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Cinema Papers #120 October 1997

Scott Murray

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Cinema Papers #120 October 1997

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FOCUS

MIRANDA MAKES MAGIC
Miranda Otto grew up in front of her audience, in a string of films from 1988's Emmal's War to the current Doing Time For Patsy Cline. She talks to Margaret Smith about her childhood, work and ambition.

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THE BECKER GROUP ACQUIRES DENDY

Becker Group Limited has announced its acquisition of Dendy Cinemas and Distribution. Managing Director Richard Becker states that the move will strengthen Dendy’s standing in the film industry, and plans to retain the Dendy name, while making it a distinct business unit within the company. It will be managed by Lyn McCarthy and Graeme Tubbenhauer.

AWGIE-INSPIRING

The Australian Writers’ Guild has announced its 1997 AWGIE Awards. Nick Enright won two AWGIEs for his Blackrock screenplay, adapted from his stage play of the same name: Best Adapted Screenplay, and the Gold AWGIE.

Chris Kennedy won the Best Original Screenplay AWGIE for Doing Time for Patsy Cline. Other winners include:

- **SHORT FILM AWARD**
  - A Simple Man, Alan Woodruff
  - Only the Young Die Good (Good Guys, Bad Guys), Roger Simpson

- **TELEMOVIE AWARD**
  - Reports of Damage and Loss (Blue Heelers), John Banas
  - The Beneficiary

- **TELEVISION AWARD**
  - Home and Away episode 2065, Greg Haddrick
  - Security, John O’Brien

- **DOCUMENTARY AWARD**
  - Doing Time for Patsy Cline

- **PUBLIC RELATIONS AWARD**
  - Doonan Communications

- **AWGIE-INSPIRING**
  - AFI-AFC Industry Night was held at the Chauvel Cinema in Sydney, and screened three short films by new filmmakers, who also introduced and discussed their films. The aim of these nights is to give such filmmakers an opportunity to have their films screened, and to be introduced to the established film industry.

July saw the following films screened:

- **At Sea** (Penny Fowler-Smith), House Taken Over (Liz Hughes), The Beneficiary (Graeme Burfoot)
- **The Magic Miranda Makes**
- **Tell a Friend it’s Never Too Late**
- **Blue Heelers**
- **Good Guys, Bad Guys**
- **Penny Fowler-Smith**
- **Graeme Burfoot**
- **John Banas**
- **The Beneficiary**
- **A Simple Man**
- **Doing Time for Patsy Cline**
- **Trevor’s Story**
- **A Different View**
- **The Chandeliers**

**INDUSTRY NIGHT AT THE CHAUVEL**

An AFI-AFC Industry Night was held at the Chauvel Cinema in Sydney, and screened three short films by new filmmakers, who also introduced and discussed their films. The aim of these nights is to give such filmmakers an opportunity to have their films screened, and to be introduced to the established film industry.

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OFF TO A FLYING START – FOR SOME

Actor

were presented in Melbourne recently.

Alison Elder and Heather Croall

heard

awards:

Handycam, $5,000

two to the

their films screened as inflight enter­

Oleh Sokolovsky

Awaiting Spring),

Kodak Professional

picture film stock and one day’s

Matthew Saville (FastBuck),

i r s t

F

Film Festival)

surrounding Volvo drivers, is consid­

apparently because the film, which

is the proposed new develop­

i t 2001.

Cinema’s brief is to encourage,

promote and assist the production,

distribution and exhibition of screen

content and culture for entertainment,

education and information.

INTERNATIONAL CO-PRODUCTIONS

HOOD

(Stuart Rosenberg, 1973), the Fox one, in German and in

English, and really loved it. It’s funny

because I saw Jacqui McKenzie a

while back, and we were upstairs at

Jack Nicholson’s watching it on video

and Producer

THE OUTLAW – JOSEY WALES

(Clint Eastwood, 1976) and COOL

HAND LUKE (Stuart Rosenberg,

1967); I loved those boyish kind of

films. I loved ‘man’ films when I was about 8 to 12.

Also, things like THE RESTLESS

YEARS, COP SHOP and PRISONER

had a very big impact on me. One of

the things I loved about serial televi­

sion, which I’ve never found

anywhere else, was that they’re really

good at going into an investigation of characters, and no matter how

rudimentary or simplistic or simple­
tone like it can be at times, when it’s

done well, it’s very effective. Very

few people talk about the positive side

of television on young people, but it

actually taught me a lot; it gave me a

sense that different people have dif­

ferent values, and there was cause

effect to people’s behaviour,

something I hadn’t garnered from

other sources.

CINEMEDIA OFFICIALLY LAUNCHED

On 17 July, Alan Stockdale,

Victoria’s Minister for Multime­

dia, officially launched Cinemedia as

the new government body that has

subsumed the previous bodies, Film

Victoria and the State Film Centre. A

new logo, designed by Cato Design

and animated by Illoura, was also

launched.

It was also announced that Cineme­

dia would have a new home in the

Federation Square Project. Federation

Square is the proposed new develop­

ment to be built over Melbourne’s

railways, and will stretch from Flinders

Street to the west bank of the Yarra

River. The Project is due to be com­

pleted by the year 2001.

Cinemedia’s brief is to encourage,

promote and assist the production,

distribution and exhibition of screen

content and culture for entertainment,

education and information.

... AND SO DO INTERNATIONAL

AUSTRALIAN SHOWCASES

Australian films were showcased

at two recent international events: the 32nd Karlovy Vary Interna­
tional Film Festival in the Czech

Republic; and a special festival of

recent Australian films presented by

the Australian Film Commission in

Johannesburg and Cape Town, South

Africa.

Directors Yahoo Serious and Peter

Duncan, and producer Anthony Buck­

ley travelled to the Czech Republic,

where features such as The Cars That

Base and recognizes the vital rôle

played by this industry and shows we

are determined to help it reach its true

potential.”

CINEMA PAPERS • OCTOBER 1997
DAVID HIRSCHFELDER / Shine Strictly Ballroom the Interview. STEVE LAW (ABC Electronic Composer of the Year) / NICK CAVE / NICK HARVEY / BLIXA BARGELD: To Have and to Hold. OLLIE OLSEN / STEVE KILBEY: The Church, Blackrock. YURI WORONTSCHAN: Full Frontal etc. CAMERON ALLAN. ROGER WHITE: Bandit Queen. BARRINGTON PHELOUNG / DAVID CHESWORTH / DAVE GRANEY / TRICKY / POWDERFINGER / THE CRUEL SEA / THE CARDIGANS. BEN LEE / DAVID THRUSSELL / REBECCA'S EMPIRE. NICK CAVE AND THE BAD SEEDS. YOU AM I. U2. BILL LASWELL / ED KUEPPER. PRIMUS. KITARO. C.A.M.A. BJORK. EQUILA. KISS. DIRTY THREE. D.I.G. etc. PRISCILLA. LOVE & OTHER CATASTROPHES. DATING THE ENEMY. BLACKROCK. IDIOT BOX. SHINE etc.

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Até Paris (Peter Weir, 1974), ‘Breaker’ Morant (Bruce Beresford, 1980), Angel Baby (Michael Rymer, 1995), Bad Boy Bubby (Rolf de Heer, 1993), Floating Life (Clara Law, 1996), Shine (Scott Hicks, 1996) and Children of the Revolution (Peter Duncan, 1996) and a selection of award-winning short films were screened.

A delegation of industry personnel, headed by Cathy Robinson, Chief Executive of the AFC, and Michael Ward, AFC Policy Adviser, travelled to South Africa. Also included were producer Tristram Miall, writer-director Margot Nash and actor Pamela Rabe. Films screened included: Children of the Revolution, Floating Life, Dead Heat (Nick Parsons, 1996), Idiot Box (David Caesaer, 1997), Vacant Possession (Margot Nash, 1995), What I Have Written (John Hughes, 1996), Mr Reliable (Nadla Tass, 1997) and Rats in the Ranks (Bob Connolly and Robin Anderson, 1996).

AFI Awards Contenders Screened

Throughout July, August and September, the Australian Film Festival travelled around the country, giving AFI members a chance to see all the feature films entered for this year’s AFI Awards. This is the first year of a new selection system (see Cinema Papers, June 1997, no. 117, p.2) and the films entered are: Blackrock (Steve Vidler), The Castle (Rob Stich), Doing Time for Patsy Cline (Chris Kennedy), Fistful of Flies (Monica Pellizzari), Heaven’s Burning (Craig Lahiff), Idiot Box (David Caesaer), The Inner Sanctuary (Chris Clarke), Kiss or Kill (Bill Bennett), Love in Ambush (Carl Schulte), Road to Nhill (Sue Brooks), Thank God He Met Lizzie (Cherie Nowlan), True Love and Chaos (Stavros Andonis Ethymiou), Under the Lighthouse Dancing (Graeme Rattigan) and The Well (Samantha Lang).

Preselected short fiction films, animations and documentaries will also screen as part of the AFF.

WHERE NO EXHIBIT HAS GONE BEFORE

The Powerhouse Museum in Sydney is hosting Star Trek: The Exhibit, an exhibition of original Star Trek costumes, sets, graphics, props and models from the television series and feature films. Also featured is a display of make-up supervisor Michael Westmore’s work, a full-scale command bridge and the Transporter. The exhibit runs until 3 February 1998, and will then travel to Science-works in Victoria, and then to the Queensland Museum.

Paying the Way for the Next Wave

A new international company, Next Wave Films, is being set up in Santa Monica, California, to provide finishing funds for very low-budget films from the United States, and abroad.

Next Wave Films has been funded by the Independent Film Channel, its president is Peter Broderick, and it will be supporting and discovering new directors from around the world. Advisors on hand include, amongst others, Terrence Malick, Robert Rodriguez, John Sayles, Kevin Smith, Steven Soderbergh from the United States, George Miller from our own shores, Atom Egoyan and Mina Shum from Canada, Stephen Frears from the UK, Neil Jordan from Ireland and Peter Jackson from New Zealand.

Next Wave Films’ focus is on English-language films made for theatrical release with a budget under US$200,000. Next Wave can supply up to US $300,00 in finishing funds for up to four films a year. It will also serve as a producer’s representative for the films, help the filmmakers implement a film festival strategy, and secure distribution. Contact: Peter Broderick, Next Wave Films, 708 Euclid St, Santa Monica, CA 90402 USA. Tel: 1 (310) 392-1720. Email: paradigm@earthlink.net

Animal Logic’s Film Face Raises Its Profile

The new Australian effects house Animal Logic has created titles and additional effects for the new Paramount Pictures film, Face/Off, directed by John Woo, and starring John Travolta and Nicolas Cage. Previous Animal Logic credits include the titles for Babe (George Miller, 1995), Little Women (Gillian

Top 10 The Great Unwatched

Cinema Papers nominates some front-runners to the rollcall of ‘great’ unseen films.

1. The Other Side of the Wind

Late in 1970 Orson Welles started shooting a film about the final days in the career of an aging film director. John Huston plays the director. Welles shot the film on and off over several years, but died before completing it. The film remains partly edited and is embroiled in legal disputes that prevent it being completed.

3. IPs: L’Ile aux Pachydermes

In 1992, Beineix completed his most recent feature, IPs: L’Ile aux Pachydermes. It is the last film of Yves Montand. The storyboards have been published in a sumptuous bound edition. The director’s hit 372 le Matin (Betty Blue) had been released down under in the stunning version integrale. But IPs has not been released locally in any form. No antipodean festival has bothered to show it. It is only available to Australians, like Assigné à Résidence, on imported video. This is an insulting way to have to watch great films from a great director.

4. Lisbon Story

Since his globe-trotting epics failed to find favour amongst his dedicated international audience, Wim Wenders has been notable for his work with a gem such as Le Jeu avec le Feu (Playing with Fire) would run successfully in the city (at The Embassy in Melbourne). Those who praise the standard of independent distribution in Australia today are either very young or have short memories.

5. My Forgotten Man (aka Flynn and Young Flynn)

A large ‘Coming Soon’ poster in the foyer of Melbourne’s Hoyts City Centre appears to be as close local viewers came to seeing this much-touted biopic of Errol Flynn. The film was shot in 1989 under the direction of Brian Kavanagh, and largely re-shot a few years later by producer Frank Howson. The film is available on video in the UK.
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.

