: PATRICIA EDGAR, ELIZABETH SYMONS
W: LOUISE FOX, EDDIE STORM, PHILIP DALLEN
Pre-sale: ABC TV, BBC TV

Australia's genie Bruce is still crying freedom, but this time he will seek freedom through the love of stuck-up Penelope's mother, Diana. If Diana loves Bruce enough and has the opal in her possession, perhaps she'll set him free. Through five thousand years of servitude, no master has ever been selfless enough to free their genie. And it is Penelope who has the magic opal which makes her the master of Bruce and Baz, not her mother. Naturally, Penelope will do everything within her power to keep the opal out of reach. The last thing she wants is for her genie to be free.
VICTIMS is the story of two Hungarian Australians, both victims of the holocaust and communism, who now must face the demons of their past. The fall of the Berlin Wall has irrevocably forced that past into the present.

At a special conference link-up on 1 April 1997, the Board also approved:

GOODBYE TO THE GHOST (55 mins)
NICK TORNESI FILM PRODUCTIONS

PRE-PRODUCTION

PROJECT 500
Production company: Signature Films Production
Location: Port Douglas
Distribution company: Some Pictures

PRINCIPAL CREDITS
Director: TERENCE MALICK
Executive producer: Grant Hill

ON-SET CREW
1st assistant director: BOB DONALDSON
2nd assistant director: CHRISTIAN ROBINSON
3rd assistant director: IAN PIRRI
Assistant director: CUA PROST
Continuity: JO WALKS
Video splitter: Pip Wincer
Boom operator: TONY DICKINSON
Make-up: AMANDA PROB ekinson
Hairdresser: ZELJKA STAIN
Special effects: STEVE WEBBER
Survival supervisor: TONY HUTCHISON
Unit manager: TED G OREN
Sound engineer: Smi NULTON
Cameraman: JIM STICKLEY
Art director: THEODOROS TUTOS/CHAPERONE: MA NUE GRAY

WAREHOUSE
Costume assistant: BRIAN DE VEYHAR
wardrobe mistress: MARIAN SEWIT
Costume: ALISON FENN!
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Four Jacks
Production company: PIPELINE FILMS
Production date: 20/1-2/2/97
Post-production: 2/2-3/3/97
Principal Credits
Director: Matthew George
Producer: Robert Gough, Stephen Stamford
Line producers: lime Gropper, Matthew George
Director of photography: Justin Brickle
Sound recordist: Martin Kirin
Production designer: Ralph Moser
Costume designer: Robin Thomas
Planning and Development
Director: Cameron Castine
Shooting schedule by Mike Grieve

Production Crew
Producer's assistants: Holly MacKee, noelle Kirsch, Camilla lanakan, Nina Nichols
Location manager: Adrienne N. Nunn
Unit manager: Rum a. Anderson
Production manager: David Patrick
Camera Crew
Focus puller: Cameron Dunn
Clapper loader: Shadmehr Amoozgarh, wires day
Key grip: freddy Yick
Assistant grip: mark Buzzard
Gaffer: Ken Engler
Best Boy: David Chong

On-set Crew
1st assistant director: Mike Grieve
2nd assistant director: Linda Kair
Continuity: Gisela Sandler
Boom operator: Chris O'Shea
Catering: Fab Foods

Art Department
Art Direction: Richard Adamson
Props: jamee. Merkle

Four young men piece together their role in a murder gone wrong.

A LITTLE BIT OF SOUL
Principal Credits
Director: David Paterson
Producer: Peter Duncan, Simon Martin, Martin McGee, Peter Iv, production designer: Berrill Rea

The story of a female prison officer: married, reliable, trusted. Yet she planned the most spectacular getaway in Australia's criminal history - for the love of a convicted murderer.

Oscar and Lucinda
Production company: Meridian Films
Distributor: New Vision
Production date: September-December 1996
Budget: $16 million
Director: Gillian Armstrong
Producers: Tim White, Robin Dalton
Writer: Lawrence Watt-Evans
Government Agency funding: VPCS
Cast
Ralph Fiennes, Cate Blanchett.

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

Out of the Blue
Production company: Avalon Films
Distributor: New Vision
Pre-production: 2/12/96
Production date: 10/1/97
Post-production: 3/11/97
Principal Credits
Director: Phil Alipav
Producer: Phil Alipav
Executive producers: hans Pomerance, Peter O'Neill, kerry Dunlop
Associate producers: julian Sagner, jason godden
Script: Phil Alipav
Director of photography: Les Parrott
Production designer: Cathy Finlay
Costume designer: Jane Campbell
Editor: Mike Honey

Planning and Development
Script editor: Gerard Mayeur

Production Crew
Producer: Bill Marson
Location manager: harriet Scott
Unit manager: Tony Fields
Production manager: raw Hulburrow
Assistant unit manager: rob Robinson
Assistant production account executive: jason godden
Account executive: Tony gibbs
Leges: O'Neill-O'neill

Camera Crew
Focus puller: Roger Bohle
Clapper loader: Liz Sherman
Gaffer: steve Carter

On-set Crew
1st assistant director: Clinton white
Continuity: Stewart Edwards
Make-up: hilary Placzek
Hairstylist: hilary Pearce
Stunt co-ordinator: Grant Paul

Post-production
Post-production facility: Red Bollard
Soundtrack: Pacific Rim
Music co-ordinator: Graham Rast
Label: Metroplex
Post-production facility: Spectrum

Cast
Simon West/away (johanan Austen), Bill Hunter (ete Trefu), Rebecca Rigg (Darren)

A royal commission into police corruption is announced. three brothers from different walks in life - and through purpeth evens - collide with the underworld and authorities.