But this is only the beginning. Let's talk about the future of visual media creation.

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NEWEST STUDIO IN THE WEST

The Film and Television Institute (WA) Inc (FTI) and Imago Multimedia Centre have opened the Digital Arts Studio (DAS) in Adelaide Street, Fremantle, the first of its kind in WA. Resources will include production facilities for interactive multimedia, digital sound recording, 3D-modelling and animation, and digital video and web authoring. DAS will also host seminars, training courses and workshops as well as provide equipment access, production grants and residencies.

APPOINTMENTS

The Australian Film Finance Corporation (FFC) has appointed investment manager, Sue Seeary, as manager of its Melbourne office. Ms Seeary replaces Peter Belby (who has moved to Artist Services). The FFC has also announced the appointment of two new board members - producer Lynda House and lawyer Geoffrey Levy - for a three-year term each. House and Levy are replacing producers Tim White and Sandra Levy, whose terms expired at the end of last year.

NEW COURSES IN SYDNEY

The Academy of Photogenic Arts in Sydney has announced two new training courses: Developing and Producing Multimedia Titles and Camera Assistant’s Course for Film and Video. Developing and Producing Multimdia Titles will cover digital-based graphic art, typesetting, authoring, photography, video and sound production. The course is designed to teach the skills required to create multimedia productions by introducing the necessary tools involved and offering training and assistance.

Camera Assistant’s Course for Film and Video is designed to develop the camera assistant’s skills to feel confident enough to accept a position with any professional film or video production unit. Camera equipment used will include SP Betacam digital and analogue video cameras, 16mm Arri and 35mm Panaflex film cameras as well as steadicam.

For more information, contact the Academy of Photogenic Arts: Tel: 61 2 9974 4480, Fax: 61 2 9974 5484, email: carole@apa.edu.au

CORRIGENDUM

In an article in the previous issue of Cinema Papers (“The distributor and censorship”, August 1997, no 119, p. 42), it was stated that Soló was to be banned once again. This is untrue. The author apologizes for this misleading information.

LETTERS

PO BOX 2221 FITZROY VIC 3065  email: cp@parkhouse.com.au

DON’T BURN THIS BOOK; WE’RE STILL WORKING ON IT

Dear Sir

There is a scene in Peter Weir’s Dead Poets Society (1989) where the hero invites his young charges to a ritual book-burning to free their creative spirit. To truly experience poetry and art and to find their true selves, they must cast off the dead weight of tradition. Through this purging act of book-burning they can begin afresh.

Annamarie Lopez’s funny, acerbic and critical review of my book, Australian National Cinema, recalls this scene. She relives her K-Mart dreamings of the something better at university that never eventuated and holds the whole academy responsible for this disappointment. If vituperation could burn, then that is what Lopez is doing – exorcizing her own ghosts. But just as with the class in Dead Poets Society, she does not engage with what she’s burning. And that’s a pity.

While Australian National Cinema is not a book for everyone, it is a book for more people than her review suggests. Some of the things that might interest readers are:

- It is a book about national cinemas which situates Australian cinema as one among a number of national cinemas – a medium-sized, English-language cinema.
- As part of a series on national cinemas, it was designed to be part of an international conversation about the meaning and future of national cinemas.
- It describes the diversity of Australian cinema and notes how it contributes to the diverse pathways of the cinema, whether in its mainstream guise (everything from thriller, sci-fi, screwball comedy, western, melodrama and documentary) or in its various oppositional categories of filmmaking (feminist, ethnographic, ethnic, indigenous and avant garde films).
- It considers the multifaceted character and consequences of the close relations Australian cinema has with Hollywood and British cinema.
- It identifies Australian cinema’s economic and aesthetic limits; the impact of three decades of policy-making; and the constraining ways we have of making sense of and valuing its films.
- It makes an argument as to what is distinctive and to be valued about Australian cinema.
- It reframes the issue of the originality and derivativeness of Australian cinema by considering it as an ordinary matter of cultural transfer – a condition of all culture.
- Above all, it considers Australian cinema in terms of what it can realistically be rather than what it ought to be and in doing so opens out perspectives for film criticism. If readers come to my book expecting another version of David Stratton’s The Avocado Plantation or Scott Murray’s excellent edited collection, Australian Film 1978-1994, they will, like Lopez, be disappointed. My book undertakes a complementary task of providing a framing context for these films, a way of linking their diverse energies and the institutions and individuals that produced them. And, yes, it’s about filmmaking’s subsequent career on public horizons – our cultural history. I wrote this book to chart the information landscape of Australian cinema – to show how “Australian filmmakers need to be artists in the morning, business-persons in the afternoon and lobbyists by night”. I wanted Australian cinema to count nationally and internationally by forcing a re-appraisal of entrenched ways of thinking about national cinemas and Australia’s place among them. And I wrote a textbook for Australian cinema and national cinema courses which works with student and industry expectations, internal protocol and a given body of work. To get students to think about the mobile connections within a film milieu you need to theorize and illustrate these connections. Within these courses, Australian National Cinema is one input alongside a number of Australian films, and students are asked to view and analyze films for themselves, and not regurgitate what O’Regan thinks about this or that film. Lopez wants there to be just films and the natural responses of the audience to them. She wants her books on the cinema to be like that. There is not much room for criticism here or the institutions of the cinema because she has set herself the task of engaging with ideas generated there by lamponing them. Ultimately, the difference between Lopez and I lies here. I think there is a place for both kinds of work – entertaining and thorough books on the films and serious informational books on the character and content of an Australian cultural industry.

Yours sincerely,

Tom O’Regan

1 Lost Innocence: Problematising Cinema”, Cinema Papers, August 1997, no 119, p. 32.

Dear Sir

In relation to the “Brother Grimm ... Not” letter from Mr Alan Richard in the August issue of Cinema Papers, I may stand corrected.

The fact that it may be Camelot was discussed with numerous film experts and the general consensus was that it was strip from Brothers Grimm and not Camelot. Unfortunately, I did not have access to a copy of either prior to publication to check this.

Mr Bond is quite right: The Wonderful World of the Brothers Grimm was shot in the magnificent three-strip Cinerama process. However, it was also shot in single frame (20mm and 35mm-reduced) at the same time, for a wider theatrical release in theatres not equipped with Cinerama equipment.

Either way (until I verify this), I thank you for pointing this out and, if it is from Camelot, I sincerely apologize for the (genuine) error. It was a very difficult problem to solve. With kindest regards,

James Sherlock
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Brisbane Film Festival

by Scott Murray

Now in its sixth year, the Brisbane International Film Festival is evolving into a delightful and wide-ranging event. The city seems to have finally embraced the Festival (even the taxi driver was explaining how it had found its niche), and, with goodwill and continued government support, it can only get stronger and richer.

Not only has the Festival developed its own astute programming blend (and ticket sales soared this year), it showcases interesting guests in a more relaxed and intimate way than, say, Melbourne, where audience-filmmaker sessions are sometimes stage-managed and uncomfortable. Here, the session with Bill Bennett (Kiss or Kill) and Samantha Lang (The Well) was held in the small 'green room' in the Regent Theatre, and the questions and answers took the form more of a spirited dinner party than a us-them debate.

Film screenings are held in the one downtown venue, allowing for a more intimate and sociable event than the multiple venues of other Australian festivals. (The Metway Theatre in the nearby State Library serves for video screenings and forums.)

Opening Night got under way after a walk past two rows of heavily made-up pre-pubescent ballerinas. As this was followed two days later by colour coverage in the Sunday Mail of Jon-Benet-style beauty contestants, one wonders how different the culture of this place is from places south and west.

This feeling continued when Denver Beanland (Attorney General and Minister for Justice), filling in for the ill Joan Sheldon (Treasurer and Arts Minister), read her speech as if he was only catching its drift after the words had been spoken. (The bit about being totally committed to freedom of speech had the audience on the edge of their seats in disbelief.)

Then the films commenced. First up was the short Titsiana Booberini (Robert Luketic), which is best described as slight. The audience laughed and cheered wildly, but this semi-musical about love coming to a 'plain' girl after she bleaches her moustache is dishearteningly regressive. While one should rejoice at seeing a short being made on 35mm, the shooting style is bland and takes no note of what Minnelli and Demy, and a host of others, have done with the form. As well, Sophie Lee's agent ought to stop her playing the same character, in ever-diminishing parts. A significant comic gift is being wasted.

The Full Monty (Peter Cattaneo) followed. Again the audience laughed and cheered with enthusiasm - and this was from the second minute! Quite puzzling, really, as this witty comedy is also one of the saddest films of recent years. No didactic, left-wing exposé of the working-class poor has been quite so powerful in depicting the hopelessness, the unfairness and the devaluation of self.

In some ways, The Full Monty is a classic British genre film of the 1960s (let's form a band and aim for the stars), with a late-'90s edge. The knowing use of genre invites comparisons with such sunny cult classics as Summer Holiday (Peter Yates and Herbert Ross, 1963), inevitably revealing how backward and agonized England has become for so many.

But this is a film about hope - albeit in a social-realist British way. The audience well knows that, at film's end, the day after will still be a huge challenge for the characters. At least, by restoring their fortunes with a male strip revue, they have regained some sense of self, and a less-bitter sense of humour.

The filmmakers milk every moment for political and social comedy. Every imaginable topic is touched upon (save lesbianism), but the points hit home and the actors perform with confidence and great comic timing. While Robert Carlyle (as Gaz) moves from television's Hamish Macbeth to cinema with true ease, and will inevitably garner most newspaper copy, the rest of the cast is equally brilliant, especially Mark Addy as the (harrowingly-sad) self-loathing fat bloke, Dave.

The film manages to maintain momentum right up to its predeter-
ming end, where even the jock-straps go (as in "the full monty"). Though it does so by blissfully sidestepping key narrative concerns (do these guys really expect the girls to pay up to ten quid — the price is never clear — for a cabaret act that lasts at best two minutes?), it does so with such verve that loud cheering will be how audiences will greet its conclusion the world over.

The next day featured video projections of several documentaries on filmmaking. Unfortunately, the projector couldn't handle one particular NTSC running-speed and The Hamster Factor (Louis Pepe and Keith Fulton), on the making of Terry Gilliam's 12 Monkeys, had to be held over.

First up, then, was Who Is Henry Jaglom? (Alex Rubin and Jeremy Workman), a very funny and illuminating look at an American maverick. The film begins with Jaglom charmingly putting the case for his "male lesbian" style of cinema, rejecting the controlling drive of male directors in favour of the more evoking and encompassing female.

This is all very convincing till, near the end, the filmmakers show Jaglom on set — as terrifying a male bully as one could find anywhere. Now he calmly justifies the hideous bullying of (female) actors by saying they need this treatment in order to act properly.

Few not already convinced by Jaglom's work will side with him in this spikey doco.

Who Is Henry Jaglom? was followed by Thom Anderson and Noel Burch's Red Hollywood (as the film's title bizarrely has it), which attempts to determine whether the claim made by the House UnAmerican Activities Committee — that communists influenced the content of films they worked on — was true.

The film so carefully does not wear its heart on its sleeve that more than 90 minutes passes before one can sense whether the film is a right-wing exposé of anti-Americans or a sympathetic account of brave mavericks.

What is less well done is the fact that the case the filmmakers posit — that the communists did influence content — is totally unconvinving. It may be true, it no doubt was, but the examples cited are so few and so uncontextualized that they prove nothing. Snippets exposing the harsher side of capitalism can be found in many films of the time made by non-communist writers and directors.

These moments just used to be called social comment and were used by all and sundry, including dictatorial studio heads, to spice up pictures.

The filmmakers also seem to ignore the most obvious point of all: that a line by one character does not necessarily reflect the view of the writer or the director. A speech by a child molester extolling his perversion can hardly be used as a 10-second clip to argue that the filmmakers support child molestation.

However, while the documentary fails to make its case, it is utterly fascinating and the interviews with people such as Ring Lardner Jr and Abraham Polonsky riveting. The latter is particularly insightful and acerbic, and the clips from his works a necessary salver to the political and social blandness of most Hollywood writing today. The film ends with a clip from the great Tell Them Willie Boy Was Here (how about a festival revival?), and a great comment from Polonsky (hastily, and perhaps inaccurately, scrawled down in the dark): "The crime genre is always about capitalism because capitalism is crime. At least, that's what I used to think ... Now I'm certain."

After a heady trip through Hollywoodwood cinema, it was a return that night to antipodean shores with Bill Bennett's Kiss or Kill, easily his best picture since Backlash (1986).

The plot and its genesis have been well discussed elsewhere in this and previous issues, so let it just be stated that this is a thriller about two petty crooks on the run, and a string of murders across the outback.

The opening act is the more traditional, centring on Al (Matt Day) and Nikki (Frances O'Connor), and their unsettled and unsettling relationship of dependence and doubt. But Bennett soon enriches his film by adeptly intro-
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Hawks and Ford resurgent
by Raymond Younis

The 1997 Sydney Film Festival included a retrospective of Howard Hawks and a tribute to the UCLA Film and Television Archive, which provided reconstructed or restored versions of John Ford's My Darling Clementine (1946), Hawks' The Big Sleep (1946) and Charles Reisner's The Better 'Ole (1926). Ford and Hawks are widely regarded as definitive figures in American film, yet many in the audience saw about a dozen films by Hawks on the large screen for the first time. These films, like Ford's, and especially the Westerns, lose much on television screens. The mise-en-scene, with its emphasis on the vast and wild expanses of the American frontier, the stark division between light and shadow, between chaos and the imposed order of civilization, as well as the highlighting of larger-than-life heroes who brawl, love, endure and conquer — often in that order — register much more vividly on the large screen.

A retrospective of this kind highlights many common threads in Hawks' films. In many films, two men are brought together by violence and common concerns. Almost invariably (A Girl in Every Port, The Big Sky, Red River, Rio Bravo), there is a mythmaking process at work, though in a purely secularized sense. Two men are put to a test of fire: they test each other's "manhood", usually by brawling; they must show they are good enough; and, having shown this, are then accepted into the circle of male fellowship and exalted by this status. It is as if they must show that they deserve to be initiates in this exalted order of masculine violence, bravery and heroism.

When a woman enters the circle (His Girl Friday, I Was a Male War Bride, Scarface, Rio Bravo, Red River), she is almost invariably bold, aggressive, demanding and outspoken. It is as if Hawks' code left no room for timid, weak, or pusillanimous individuals (either male or female). In some films, the two men choose one another's company; in others, one is chosen by, and/or chooses, the woman.

These films are also remarkable for their emphasis on humanism. It is notable that God and religion play no role at all in most of the films. Indeed, Hawks' characters are most excited when they have found a common ground in spite of the theatrics, hyperbole, quick-fire repartee, or conflict. The world in these films is a harsh, extremely competitive, at times brutal place where the survival of the fittest is paramount and where the fittest come together in conflict and in love.

The style is suitably grand or intimate; there are vast expanses where the will can be tested to the full; there is a looseness of structure that gives these films a fury — and, at times, demonic energy; there is dialogue which is 20 percent faster than normal; there are many long shots and dramatic contrasts in tone, light and tempo. There is also much lyricism amidst the violence (verbal or physical). And there is in some films, such as The Big Sky, a thought-provoking attitude towards the indigenous people of the USA.

Like Hawks, Ford was more interested in character than in plot, and just as uninterested in God and religion on the frontiers. John Ford's My Darling Clementine was much abused. Zanuck chopped and changed it, but could not ruin it. The version shown is the new version of July 1946, not the November 1946 version (Zanuck had added unsubtle orchestral sound in place of natural sounds; dialogue had been removed; and the ending had been changed). What emerges in the earlier version is a complex, lyrical and dramatic film which shows Ford's mythmaking capabilities at their best. It tells the story of the gunfight at the OK Corral between the Earps and the Clantons. The conflict has never been so vivid, largely because of the depth in the characterizations of Doc Holliday and Wyatt Earp. Victor Mature is forceful as Holliday, the self-destructive, self-loathing gunfighter and failed surgeon; Henry Fonda gives a performance of archetypal proportions as Earp, the harbinger of truth, justice and the American Way into a turbulent, violent world.

This is a film about good and evil, and, like many such films, there is some caricature. But the style is utterly grand and memorable, the use of diagonals creates depth and a sense of teeming life — an energized, at times chaotic space; light and shadow are dramatically combined; the vast expanses of the desert and the mountains suggest an indifferent and unfeeling nature against which heroic individuals strive and struggle.

Indeed, the final image is a fit and representative one: Wyatt Earp, having brought order and justice to this world, rides away from Clementine, who stands on the edge of the town (civilization). Earp rides out on a path which bifurcates in the near distance. Between the end of the path and the far horizon there is the wilderness where solitary monoliths carved by rain and wind out of stone rear out of the desert like great inhuman sentries. Here is Ford's West in microcosm: the beloved who watches the duty-bound instrument of justice riding out (again); the solitary journey along an uncertain path; the inerasable boundary between home and the wilderness; and the emblems of endurance, strength and solitude carved in stone, towering over the desert. It is a harsh but beautiful picture with a poetic quality that is all Ford's own.
Guns for hire?

by Michael Helms

The Government has confirmed its financial support of the film and television industries for 1997/98, but there’s one small yet highly-visible sector of the film industry whose future is less well-defined — and not just because it’s subject to different types of government regulation. Wishing to remain anonymous for obvious reasons, a film armourer, a practising weapons handler and supplier, veers into a job description: “It’s partly the supply of the correct type of weapons for the period of the film and partly to fulfil legal requirements as required in the various states as to the licensing and proper supply of firearms. Also, partly, to oversee the safety of the use of the firearms on the set. And, in that respect, you basically become the link between the firearm and the crew — so that the crew know that there’s somebody there responsible and, if they say it’s safe, then it’s safe.”

Having witnessed different weapons handlers at work under all sorts of conditions, a major unifying factor is the ability to readily and right­fully gain the undivided attention of all other personnel on set. Repeatedly we’ve marvelled at the way these film workers can effectively transform a bunch of gun-shy amateurs into a safety-conscious team ready to be directed.

There’s no doubt the mass murder tragedy that occurred at Port Arthur in 1996 opened a floor-to-ceiling window of opportunity to all sorts of response. The Federal Government rewrote gun laws and put a national gun buy-back scheme in place, openly encouraging the public disposal of all sorts of privately-owned weaponry.

An awesome protest on the streets of Melbourne has bled its way into city cinemas. The buy-back has run from August 1996 and closes at the end of September 1997. Our caller notes, “At the Police Ministers’ Conference of May 10, the Prime Minister and the Ministers agreed that if you had a genuine reason for owning, possessing or using a firearm you could continue to do so either by legislation or Ministerial approval in writing. The example of firearms used in film production was offered. Presumably, this would exempt you from the buy-back.”

With assurances like that everything looked fine. “In actual fact,” points out the caller, “there’s no reason to hand in any guns if you’re a supplier to the film industry. But the cash incentives for the prohibited guns are so high that you get a situation where people say, ‘We’re sick of the same film industry questions: Can you do half a day? Why is it so dear?’ Why bother with all this penny-pinching, and not just take the money and run? In one way, this has left the film industry short of people and short of firearms. And, in another way, it should make the film industry aware that they shouldn’t be penny-pinching and going back to the old days of borrowing a rifle from somebody. We’ve gone a long way since those days.”

A query concerning the current no-budget filmmaking trend and its risk of exposure to this sort of exploitation gains an instant response:

“This film asked the guy who had the firearms if he would mind bringing them down to the studio so they could have a look at what they wanted for the film. They photographed the lot and said they’d get back to him. With these Polaroids they actually made models and used them throughout 80 percent of the film. They only got the guy in for one or two days, which is not the right way to do things.

“Another thing that goes along with that line is that, in most states, if it looks like a firearm it should be registered and licensed. So, not only is the production company cheap-skating, they’re also breaking the law. It does vary, depending on which state you’re in, but for them to be doing that [using models] in either Victoria or New South Wales would be contravening the Firearms Act. Even if it was a model toy that belonged to an armourer, the armourer would have to have it licensed and he would have to be responsible for it just the same as if it were a real gun. For the production company to just make these models and use them without any form of licensing is purely a contravention of the Firearms Act.

“As I said, it does depend on which state you’re in but, basically, as a rule of thumb, if it looks like a firearm, it is a firearm in legislation. This is one of the reasons why, if you look in a toy store, you’ll see that kid’s water pistols are normally fluorescent green or orange. If you took that water pistol and painted it black, it could look like a firearm and therefore, under the legislation, it is a firearm.

“If it looks realistic then it is considered a gun and has to be registered as a gun, even though it cannot fire at all. But there are grey areas in legislation. In Victoria, for instance, it applies to anything that is not a rifle. If it is a toy rifle then it’s not a firearm but, if it’s a toy pistol, it is a firearm. The technicalities of the legislation are quite strange, the difference being that if you were using a black toy plastic gun in a film, it needs to be licensed but, if you were using a black toy plastic rifle in a film, it doesn’t need to be licensed. It’s a strange anomaly.”

Returning to the matter of guns as props, the caller slips into the issue that should be the crux of any legislation concerning firearms: safety. “The producers will give those fake guns to the props people and say it’s just a prop. If you want to talk about the Brandon Lee story, for instance, his death can be attributed to two things. Firstly, the production company let its weapons’ specialist go to save money and then gave the guns to props people. An inexperienced props person didn’t realize that something was stuck in the gun so that, when the blanks were fired through the gun, poor Brandon Lee was killed. So, this is partly a production company trying to save money, and partly an inexperienced person in charge of a potentially lethal prop. Fortunately, we haven’t had a death on a set due to gun injury and we don’t want one. On the sets where they use a weapons specialist, it’s most unlikely that that would happen because these people know what they’re doing. They’re very knowledgeable. But, if we go back to the scenario where props people, or anyone, thinks, ‘We’ll just borrow a rifle from so and so’ or ‘We’ll use this one; this one doesn’t work’ and then they find that, by putting a blank in it, it blows up and fragments of metal go everywhere, they might realize they need people who know what they’re doing.

“At the moment, we’re heading down the right track but we’re coming to a crossroads where the industry will have to make a decision whether it wants us to keep going that way or whether they don’t care about us. It’s up to producers to hire qualified people.

For a moment we ponder the threat of any further potential job hindrances.

“The only other thing is if there’s a general push in the community not to make violent movies, not to make movies with firearms in them. That’s a possibility.”

Not wishing to end our conversation on a completely-downbeat note, we ask why none of these concerns were broached by the envoy of representatives from the film industry who met with the government earlier in the year as the budget was being formulated.

“That’s because it’s a forgotten area [of the industry]. I personally have lobbied a fair bit because we will have to live with whatever legislation they put in parliament and, if you don’t lobby, you don’t get workable legislation. If we get sensible legislation that allows us to actually use firearms on film sets like we have been doing, we will head in the right direction and it will be just like anywhere else in the world where they make films. But, if we head in the other direction, all it does is leave us open for big international companies to come here, make their movies bringing their own guns and go away; and that will lose jobs for local people.”

As of this writing the government remains mute on the specifics of any relationship with gun suppliers to the film industry. Although it’s inevitable that the manufacture of films with weapons in them will continue, it’s clear that come 30 September it’s quite possible that the weapon you see on screen will not have been packed and supplied by an Australian.
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A Walk on the Sunny Side


Walking down Marseille’s grand Boulevard, La Canebière, towards the old port we were stopped by two young men with cameras. They took our photo and handed us a blank Polaroid. “Umm, thanks”, I said, wondering why this all seemed familiar. “One hundred francs, one hundred francs”, he began to bark. “No thanks”, I said giving it back. He cussed something in Arabic and moved on. I remembered the scam from back streets of Paris when I was an erstwhile backpacker.

Every now and then a well-heeled tourist stands on what is now a deserted street holding a Polaroid which never develops. Marseille is a majestic, architecturally-stunning city on France’s opulent Riviera. It is every bit as beautiful as its neighbours, but differs in that it is a truly functioning city with snarling traffic, hustlers and immigrants from the former French-African colonies. Its character is quite different to that of Cannes or Nice, which have lots of money but little colour and no grit. There’s grit to burn from hard-liners, like the BBC’s Nick Fraser (we want something like Microcosmos, he said at one of the forums – I’m sure he does).