Pigeon
Production company: Sal
Budget: Less than $200,000

Gaffer: Brent Hull
Best assistant: Ross Orr

On-set Crew
1st assistant director: Monique grieve
2nd assistant director: Job Todd, nadia corbic
Director's assistant: Tamara Schnapp
Script editor: Yvonne Peculiar
continuity: Anna Lightfoot
Make-up: julia green, Cicia stanton
Stunts co-ordinator: P.J. Chris Peters
Safety supervisor: Peter Culpan
Suits: peter milne

Art Department
Art director: John Fox

Wardrobe: Karen Tate

Post-production
Sound: Michael ritsou
Mix: M.E. Tchénia
FILM: AV
Laboratory: cineplex
Film grade: Super 16

Track-in tracks: Laboratories

Cast
Craig Adams, Kate atkinson, Ian Scott, John annullo, Susie Dee, Maureen Andrews, Steve gone, Sophie Mor, andrew clarke, Peter Moon, David Johnston, Lillian frank, Bonnie Quinn

The alive Tribe is a wild bunch of dropped-out student radicals who fight for anything, from ecological Armageddon to the ozone layer and animal liberation. Set around the final days of the Ferryboat football club, the film explores the theme: evolve or die.

Black Ice
Production company: WEEDSTAIR PAM MAGNUSON LTD
Budget: $1.5 million
Principal Credits
Director: James Richards
Producer: Robert Greenhough
Executive producers: Bil Muller, Ron Williams
Associate producer: Ron Verwey
Scriptwriters: James Richards, rob Greenhough
Director of photography: kevin "Loopy" Lund
Production Crew
Post-production supervisor: kari, bristan Chroponski: Ron Verwey, James Williams
Assistant editor: adaim. wear

Cast
John O'callion, Tony Bonner, Ron Verwey, tona lee

Nathan Vaughn, an enigmatic man, is coiled spring ready to explode, is recruited by detective Andy riddle to hand out his own form of tough justice. Vaughn begins working for criminal Curtis starr which is his final journey to self-destruction.

JoeY
Production company: Valley barn Productions
Production date: 4/9-16/96
Principal Credits
Producer: Michael lake
Executive producers: Robert Binre, Stuart Beattie
Director of photography: David evans
Production designer: Peter Lawson
Costume designer: Karen Eve
Planning and Development
Production office: Gold coast
Unit manager: Brian Hence
1st assistant director: Stuart Freeman

Post-production
Animators supervisor: John Co. McKee
Marketing: International K.O. Leaf
Village roadshow Pictures Worldwide
Unit publicity: Fiona Seedman, DDA

JoeY Chair
Jamee Curtis, Alex McKenna, Rebecca birney, ed bryant, julian Mcnab

When a young Australian boy arrives in Sydney to train as a Sydney Harbour police officer, he begins his adventures through the city's mean streets and the halls of government, finding a new best friend and justice along the way.

My blessings
Production company: INNERSENSEProductions
Budget: $8,000
Pre-production: 12/8-22/96
Production date: 23/8-11/96
Post-production: 12/30-16/12/97
Principal Credits
Producer: Bil Muller
Production designer: Simon Martin
Production designer: Bil Muller

A little bit of soul
Principal Credits
Director: David Paterson
Producer: Peter Duncan, Simon Martin, Martin McGee, Peter Iv, production designer: Berrill Rea

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69
A mini-series adaptation of Herman Melville’s classic novel, Moby Dick. Dr. The Tale of a Whale.

Production

I AM THE EARTH

DMC-OMAR

Production company: Right Vision Entertainment

Principal producers: Madani Nishrma

Director: Brian Burdges

CAST

Christian Lassen

I am the Earth tells a tale of pollution and suffering of 85 million humans around Christian and his friends. Deeps the dolphin and her family, who save him from illness.

VIOLENT EARTH (MINI-SERIES)

Production companies: ChapmanFords Productions, Gaumont Television

Production: 26 May – 29 August 1997, Queensland

Principal directors: Michael Offer

CAST

A sweeping saga set in New Calcutta in last century. The story follows the fortunes and the trials of settlement, racial conflict and decolonization.

Toyzel Drama

[TELE-FEATURES AND OR MINI-SERIES]

Pre-production

MOBY DICK

MINI-SERIES

Production Company: Hallmark Entertainment

Production: June 1997, Melbourne

Executive producer: David Poxer

Principal directors: Frank Roddam

Producer: Steve McQueen

Based on the novel Moby Dick. Dr. The Tale of a Whale.
for those who believe 37°2 Le Matin to be one of the great films of the recent past, a favoured moment is the birthday-cake-in-the-boot sequence. In the short version, the scene is edited in such a way that Zorg (Jean-Hughes Anglade) must have lit the candies before leaving town. That the candles should still be alight all that time and distance later gives the scene a surreal quality. (It also helps cynics dismiss the moment as unbelievable.)

In the version intégrale, Zorg has the opportunity to secretly light the candles, while Betty (Béatrice Dalle) looks out over the land Zorg has bought her, in yet another instance where madness will prove immune to capitalism, as Deleuze and Guattari so cogently argued years before in a text that informs every frame of the film. The surreal edge is lost, but the deeper levels of the film are re-enforced and the integrated whole, along with this most pure of cinematic moments, becomes a telling exploration of a society's desire to contain and destroy, and love's ability to circumvent and triumph. SM
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