According to Dione Gilmour, there is not much hope of an overseas pre-sale to the ABC at the moment now that its production budget has been slashed. “European producers are avoiding me at cocktail parties”, she quipped. Claire Jager spoke similarly of SBS, but for Australian producers seeking overseas presales (for non-accord documentaries) there are definitely opportunities providing the subject matter is not too parochial.

Sue Seeary (FFC) explained that for Australians, co-productions are more appropriate for series than for individual documentaries: Co-productions are hard work and tend to be too expensive for one-off documentaries. Straight pre-sales are possible, of course, but when you start introducing foreign directors or producers (as in the case of an official co-production), you need to double your producers’ fees and double your legal fees, so the incentive begins to wane.

But it is the European broadcasters of the ABC’s Natural History Unit, and Sue Seeary, Investment Officer with the FFC. From the private sector only Beyond (with a very busy stand), production company Film Art Doco, and my own distribution company, Fearless Promotions (now based in Amsterdam), attended. Not many of us really, but then it’s a long way to go and there are many other markets to choose from.

I had a chance to talk with most of these people over the course of the week and asked them about the potential for presales and co-productions between Australia and Europe. According to Dione Gilmour, there is not much hope of an overseas pre-sale to the ABC at the moment now that its production budget has been slashed. “European producers are avoiding me at cocktail parties”, she quipped. Claire Jager spoke similarly of SBS, but for Australian producers seeking overseas presales (for non-accord documentaries) there are definitely opportunities providing the subject matter is not too parochial.

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that most producers were there to see. Arte, along with its partners ZDF in Germany, La Sept in Paris, RTBF in Belgium, SBC in Switzerland and TVE in Spain, broadcasts more than six hours of documentaries per week and it pays generously for the right project. The BBC, Channel Four (oddly absent) and Discovery from the UK are all good catches and the public broadcasters from Sweden, Denmark, Holland, Belgium, Spain, Italy, Austria and Israel all buy and pre-buy documentaries at reasonable rates comparable with, and often far in excess of, the ABC.

They all complain about diminishing budgets and dwindling broadcast times for independent documentaries; but there are new opportunities opening all the time, so the mood was far from negative at Sunny Side. The new cable channels, although typically not as generous as their terrestrial brethren, are opening up a number of new "special interest" niches which could not exist under the public broadcasting system. While few of these offer pre sale opportunities to independents, they are a valuable secondary market once the production has been made.

One of our clients, Dutch producer Mark Aardenburg, sold his documentary on Bangladesh's Grameen Bank to more than twenty broadcasters, mostly in Europe after initially pre-selling to Germany's WDR. This is by no means an exception.

The documentary festival and market are held at the same time, but are treated as separate events requiring separate accreditation. And while the market was always busy, the Festival was dismally attended. Even for a popular film like Ken Loach's *The Dockers of Liverpool*, there was not more than sixty in the cinema, and for many screenings there were less than ten. There were five screens running throughout the Festival, but only one was in the Palais du Pharo. The others were in a small, multi-screen cinema downtown making it impractical to attend any sessions held there. I did, however, manage to see quite a few of the Festival screenings but there were not many which held my attention for long.

One exception was Johan van der Keuken's four-hour epic *Amsterdam: Global Village*. A fascinating portrait of the Dutch capital, it manages to capture the cosmopolitan, yet village-like character of the city. Much as I enjoyed the film, it was demanding to watch and, like most of the films in Competition, it would not be particularly suitable for television. This is an interesting dilemma for a festival-market. A film market, on the other hand, is all about being commercial: finding buy- ers and co-producers for a project and making that project suitable for a television (or theatrical or both) market. A festival, on the other hand, is, typically, about films which have artistic or cinematic merit but which are not necessarily suitable for a wide public. This is difficult to reconcile at an event like Sunny Side and is presumably why few of those attending the market were interested in what was screening in the festival.

As distributors of short films (definitely not commercial) and documentaries (frequently not commercial), we are faced with this contradiction every day. On the one hand, we are dealing with producers who want to get a film that they believe in; on the other, there are television buyers who are desperately looking for productions to fill their documentary slots that aren't too parochial, too long, or too short, or too clever, or too 'arty', but just work well and have some sense of originality. The twain so rarely meet.

**DOUBLE DUTCH TV: A Case Study in European Broadcasting**

The Netherlands has one of the most complicated broadcasting systems in the world. For a country with a population just shy of Australia's, it has five times as many 'free' television channels available. (It also has five national daily newspapers and a further two specifically for Amsterdam.) In Holland, there are three public television 'channels' like our ABC and SBS: Nederlands 1; 2; and 3. There are about six commercial channels, a local arts channel, a private regional channel, and several public community channels. Amsterdam also receives other European channels, such as Britain's BBC, CNN, MTV, two German channels, two Belgian, one Italian, one French and one Moroccan. All television in Holland is delivered by cable for a small annual cable fee and an annual license fee.

The cable system is state-owned and is merely a substitute for terrestrial broadcasting - with perfect reception on all channels. Pay TV is also available within a similar system to that which is now operating in Australia. There are two or three pay TV operators with a range of channels offered by each. Public (state-owned) channels 1, 2 and 3 are not merely operated by three companies, but by no less than thirty different broadcasters. The broadcasters include around twelve main companies and another twenty-odd special interest groups, including religious, political and humanitarian organizations, all of which operate like mini-television stations. Many of the broadcasters operate a subscription service and publish their own television guides with an editorial bias towards their respective programming. The number of subscribers a broadcaster has, along with a few other factors, determines how much broadcasting time they receive.

The public broadcasters are not permitted to advertise themselves. Rather, there is a state-owned advertising organization which advertises on behalf of the broadcasters. Advertising revenue is added to annual license and cable fees and the total is divided among each of the broadcasters. The private television channels are a little more straightforward, operating similarly to 7, 9 and 10 in Australia. Several of them, though, also operate radio stations. One of these is the 'breakaway' broadcaster, Veronica, which became commercial several years ago. Veronica started life as one of Europe's infamous pirate radio stations operating from a ship in the North Sea. In true Dutch style, it was eventually given asylum as a public broadcaster and is now one of the more successful commercial stations, offering a mix of tabloid, movies and soft porn.
Miranda Otto, like many other young actors in Australia, is working hard. Already she has three completed films under her belt this year. She's just finished shooting *The Dead Letter Office* in Melbourne, is about to start work on another in Port Douglas, with still another to shoot immediately after that.

With such a busy schedule, time for reflection and retrospection is a luxury, but recently she made the time to talk family, career and philosophy with Margaret Smith.

**How were you drawn into acting?**

I come from a family of actors. I've been around the theatre all my life. Even though I didn't live with my father [Barry Otto], I spent a lot of time with him on holidays. At school, and in my holidays, I did shows with friends. It was always an all-encompassing experience: it wasn't just acting, it was the whole show, making costumes, programmes, things like that.

It has only been the periods in my life where I felt that I had to give it up that I've actually found how much I love it and how much it is a part of my life.

**What was the influence of your mother and father in terms of their acting?**

My mother's name is Lindy Otto. She acted in Brisbane years ago. My father has been a huge influence in that I've seen him do so many things. I remember seeing him in *Uncle Vanya* and being incredibly moved by that.

I think you go through a period as a teenager of being quite cool and unaffected by things, being able to divorce yourself and look at people crying at films and say, "What are you doing? Why are you crying?" I used to say that to my mother a lot. Films came on the television and she would cry. But I remember being at *Uncle Vanya* and just bowing, crying and crying and gradually pulling myself back together, then coming downstairs to meet all these actors afterwards and them saying, "What did you think?"
I think it takes a long time to settle in, or it certainly did for me. It was scary at first trying to play people who were older than me, people who were very different. I still find it a bit scary sometimes, but it definitely broadens you. It takes a long time to work in; I think that the work I did there is only just coming to fruition.

**How would you describe Emma’s War?**

It’s a film about a young girl, Emma, growing up during World War 2. I was 17, but I was playing 13. The story is about her mother — her father is away at the war — and Emma, who develops a crush on a conscientious objector, played by Mark Lee. My mother was played by Lee Remick. Basically, it was a fairly simple, joyous kind of story.

I'm probably more cerebral about things, where Dad is maybe more instinctive and off-the-wall than I am. I've developed my own thing, and I think we are quite different as actors.

For the two years before I went to NIDA, I just worked off myself, tried to be as truthful as possible and just answer back to the other actor in the way that I felt. That was well and good — the truth is so much of it — but I think going onto NIDA helped me explore characters much further away from myself. Trying to change one’s physicality broadens you enormously.

**The Last Days of Chez Nous** [Gillian Armstrong, 1992] was probably where you were really able to make your mark in Australia.

**Is that right?**

God, does one ever really make one’s mark? Maybe that’s more for other people to judge. *Chez Nous* was an interesting experience because I felt very over-awed for about the first four weeks of shooting by the company I was in. Everybody had done such amazing things before — Lisa [Harrow], Bruno [Ganz], Kerry [Fox], Gill [Armstrong]. It took me a long while to settle into it, to feel worthy enough to be there. I was quite inhibited by them at first. I gradually found a place to kind of mark my space, if you know what I mean, to stand my ground.

**How did Armstrong help you?**

I remember doing a scene at the end of the film when JP [Bruno Ganz] leaves. In one of the rehearsals, I was crying and, when we went to do one of the takes, it didn’t happen. Instead of her saying to me, “You should cry, try and cry”, she would say, “Let’s do another one.” I thought that was incredibly clever, because I think as soon as you speak these things they become much harder, more forced.

**What did you learn from working with Lee Remick and Kerry Fox so early in your career?**

Working with Lee Remick I was, once again, over-awed by the whole experience. I really wasn’t at the stage where I could watch other actors and pick up what they were doing. I didn’t think of studying in a conscious way what she did. I do remember that she was an incredibly professional and lovely woman, and so generous. I’d never acted before, it was a very small-budget picture, and she was so lovely. It would have been good if I could have learnt that, but I don’t think I have learnt to be particularly lovely (laughs).
The one thing that I like about acting is that it happens for a short burst of time and you can throw everything you have into it. Whereas if you throw everything you’ve got into something that goes on for nine months, it is very draining, very hard to keep going. I’m much more erratic; short bursts of energy. I think film likes me better than the theatre does for some reason. I would very much like to go back to the theatre and do a classical rôle, something that is a wonderful play in itself, not so much as doing a new play.

I’ve done quite a few plays and have been through terrible periods early on at NIDA of having no idea what to do with my arms. In film, you don’t have to move if it is not needed; with stage, there is a sense of needing the action on the stage; needing things to happen; having to generate activity. In film, it is much more like: “Here is a table and a chair, walk in, sit down and then walk over there.” Theatre, I think, is a little more constructed, and great theatre actors have those techniques that, when they do things, they make them very interesting. In film, you can be more subtle and just let things happen.

In Love Serenade, you play Dimity, a naïve girl who fell for the first student who came to town. How did you prepare for that rôle?

We were cast a long time before the film actually started, so I had a long time to think about it, which was great. That is the ideal way: to let things drop in as you are walking down the street, think about it and develop it over a long period of time. Shirley, Rebecca [Frith] and I got together on a few occasions, did a few rehearsals and spent a few days just talking about it.

We went to Robinvale and started rehearsing there. We did a lot of improvisation with the characters: trying to lift the characters off the page, take them out of the script, really flesh them out and then put them back into the script. We improvised walking down the street. We spent days and hours in character, pretending to fish. Rebecca was fantastic, and we seemed to really work well off each other.

You must have been grateful for that time. Being cast at the last minute is really hard. You have to work very quickly and I like the time for reflection. I like working intensely, then going away and thinking about it, working out why it didn’t work and then coming back to it. It makes the work richer, I think. True Love and Chaos [Stavros Andonis Eftymiou, 1997] was also a big challenge for you, wasn’t it? Mini journeys from innocence to a young woman. She has to come to terms with a lot of stuff: her boyfriend, Hanif [Naveen Andrews]; her boyfriend’s friend, Dean [Noah Taylor]; and finally her father [Hugh Weaving]. All of which brings up her understanding of her mother [Genevieve Picot] and herself. How did you cope with the challenge of that part?

It was a very interesting experience that one, because I found the way Stavros worked very difficult to get my head around. I’ve got to work really spontaneously and he likes to throw things out at the last minute. If it is not working, he will tell you that it is no good – which is a good thing – but I think you have to develop a thick skin. You have to not be so personal about your work, you have to find a way of taking the criticism in a professional way that is not personal.

I found that very difficult, and I wasn’t very easy to get along with. It surprises me when I look at the film that I look so light. I always felt the character, in the beginning and for most of the way through the film, should be a very light person, and it surprises me that she is, because I was a very heavy person during the filming.

It is interesting that Eftymiou didn’t give the other characters a back story. It is only you and Hugh Weaving’s character who really have a back story, so we only really get interested in you two. Is it the back story that makes people interesting? Yes, because we don’t know where they come from, we don’t know much about them. They are played very well, but we aren’t told why or how, especially Hanif [Naveen Andrews], who just drops in from nowhere.

But there is a sense of him as a character who doesn’t really belong in Australia, an outsider in some ways, and that works for me. As far as the character and how it developed, it developed despite me, I think. I don’t know where it came from; him [Eftymiou] pushing and pulling me in certain directions. When he was editing, Stavros said to me, “There is a development of the character there”, and I was totally surprised. I had no idea what I had done with it. I just turned up every day. There are points – like when you drive the car off without them and when you reject Hanif in bed – where you are empowered. You had to be, otherwise you would have gone under.

And from Kerry Fox?

I’d seen Kerry in An Angel at My Table (Jane Campion, 1990) before we did Chez Nous. I thought she was incredibly fantastic.

It is hard sometimes to see how other actors are working when you are working with them, if that makes any sense. Often when I’m acting with an actor in a scene and they say, “How did you think that one went?” – it is really hard for me to tell. I can say I think the scene went well, it felt good, but I’m not really watching other actors from a point of view of watching a performance. I’m just acting with them.

In The Nostradamus Kid [Bob Ellis, 1993], you were working with a talented and eccentric director, and with Noah Taylor.

That was a very fun film. I had an extremely good time.

Afterwards, I felt that I’d had too good a time, hadn’t really worked hard enough and that there was a lot more to the character than what I had done. I once again stuck too closely to myself, instead of really branching out more into the character, putting more humour in it. I felt, looking back on the film, that I’d had too good a time, hadn’t really worked hard enough and that there was a lot of needing the action on the stage; needing things to happen; having to generate activity. In film, it is much more like: “Here is a table and a chair, walk in, sit down and then walk over there.” Theatre, I think, is a little more constructed, and great theatre actors have those techniques that, when they do things, they make them very interesting. In film, you can be more subtle and just let things happen.

In Love Serenade, you play Dimity, a naïve girl who fell for the first student who came to town. How did you prepare for that rôle?

We were cast a long time before the film actually started, so I had a long time to think about it, which was great. That is the ideal way: to let things drop in as you are walking down the street, think about it and develop it over a long period of time. Shirley, Rebecca [Frith] and I got together on a few occasions, did a few rehearsals and spent a few days just talking about it.

We went to Robinvale and started rehearsing there. We did a lot of improvisation with the characters: trying to lift the characters off the page, take them out of the script, really flesh them out and then put them back into the script. We improvised walking down the street. We spent days and hours in character, pretending to fish. Rebecca was fantastic, and we seemed to really work well off each other.

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The Nostradamus Kid also tells a story of your parents’ generation.

I’d always had a big thing for the ’60s. When I was about 18, I used to dress up in ’60s clothes. I was fascinated by that period and the people who came out of it – like Robert Hughes and Germaine Greer. Having hung around [Sydney] university myself about 1987, I thought, “Where are those people? How come they came out during the ’60s and during this period there are very middle-class people without much opinion?” It just appeared to me to be like that, not that I was ever really at university; I was just hanging around the drama group and pretending that I was a student. From Nostradamus Kid you went onto Love Serenade [Shirley Barrett, 1996]. I did Brilliant Lies, the play.
As a character, she is probably surprised by the strength that she has, and frightened by it.

**Did you use improvisation for that film?**

In rehearsal, no, because we didn't really rehearse as such. We got together and chatted and fooled around, went away for a weekend, raved on, listened to music, stuff like that.

We did improvise when we were actually working. If things weren't working, if Stavros didn't like the dialogue or the way we were doing it, he used to say, "Okay, we'll throw it out, do it in your own words." A lot of dialogue in it is improvised; no one made up the stuff in the back of the car, or the stuff about Jackie Collins, *The Tempest.* That was very funny.

**And how did you prepare for your character, Patsy, in *Doing Time for Patsy Cline*?**

Costumes had a lot to do with that character; costumes, hairdos and make-up were really the beginning. I was very flummoxed by the script and how to play this character. I had no idea, because basically it seemed to depend on her being very seductive and beautiful and alluring, and I thought, "How can I play that?" Chris Kennedy said to me, "We wanted Marilyn Monroe for the role but she wasn't available." So I thought, "How do I do that? I'm nothing like Marilyn Monroe!"

Once in the script the word "exotic" is used, and in the end that was the place that I leapt from rather than from trying to be sexy. I had to develop an idea of her life and back story based on that.

**You were working with 'hot' stars of the moment, Matt Day and Richard Roxburgh. What were they like to work with?**

Fantastic. I'd known Matt before; he was a friend of a friend and we had been out socially quite a bit over the years. I didn't really know Richard very well. We had met occasionally, but it was a hoot, you know; the three of us got on so well. In between the scenes, we would be sitting in this jag cracking jokes. It was a really good atmosphere, probably one of the few times I've worked with two actors who are very close to my age.

**Do you think they represent a new group of actors who are very professional about their work and also know how to have fun? They approach it in a balanced way, whereas the work of some of the older actors have gotten out of balance.**

I don't have any opinions about that. People ask me all the time, and I don't know! I'm meant to have theories, like I'm some kind of professor on the Australian film industry. People keep asking me that question and it drives me crazy.

**You are being hit with tabloid-journalism lines of what you are doing because you have suddenly become a star.**

Every time I make comments about this I read them back and I think, "What a load of shit am I talking about?" You know, questions like, "We went through a period of making these sort of films, and now we are making these sorts of film. Is that a reaction against...?" How do I fucking know? I don't know; things just develop. I don't mean to be rude. You're right. I was only interested in the way they approached their work.

Young actors are serious about their work and don't take any time out from it. I'm very serious about my work; there are probably only two films I've done where I had a really good time.

I really enjoyed doing *The Well* (*Samantha Lang, 1997*) and I'm very proud of it. I wouldn't say that the experience was fun, even though it was a great experience.
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COMING SOON
OMF Compatibility
I went on to work in both book and screenwriting, bringing it out again. Then he mimed putting the monster back into its cage under the table. When he was done, the executive asked the writer, “Do you know what the monster is?”

The writer shook his head. The executive leaned over and said, “The monster is named ‘Our Money.’”

It’s our money: that is, as we know, the ultimate argument used against the screenwriter. The ultimate winning argument in the making of any film. And that animal is found in every country.

As wonderful as it is, there is something that seriously worries me in this anecdote. It is that it repeats, albeit with comfortable familiarity, one of the stock attitudes of the screenwriting community (and, indeed, the arts in general) and which has been around for quite a while.

It is the attitude that the investors, the money people, the suits, the accountants, the private sector, commerce, are fundamentally evil enemies. That these people and their world is a ‘monster’.

Some writers hold this view from deep frustrations which have arisen in their worklife as writers which they feel can be sheeted home to the money people. Others hold this view because of old ideological habits. That is, ultimately, these writers see themselves as warriors for humanity against the inhumanity of the marketplace.

Sometimes they even see their roles as secret agents out to undermine the values of this world of the money people. Sometimes in the past, at the time of the Cold War, they were secret agents. They felt they had to insinuate their radical messages into the films they worked on in an effort to strike back against their evil masters.

Even though the ideological reasons for this attitude have receded, it is still there as a style-value argument. What all this ignores is that the most vital films, television, books and art generally in the past hundred years have come from this world. The world made by money people. The world of the mixed-market economy.

The films and other art we admire are almost entirely from the mixed-market world. I include the BBC and ABC and the other public and semi-public production centres which have been founded within this economy. But they are part of the nature of what we know of as mixed-market economies and involve the money people, too.

What I’m saying is that the money people must be doing something right some of the time at least. The attitude that the money people are the enemy not only flies in the face of the cultural richness of our cultures but it makes for other problems which are just as serious.

It makes for a deforming of the way we present these sectors of the society – especially the way we present the money people, the way we present administration (The Bureaucracy) and the way we present politicians, especially.

We have a serious imaginative deficit in our portrayals of these sub-groups. We fall back on cheap laughs from stale caricatures. We, and other Western cultures too, have a failure of creative empathy.

We tend to simply repeat the highly-successful stereotypes of, say, Yes, Minister and Yes, Prime Minister. Or we relish Michael Douglas in greed as symbolizing all that is bad in the market economy.

I too relish it and I enjoy this, but those programmes and films, such as Wall Street, are not templates for all other films and television portrayals.

They themselves, of course, come from earlier versions of the same stereotype, the film Babbit from the 1930s comes to mind; the money people have let an awful lot of unpleasant films be made about themselves, by the way.

There is more to be said then about political process, about the commercial world, about the administration. As writers we may think that they are out to destroy us and our work. But if I were a business person, a government bureaucrat, a politician, I might feel that the whole of the arts and writing community was out to get me. (I hope this gets back to John Howard.)

We still use silly categorizations to dismiss people. We have theatre director Rodney Pople talking in an interview about “boring businessmen”. John Gregory Dunne has a section in his book called “The suits”.

This dismissing of the business community is extraordinarily common (despite the growing sponsorship of the arts by the private sector). The disdain for the commercial and entrepreneurial life by the arts in Australia is its fatal flaw.

We have to get out and have a look at the lives of these people and their energy, their creativity, their grappling with the malaise of the real. We don’t have to like them necessarily: but we should know their world and imaginatively understand and be able to present it – in the way we have been able to remarkably present the culture of, say, the police and the law.
I have been evolving a new rule of life. The Rule is called the Perfection of Imperfection. We all know that the making of a screenplay has this strange ebb and flow through drafts and through many shapes. The writing process begins with the writer moving towards one form of 'perfection' which is related to the screenwriter's personal vision of the finished work on screen – or a sense of finding this vision. This vision is then undone, battered, shifted, turned and twisted. Much has been said about what it is that the screenplay really is its nature in the scheme of the universe when the finished script rarely ever finds itself translated word for word, scene for scene, into a finished film or television story. But generally we accept that it is a 'place for the process' to begin. Or, as we say among ourselves, "the first time and flies out through your mouth in this first telling of the story."

This leads to the fax to the agent about "a trembling fragile dream for the film or television series" and then leads to the formal writing of the proposal or the idea, the wretched treatment, and all the other documents related to getting it moving, getting the project up, as the jargon has it.

But all these small documents, faxes, proposals and so on are 'telling of the story'. They involve getting the story across to these first small audiences, sometimes an audience of one or sometimes an over-worked AFC panel.

These myriad documents with their small crucial audiences are part of our work. This is all storytelling work. And, generally speaking, it is we, the scriptwriters, who do it. And for our daily life to be fulfilled...

At the party, I met an American who turned out to be an executive of Coca-Cola out from Atlanta to help set up Coca-Cola franchises in Australia.

As a young socialist, I had an obligatory argument with him about Coca-Cola's wasting of world resources while people starved. Although I couldn't admit it then, I found him more interesting than anyone else at the party.

A few years later, this meeting was turned into a short story called "The Coca-Cola Kid". My records show it was completed in February 1969. It was the starting point for a book which was to become The Americans, Baby.

The book was published in 1972 and three years later I received a letter which, although I was no longer uncomfortably married, no longer a D-grade reporter, and no longer in the Coca-Cola Kid in its entirety. Becker and Kim lived again.

The scriptwriter's sense of the completeness of things was satisfied. A new perfection was achieved in new forms and shapes.

Finally, to use picnics as an example of this life principle of the Perfection of Imperfection: You find when you arrive at the picnic site that the salt and pepper have not been packed. There are moans and temper. You then apply the Principle of Perfection of Imperfection. You say, "It is a long time since we have tasted food without salt or without pepper. Let us explore the flavours of the food without these and we may find something out about the food." You may find out why food definitely needs salt and pepper. Or you may not. You may still go back to salt and pepper but you have had a special experience of food.

The imperfect picnic becomes the best Picnic Without Salt and Pepper in your life.

The poet John Milton knew about it when he said, "The mind is its own place and in itself Can make a Heaven of Hell, or a Hell of Heaven." But we have other problems peculiar to ourselves here in Australia. The first is: What am I doing here? Why am I not in Los Angeles?

In recent years, I have been approached by some writers, both screen and print, wanting to know where they should live: here or overseas. As some of these people have expressed to me, there is still an uneasiness within the Australians who have global aspirations. I have identified it as Agitated Expatriate, or the This Little Piggy Went To Market syndrome. It is as follows. The person who has chosen to live and work outside the country (especially in the arts) experiences an immobilizing dizziness accompanied by the recurring incertitude: What dreadful things will happen to me if I don't come back to Australia? Will my creative well dry up if I stay away? Or will it, conversely, dry up if I don't stay away? Or will it be contaminated? Am I a sell-out?

And you can be punished for staying away. I quote from The Sydney Morning Herald where a columnist commented on the absence of writer David Malouf from a literary award presentation.
Cherie Nowlan

Thank God He Met Lizzie is director Cherie Nowlan's début feature, and is the latest in a collaboration with screenwriter Alexandra Long that dates back to her time at AFTRS in Sydney.

Nowlan's background is slightly different to most of her peers. She doesn't see herself as a film school graduate. Says Nowlan: "I'm sort of a de facto film school student because I did a short course there [AFTRS] once, and I ended up being there for several months."

Before the short course, Nowlan was involved in film and television production, researching and writing for independent production companies like Kennedy Miller, which is where she started her directing career. "I pitched an idea for a documentary [God's Girls, 1991] to Glenys Rowe, who said to me, 'And, of course, you'll be directing this documentary', and I said, 'Yes, absolutely', and that was really how it happened."

From there, Nowlan set her own training agenda, including an attachment to theatre director Michael Bowden, short film courses (where she met Long and Samantha Lang), and writing, directing and producing a couple of short films. She co-produced Out, written by Long and directed by Lang, and wrote and directed Lucinda, 31, adapted from one of Long's short stories.

Collaborating on a feature film with Long seemed the next logical step for Nowlan. "Alexi had to write a feature for her year at film school, and she showed me two ideas, and went away, and I suppose the rest is history. We developed it with the Australian Film Commission for a year, and then we brought producer Jonathan Shteinman on board."

Nowlan is now working on a number of projects, including: developing a script based on Dreamtime Alice, a book by Mandy Sayer, with Cate Blanchett; another project with Long, untitled as yet; and a script of her own. "I always generate my own projects, things that I want to do. I need to do a number of things - at once."
PRAWLING OVER 215 ACRES of land at Oxenford, on Queensland’s Gold Coast, are the largest studios in the Southern Hemisphere. The Warner-Roadshow MovieWorld Studios resemble a huge, modern factory, which is, I suppose, what film studios really are: factories of movie magic.

My memories of the old Cinesound Film Studio in Sydney’s Bondi Junction date back to the 1940s and early ’50s, when my father, Charles Chauvel, made four of his feature films there: Forty Thousand Horsemen (1940), The Rats of Tobruk (1944), Sons of Matthew (1949) and Jedda (1955).

There was an element of theatre about the ungainly old studio, a romantic notion that anything could happen at any minute. It began life as a skating rink during the ’20s, until Australasian Films, still in the days of the silent ‘flicks’, took it over in 1929. It was upgraded for sound film in 1932 and became Cinesound Productions, in time becoming famous for its weekly Cinesound Review newreels. Ken Hall was in charge and produced all of his own films there. The studio and its adjoining Cinesound Laboratory were hired out to independent filmmakers, such as my father. There were other film studios at the time, in both Sydney and Melbourne, but Cinesound, more than any other, seemed to evoke that do-it-yourself, entrepreneurial period in Australian filmmaking when everyone pitched in and did whatever they could with very little. And no gaffer tape!

A kind of icon in commercial Bondi Junction, Cinesound’s red-domed tin roof towered over the single-storeyed clutter of Ebley and Rattray streets. To the locals, it held the hopes of movie stardom. At casting time, queues of people materialized outside the studio, hoping for auditions, some with their children dressed up and hair ringletted, mimicking Shirley Temple.

The building was in two parts: the studio proper, with its huge cement floor and hangar doors opening onto the street; and the laboratory, with labyrinths of upper and lower passageways and countless box-like rooms. I remember seeing film hanging in long strips to dry, above calico bins, the technicians wearing white coats and white gloves, to keep the precious film dust-free. The Cinesound lab was capable of processing 300,000 feet of film weekly.

While the laboratory was orderly, the vast sound stage was usually chaotic, crowded with settings, props and trailing electrical cables, an actor or two rehearsing their lines while technicians put Aussie ingenuity to work on outmoded equipment. One of the old cameras had an iron horseshoe dangling from it. The walls of...
of Difference In Between

the sound stage were padded with hessian, another large hangar door opening into more wood-lined, draughty passages. Above were timber gantries studded with arc lights. The muffled sound and the unnatural glow of the lights seemed to insulate you from the outside world. In the glassed-in sound room, suspended above the back of the main stage, the technicians could hear every syllable uttered below, including some of the colourful remarks made by actors when they thought the sound had been turned off. Somewhere upstairs were the wardrobe and props rooms, where Gaga Weatherley, one of an old theatrical family, reigned supreme as wardrobe mistress.

When the red lights blinked in the corridors and the warning siren sounded, before shooting commenced, you stayed wherever you were and kept absolutely quiet, everyone but the cast and technicians frozen in a kind of tableau. Last-minute adjustments were made to the camera or to artists' make-up, and we all waited expectantly, as if waiting for the curtain to go up at a gala performance, for those time-honoured words – "Lights, Camera, Action!" – and the slap of the clapper-board. An aura of fantasy surrounded everything to do with movies in those days before television and our constant diet of media information.

What passed for soundproofing in the lofty old ceiling was in tatters. The sound technicians had a hard time competing with traffic noise, including clanging trams, the shrill whistle from the factory area of Alexandria and the occasional plane. Then there was the 'five o'clock dog' who lived in the backyard of a nearby cottage and barked at five o'clock each day when his owner returned home. Quiet scenes had to be carefully timed between all these hazards.

The property rooms were mini Aladdin's Caves, tucked under one of the old wooden staircases. Their overflow spilled out into the corridors and every available crevice, as if it had a life of its own, and you picked your way past plaster dummies, oddments of Gothic architecture, old pianos, chandeliers, maybe wagon wheels and military regalia. All this more or less blended into the jumble from the carpenter's shop where, with wood-turning machines, circular saws, plaster and a constantly boiling glue pot, many miracles of illusion were created. In this shop, where the battered, galvanized iron roof leaked when it rained, the foc'sle of the "Bounty" was built to scale (for Chauvel's In the Wake of The Bounty, 1933) and a life-like replica of Charles Kingsford Smith's Southern Cross (for Ken Hall's Smithy, 1946). There were street settings from old Cairo or Jerusalem, army dugouts and settlers' slab huts. Maybe a patch of rainforest was needed, and tons of soil, ferns, grasses and small trees had been dumped directly onto the main studio floor, for the art director to rearrange.

An unforgettable occasion was the recording of Henri Krips' fine musical score for Sons of Matthew. The Sydney Symphony Orchestra was installed in front of a sound shell in the middle of that cavernous sound stage, with the film running on a screen behind the orchestra, so that Henri could synchronize his score with the scenes. He was showing off a little for his tiny audience of producer-director and family, and film crew. The...
The studio lot is serviced by wide roads allowing direct access to the sound stages, through double-sliding sound-lock-doors, a modern version of Cinesound’s old hangar doors. Inside Sound Stage 5, the dim lighting, taking a little while to warm up, gradually revealed the enormous prow of an old sailing vessel constructed for the production of Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea, starring Michael Caine.

Number 5 measures 22,800 square feet, or 2,118 square metres, a tremendous concrete barn with the same sense of muffled isolation I remembered of Cinesound. It boasts a huge, deep-water tank beneath the floor, with 1,000-gallon ‘dump’ tanks, automated wave-makers and air compressors. At one end is a weir wall and recirculating pump to create an artificial horizon. When the old ship, “Abraham Lincoln”, battles the ocean in Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea, deluged with water from the dump tanks, I will know that the drama has been played out within the secluded world of Sound Stage 5. This film is presently running in Los Angeles and soon to be released in Australia. Currently under production, in Studios 4 and 6, is Roar, a television series of thirteen episodes, set in Ireland, in 400AD. Five American artists play key roles, as well as Australian television actor Heath Ledger. Booked to begin production soon is M.G.M.’s White Shark, a four-hour mini-series.

American producers sing the praises of the MovieWorld facilities, for the professionalism of the crews, the economic advantages of working there, the climate and readily accessible real-life locations. The film crews have only to travel a short distance from the studio complex to find beach and coastal scenes, the city, mangrove swamps, rolling sugar cane fields or the rainforests of the Hinterland. Though editing facilities are available at MovieWorld, most Australian companies have feature post-production completed in either Sydney or Melbourne, while American filmmakers usually prefer to take their work home.

In the ‘old days’, an editor sat in front of a little Moviola machine, with the film and a pair of scissors – it was literally a cut-and-paste job, but one which could either make or break a film. Everything depended on the editor’s individual skill. Today’s digital, disk-based editing is fast and streamlined. In multi-functional rooms which look like sets for a television series of thirteen episodes, set in Ireland, in 400AD. Five American artists play key roles, as well as Australian television actor Heath Ledger. Booked to begin production soon is M.G.M.’s White Shark, a four-hour mini-series.

While Cinesound was self-creating and self-sufficient, today’s filmcraft is tailor-made and physically brought to the studios. While Cinesound was self-creating and self-sufficient, today’s filmcraft is tailor-made and physically brought to the studios.

The studio lot from Warners’ MovieWorld Theme Park, a rollercoaster was hurling little nests of shrieking tourists around its tortuous route. There is a thin line between fact and fantasy here, where movie magic is created on one side of the fence and recycled to the public on the other. Behind the creativity, however, lies hard business – a network of planning, liaising and evaluating, designed to ensure that film production there is both super-efficient and cost-effective.

While Cinesound was self-creating and self-sufficient, today’s filmcraft is tailor-made and physically brought to the studios. Each of the six sound stages are rented empty, soundproofed and air-conditioned. The production company must hire all crews and equipment, and this is where the specialists enter the scene. Many have set up shop within the MovieWorld Studio complex. Production support is given by firms who individually supply camera equipment, sound, lighting, visual effects, casting services and accountancy. There is the firm specializing in transport, travel and accommodation for film crews on location, another supplying trucks to move the equipment. There are construction workshops on site and master model makers, creating everything from hand props to miniature fabrications. Complete film laboratory services are available and are able to transmit the rushes daily, by satellite, to any part of the world. An administrative staff will advise and assist in co-ordinating all these services, obtaining personnel, if required. Everything a production team could possibly need is provided ‘on campus’ – but now I understand why a movie today costs so much to make!

The studio lot is serviced by wide roads allowing direct access to the sound stages, through double-sliding sound-lock-doors, a modern version of Cinesound’s old hangar doors. Inside Sound Stage 5, the dim lighting, taking a little while to warm up, gradually revealed the enormous prow of an old sailing vessel constructed for the production of Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea, starring Michael Caine.

Number 5 measures 22,800 square feet, or 2,118 square metres, a tremendous concrete barn with the same sense of muffled isolation I remembered of Cinesound. It boasts a huge, deep-water tank beneath the floor, with 1,000-gallon ‘dump’ tanks, automated wave-makers and air compressors. At one end is a weir wall and recirculating pump to create an artificial horizon. When the old ship, “Abraham Lincoln”, battles the ocean in Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea, deluged with water from the dump tanks, I will know that the drama has been played out within the secluded world of Sound Stage 5. This film is presently running in Los Angeles and soon to be released in Australia. Currently under production, in Studios 4 and 6, is Roar, a television series of thirteen episodes, set in Ireland, in 400AD. Five American artists play key roles, as well as Australian television actor Heath Ledger. Booked to begin production soon is M.G.M.’s White Shark, a four-hour mini-series.

American producers sing the praises of the MovieWorld facilities, for the professionalism of the crews, the economic advantages of working there, the climate and readily accessible real-life locations. The film crews have only to travel a short distance from the studio complex to find beach and coastal scenes, the city, mangrove swamps, rolling sugar cane fields or the rainforests of the Hinterland. Though editing facilities are available at MovieWorld, most Australian companies have feature post-production completed in either Sydney or Melbourne, while American filmmakers usually prefer to take their work home.

In the ‘old days’, an editor sat in front of a little Moviola machine, with the film and a pair of scissors – it was literally a cut-and-paste job, but one which could either make or break a film. Everything depended on the editor’s individual skill. Today’s digital, disk-based editing is fast and streamlined. In multi-functional rooms which look like sets for a television series of thirteen episodes, set in Ireland, in 400AD. Five American artists play key roles, as well as Australian television actor Heath Ledger. Booked to begin production soon is M.G.M.’s White Shark, a four-hour mini-series.

While Cinesound was self-creating and self-sufficient, today’s filmcraft is tailor-made and physically brought to the studios.
Frameworks, first in non-linear in Australia, has once again taken the initiative in film editing. We are the first facility providing a dedicated non-linear assistant's room for syncing rushes which allows for true 24FPS cutting, providing frame accurate edl's, cut lists and change lists for feature films. This method of post for 24FPS film provides a one to one relationship with picture time code, film key code numbers and sound time code.

This method provides simple and frame accurate output of cut lists, change lists, picture and sound edl's directly from the Avid. This avoids the need for trace back edl's for sound post production and conversion between 24FPS and 25FPS for cut lists.

(For further details, and a more complete explanation of the different post production methods, please contact Stephen F. Smith at Frameworks.)

“Knowledge, Experience, Service”
Frameworks Edit Pty. Ltd.  Suite 4, 239 Pacific Hwy, North Sydney, NSW 2060
Tel: 02 9955-7300 Fax: 02 9954-0175 Email: framewks@ozemail.com.au
Starring AFI-nominated actors John Brumpton (Life) and Belinda McClory (Janus), Redball is a no-budget, dark and contemporary police thriller about a few weeks in the lives of these used-up city detectives.

It is constructed as a series of snapshots of the Homicide, CIB, Vice and Drug squads, and is a darkly-comic descent into the tensions, abuses and psychoses inherent in frontline policework – and a resonant paean to a city haunted by corruption, police shootings and the murder of the innocent.

Says writer-director Jon Hewitt: “I want this film to be quite controversial. It is my intention to release it in time for the findings of the Wood Royal Commission, which will definitely raise a few eyebrows. I guess it will give Redball credibility. People won’t look at it and say, ‘Never in a million years. This cannot happen in the force.’ That’s my hope.”
Access Collection
Cinemedia access will build on the existing film and video collection to develop and maintain a collection of significant screen content, managed and distributed in the most economic and efficient manner.

On-line
Facilitating the on-line delivery of Cinemedia screen content.

Venues Management
The development and maintenance of appropriate venues for the screening of film, video and multimedia is fundamental to Cinemedia.

Film Victoria
Project development and investment for film and television will be provided by Film Victoria under the same banner. Film Victoria is now a business unit of Cinemedia.

MFO
Marketing Melbourne's film services and Victoria's locations is the primary objective of the Melbourne Film Office.

Multimedia 21 Fund
Project development and investment for multimedia will be provided through the Multimedia 21 Fund, also a business unit of Cinemedia.

PAVE - Partnering Audio-Visual Enterprise
PAVE provides a service for government departments wanting to outsource audio-visual production to the local screen community.

Screen Culture
Resourcing and supporting organisations which enhance Victoria's reputation as a centre of excellence in screen culture will be a priority for Cinemedia.

Screen Education
Promoting the appreciation and analysis of screen content and culture is important to creating a screen literate society.
The chief characters of My Best Friend's Wedding are Julianne Potter (Julia Roberts), a food critic who is still in love with her past college friend, Michael O'Neal (Dermot Mulroney), who is about to marry Kimmy (Cameron Diaz), a wide-eyed, naïve architecture student. Potter and O'Neal, who had a one-month fling in college, have promised to each other that, if by the end of their 28 years, they do not find someone to marry, they would tie the knot with each other. So, the movie, as the genre calls for, is set up for many knotty behavioural and narrative complications — especially given Kim's basic innocence when she invites the calculating Julianne to be the maid-of-honour for her forthcoming wedding. Julianne is devastated by Michael's decision to marry Kimmy. She goes to Chicago to try out her zany, desperate schemes as a home-breaker. Often, Hogan's assured grasp of the romantic comedy centres around Julianne's schemes and miscalculated conclusions. In her desperation to renew Michael's affections for her, Julianne reminds one of Chuck Jones' hapless Coyote in the Roadrunner cartoon series. From a spectator's point-of-view, we can see the constant mistaken identities, the flawed information that the protagonists have of each other and their motives, and the ironic resonances of their terribly complicated lives. The genre, amongst other things, speaks of the romantic comedy centres’ epic fail. Characteristically, Hogan's understanding of this (on a thematic, gestural and stylistic level) colours our knowledge of the three...
George performs a vital function in My Best Friend’s Wedding as Julianne’s confidante and, as such, provides much quirkier humour to the entire movie. This is especially foregrounded in the aforementioned, highpoint table sequence. George comes to Chicago because Julianne needs his help when she is at the end of her tether; things have not been going to plan at all.

Rupert Everett as George nearly steals the movie from Julia Roberts, who is quite good as the scheming but good-hearted Julianne. In fact, Roberts’ subtle and energetic performance carries across the right kind of miscueous lightness that her role demands. She is quite unpredictably convincing throughout the movie’s duration. Everett also gives an appealing, highly-tuned performance as he camps up his role and its well-defined generic contours. Both performers, when they are together, provide the movie with a welcomed performative alchemy. Contrary to expectation, My Best Friend’s Wedding is arguably – and thankfully – not one of the more predictable, superficial exercises in a feel-good romantic comedy or its overlapping comedy of manners. This is not to say that the movie does not at times exhibit the more accustomed generic features of such tiresome movie fare of the ‘90s – it does up to a small degree – but, moreover, it is a well-directed, written and performed movie that features the director’s considerable, emerging comedic and musical talent.

CAREER GIRLS


Shooting on this sharp, tough little film finished a few days before Mike Leigh was in Cannes to win the Palme d’Or for Secrets and Lies. The film will interest Leigh’s fans, though it’s more problematic than most of his recent cinema.

Career Girls opens with a 30-year-old, shy Annie (Lynda Steadman) sitting alone on an English train as it speeds through the countryside. We cut to her arriving at London and being met by her trendy, outspoken friend, Hannah (Kate Winslet), the two women awkward and uneasy with one another after a separation of six years. They drive back to Hannah’s apartment, and gradually their characters unfold, with the differences that separate them more apparent.

Cut to a scene where a red-haired, nervous young woman knocks on a door in search of share accommodation, the camera lingering on the side of her face which is disfigured by eczema. But the young woman who answers the door is even more uptight than the caller, and speaks in short manic outbursts which are either catatonic or drug-induced, or both. It seems impossible that these two women would ever get on, except for the fact that the other flatmate, Claire (Kate Byers), is relatively “normal”.

Then Career Girls cuts back to the older women, whose relative sophistication makes a stark contrast. They both work, and Hannah has a cute flat with a work desk and a fax, and the country girl is naïvely impressed. Annie is only visiting for the weekend, and it’s taken her six whole years to revisit London and Hannah.

The film continues to cut back and forth between the two stories, and then suddenly we realize that the two older women are the two younger women six years earlier – their hair colour, their voices, their clothes, and their mannerisms have changed, and we only just see the resemblance! Then the older Hannah takes Annie out on the town in search of a new apartment to purchase, and the two halves of the story gradually become whole as the past begins to impinge more directly on the present.

Some of the best, whacky scenes in Career Girls’ now follow. Hannah and Annie walk in on a wealthy businessman, who shows them his apartment for sale, while he’s dressed in a white towelling robe and downing glasses of wine. Their next encounter is equally funny and absurd, but this time a smart real estate agent turns out to be a man Hannah has fucked and Annie had the hots for six years ago. But Adrian (Joe Tucker) can’t remember either of them, and adds the inevitable insult to injury.

The reunion of Annie and Hannah isn’t easy, especially when their weekend begins to dredge up some really unpleasant memories concerning their flatmate, Ricky (Mark Benton).

Mike Leigh has gathered together a small ensemble of actors for this film, where they have maximum impact. Lynda Steadman, who plays Annie, appeared as a lead in Channel Four’s Hearts and Minds, and has directed and performed in her own play at the Edinburgh Festival. Karin Cartlidge, who plays Hannah, was Sophie in Asked which earned her the best European actor award in 1993. Mark Benton has acted for the Royal National Theatre and Joe Tucker has been in Pie in the Sky and The Bill.

Leigh films this modern comedy of errors in his usual, naturalistic tones, which sometimes seems at odds with the contents. Even the flashbacks have a warm inner glow, which makes them more unsettling, especially as the young Annie and Hannah are so hopelessly dysfunctional. And their
student friend, Ricky, twitches even more than they do, and finally turns up six years later as a person with a real mental disability. Career Girls does fool the audience for at least the first five minutes, where we just don't realize that these two stories concern the same women. But you feel hoodwinked, rather than a witness to any real revelation about character and life on the edge.

Perhaps Leigh's method of intensely workshopping scripts with actors may have seriously let him down on this film. Steedman's and Cartlidge's acting as the younger characters just seems pushed to the limit of mannered, nervous twitches and eccentricity. Without any real study of psychological understanding, I couldn't help but feel that I was watching contrived performances that lacked authenticity.

Mike Leigh could do well to absorb more of America's approach to method acting, so that his characters and stories are researched as well as workshoped. Then, Annie's and Natha's stories could have been poignantly funny, and the real potential of this film could have really touched us.

— Margaret Smith

**DOING TIME FOR PATSY CLINE**


Director Chris Kennedy's latest film adds to the current crop of similar-themed Australian movies. *Doing Time for Patsy Cline* is a mélange of road movie, amour fou, prison flick and cautionary tale of that his characters and stories are researched as well as workshoped. Then, Annie's and Natha's stories could have been poignantly funny, and the real potential of this film could have really touched us.

Matt Day plays Ralph, a clean-cut, naïve, outback farm boy, who fancies himself as a country-western star in the making. His plans to make real his dream, by going to Nashville, USA, are waylaid by the arrival in a new Jag of a student friend, Ricky, twitches even more than they do, and finally turns up six years later as a person with a real mental disability. Career Girls does fool the audience for at least the first five minutes, where we just don't realize that these two stories concern the same women. But you feel hoodwinked, rather than a witness to any real revelation about character and life on the edge.

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— Margaret Smith
in review
Films
continued

western singer’s dream – playing the Grand Ole Opry – Boyd is killed in the classic music legend method – a plane crash. Ralph realizes that what he has lived his dream and it didn’t leave him satisfied. He had over-looked that he had everything he needed back home, so he makes the decision to leave Nashville, fame and Patsy, in a grand romant­ic, Cos Cob ­lens-style gesture.

While this method of inter­spersed the Nashville story with the Australian story often creates the most pleasurable moments of the film – the rise of Patsy and Ralph, the irony of Boyd’s cruel but continued

Films

road movies have always been favourite genre for writer-director Bill Bennett. The thrill of the ‘car as crucible’ into which he places characters and applies the heat has long been the filmmaker’s turn-on.

It may be partly by product of his documentary background, the savouring of the alchemy of unexpected compounds released by the chemical, emotional, social or psychological interaction of characters confined in the motor capsule. It may be the release of speed which allows him the freedom to turn up the ante, or its stark contrast to the pervasive kaleidoscope of landscape – the rare, momentary savoring of the alchemy of unex­pectedness. Bennett’s dramatically-horrifying film is the m urderer? As Bennett turns up the heat on a sugar rush (as does Miranda Otto’s singing) – there was a sense that the classic country-and-western tunes weren’t given their own ‘role’, and that their lyrical strength was lost.

Ultimately, the film doesn’t quite conjure up the pathos and bittersweet humour embodied in many of the great country-and-western songs, although it is an admirable attempt to mix charac­ter, genre and classic storylines into an entertaining brew. 

KISS OR KILL


It may be partly by product of his documentary background, the savouring of the alchemy of unexpected compounds released by the chemical, emotional, social or psychological interaction of characters confined in the motor capsule. It may be the release of speed which allows him the freedom to turn up the ante, or its stark contrast to the pervasive kaleidoscope of landscape – the rare, momentary control or victory over the nature that feeds his cinematic adrenaline. It may be because it is one way to pack in as much of the chameleon, empty, mystical Australian landscape to which, he believes, few directors apart from Peter Weir have done justice, or the anxiety that the road movie engenders, encouraging an auteur to rev up his film language with hand-held cam­eras, unusual angles and jump-cut editing. Whether it’s one or all of these reasons, with a road movie Bill Bennett is like a kid in a toy shop.

In Backlash (1986) and Spider & Rose (1994), he revelled in the energy and chaos unleashed by throwing together disparate charac­ters (a policewoman and her charges, an eccentric septuagenarian and her young, hip ambulance driver-attendant) on their physical – and metaphorical – journeys. Kiss or Kill presents a different scenario as Bennett turns up the heat on a young fugitive couple, Nikki (Frances O’Connor) and Al (Matt Day).

They’re not exactly Bonnie and Clyde. Rather than Thelma and Louise, their life on the run begins – almost – by default when one of the rich men she scams in a common pattern of pick-up, drug and rob dies (on top of her) from the usual dose of two tablets. Unable to resist departure without taking loot, Nik and Al grab his briefcase with its uneasy cargo, a video doc­umenting paedophiliac activities of local football celebrity, Zipper Doyle (Barry Langrish), evidently intended as blackmail material.

In no time the duo are on the run, not only from police – who are brilliantly portrayed and at times drooly spoofed by Chris Haywood (Detective Hummer) and Andrew S. Gilbert (longtime partner Detective Creak), a kind of Aussified Colombo and pal (a breakfast episode between them is one of the movie’s scene-stealers) – but also Zipper, when the video’s con­tents are discovered. The three strands interweave in the most unexpected ways.

But while Bennett pursues the chase with some excitement and slightly-funny encounters en route, his main interest is the intellectual underpinning of the pair’s psychologi­cal cargo. Nik and Al aren’t just carefree, wild, couple-on-the-run: ostensibly, they travel light but are loaded down with emo­tional baggage; hers revealed in the film’s dramatically-horrifying opening moments – which form a recurrent motif – when a little girl she witnesses the dousing and setting alight of her mother by a man. Nik’s distrust and hatred of men, previously an incentive of their scam, now turns into a hazard as a trail of corpses follows the couple’s trail. As Al’s Achilles’ heel, his violent temper (‘his short fuse’) is gradually revealed, we, they and the police are left wondering: Who is the murderer?

The moral complexities are fur­ther compounded by the strongly individualistic cameos of their vic­tims – all kindly disposed towards the couple: the womanizing but cheery hotel owner, Stan (superbly played by Max Cullen); the eccentric artists-jewellers, Adler Jones (Barry Otto in another powerful vignette) and wife (Jennifer Clift). It takes a flamboyant Aboriginal tracker (here again Bennett works against stereotype) to piece the threads together.

O’Connor and Day shed the frothy light-hearted image as high­spirited uni students of Emma-Kate Croghan’s Love and Other Cata­strophes, the film that launched their careers, to depict the much darker, more complex characters that evolved through Bennett’s leg­endary improvisational approach. However diverting the perfor-
rmanes of the minor characters, the real heartbeat of this film is pumped by the intensity and volatile nature of its fugitive couple. They are rebellious thrill-seekers, and this escapade is to test their love to its limits. In a tightrope act, O'Connor and Day have to bond with the audience yet keep each other and us guessing on this emotional roller coaster. "How well do you ever know anyone?" asks Bennett. How much of a secret inner-life do we consciously or otherwise keep to ourselves? However predictable and desperate their plight and, as close as they come to suspecting the other is the killer, the most touching element of the relationship between these two lovers with a history of petty crime is their tender love for each other and willingness to sacrifice themselves (by confessing to the crimes) for the other. It's a couple joined at the hip, together thriving on life on the run. The chemistry between them fuels the film's uneven, at times frenetic, tempo, veering from vulnerable to manic, gentle to dynamic, a chameleon to the very last frames of the film. Bennett revels in that unpredictability, shirking the moral and emotional catharsis of other, especially American, road movies. After his Hollywood foray, Two If By Sea (which this writer must make an unhyp confession of quite enjoying), Bennett revels in this relatively low-budget $2.6 million surreal psychological thriller in breaking convention and exploring the form, and in eschewing traditional uses of the music soundtrack that's commonly a signature of the genre. The director wanted no distractions from the film's heartbeat, no artifice distilling the backout's sounds, but instead the spontaneous nature of performance, of shooting from the hip and jump-cut editing (expertly handled by Henry Dangar).

Camera angles jolt and surprise: obtuse or low, Ozu-like, hand-held, virtually an organic extension of the duet's unpredictable lives. The raw editing style - quick cutting from frenetic staccato rhythms to more languid beat - keeps the visuals pumping through at an irregular rate, creating an intimacy with the duo's life on the run.

A prominent feature, or rather character, is the ever-present kaleidoscopic landscape - uniformly flat but constantly changing in colour, texture, ambience. White sandy stretches of beach intersperse with dark bushland, scrub and rock, as Bennett and director of photography Malcolm McCalluch reveal the awesome, disquieting power and beauty of the Nullarbor Plain, the town of Ceduna, Booka west of Adelaide, and nearby Streaky Bay on the Great Australian Bight and Port Augusta. Yet it's a more varied, brighter landscape than depicted in many backout films, with an exuberant life of its own resonating through the rich blues and greens of the production design, which starkly contrast with the muted interiors. A MARY COLBERT

A Detective Cream (Andrew Bovell) and Nikki. Kiss or Kill.

Video

UN DIVAN À NEW YORK (A COUCH IN NEW YORK)1

DIRECTED BY CHANTAL AKERMAN. PRODUCERS: RÉGINE KONIGER, JEAN-LUC DEMIÈRES. SCREENWRITERS: CHANTAL AKERMAN, JEAN-LOUIS BENOT. DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY: DIETRICH LEHMANN. MUSIC: SONIA WILDER-ATHINEUM. SOUND: PIERRE MORET, GÉRARD LAMPS. EDITOR: CLARE BRYSTON. CAST: WILLIAM HURT (Henry), JULIETTE BINOCH (Béatrice), STEPHANIE BUTTE (Anne), BARBARA GARRICK (Lorette), PAUL GUPTON (Denis), RICHARD JENINS (Campbell).

AUSTRALIAN DISTRIBUTOR: ROADSIDE HOME VIDEO. 35MM. FRANCE-BELGIUM-US. 1996. 100 MIN.

At first glance, and particularly to anyone who is unfamiliar with Chantal Akerman's previous films, Akerman's Un Divan à New York may seem like a strangely-pale, and even clunky version of a typical American romantic comedy from the past few years. It takes to an extreme the principle of a film like Sleepless in Seattle (Nora Ephron, 1993) where lovers who are destined to be together spend most of the movie apart, or, even when they are together, they somehow miss each other, don't really relate to each other openly, honestly, directly.

Un Divan à New York also uses another staple device of romantic comedy: it's a film about the comparison and the clash of different cultures and their manners, like Lawrence Kasdan's French Kiss (1995). (The two films share a delightful scat song, Poole Conte's "Via Con Me.") The narrative set-up of Akerman's film is simple and intriguing: a Parisian dancer, Béatrice (Juliette Binoche), and a New York psychoanalyst, Henry (William Hurt), exchange apartments. She lives in the bustling, noisy, colourful, run-down, very multicultural district of Belleville; he lives in a vast, sterile, hi-tech New York apartment. She has a veritable army of lovers after her; and he leads a sheltered, loveless, even solipsistic existence.

For a long time, the film just switches these characters, and watches them exploring their new environments. But then the plot lurches forward and keeps zigzagging in sometimes surreal and airy ways. First, Béatrice starts treating, to anyone who is unfamiliar with Chantal Akerman's previous films, Akerman's Un Divan à New York may seem like a strangely-pale, and even clunky version of a typical American romantic comedy from the past few years. It takes to an extreme the principle of a film like Sleepless in Seattle (Nora Ephron, 1993) where lovers who are destined to be together spend most of the movie apart, or, even when they are together, they somehow miss each other, don't really relate to each other openly, honestly, directly.

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Akerman does not entirely reject traditional characterization, or conventional paths of character development in her films. She does not reject traditional narrative or storytelling techniques. Whether Akerman is filming the gestures and performances, or recording various dances by Pina Bausch's troupe (Un jour, Pina m'a demandé, 1984), documenting hair raising tableaux of attraction and repulsion that have a similar element, fiery, irrational emotional logic. Un Divan à New York, too, is about a love that has virtually no reason to it, that scarcely needs any pretexts to be born (that might just as well, if conditions were different, never have been born).

When Akerman's marvellous triangular romance, Nuit et Jour (1991), was shown at the Venice Film Festival, a prominent juror complained publicly that her way of telling a love story seemed to deliberately leave out exactly the scenes you would normally expect in such a story: the turning points, the moments of decision, recognition, revelation. And even some of Akerman's fans sometimes think she is better as a kind of static portraitist, rather than someone who can relay a developing story of evolving characters and emotions across time. Personally, I think that criticism is nonsense. Akerman has her own special, individual way with plots and characters, a way which moves and feels not quite all there yet, who are becoming themselves, who are not quite all there yet, who are somewhat unformed. Her most directly autobiographical film, called Portrait of a Young Girl at the end of the 60s in Brussels (1994), captures very beautifully such a quality of being unformed and potential when one is young. But perhaps Akerman's characters will stay unformed for the rest of their lives.

The relationships that happen between unformed individuals are strange, floating inscrutable events—inscrutable even to those who are inside those relationships. Love, in an Akerman film, is always, almost literally, a falling in love, a sudden trip or descent of collision, where the spark of desire, the erotic or romantic connection is absurdly immediate. One of Akerman's most scintillating and haunting films, Toute une nuit (All Night Long, 1982), shows a series of experiences and encounters that occur to a wide range of people between nightlife and daybreak. In one unforgettable vignette, two people in a bar happen to get up from their respective tables at the same moment. As their paths cross, these two strangers suddenly fall into each other's arms in a wild embrace, and they dance to the sad tune that's playing on the jukebox; they dance like they've been wrapped up in each other forever.

It is little wonder that Akerman made, shortly after, a film that recorded various dances by Pina Bausch's troupe (Un jour, Pina m'a demandé, 1984), documenting hair raising tableaux of attraction and repulsion that have a similar element, fiery, irrational emotional logic. Un Divan à New York, too, is about a love that has virtually no reason to it, that scarcely needs any pretexts to be born (that might just as well, if conditions were different, never have been born).
Frank Moorehouse

She says, "The author is currently sojourning at his Tuscan home.

The use of the words "currently" and "sojourning" are wimpy words used to suggest a leisurely occupation in foreign parts free of any considerations about what might be happening back here in Australia.

The use of the words "Tuscan home" also implicates David. The word Tuscan is redolent with exotic superiority. And isn't 'Australia' the only 'home' an Australian can have?

Another specimen from the Sun-Herald: "Artist Arthur Boyd says while he may spend much of his time overseas, there should be no doubting where his heart lies. The Australian of the Year defended [note the word defended] his long stays in Britain [...] 'I do live here, I just like to go away from time to time,' he said."

The headline of the piece says "Boyd's art is in the right place."

The punishment, of course, comes from those Little Piggies Who Stayed Home.

Those who suffer from the Little Piggy Who Stayed Home syndrome experience a profound sense of disease on reading about expatriate fellow nationals: Are they having a better life? Are they meeting famous and wonderful people who will advance their career and enrich their life while I am back here working away in the blazing Australian sun?

Further, the sufferer is then gripped by an uncontrollable rage that the absent fellow national, by living in a desirable foreign environment, is committing a cultural treason; the expatriate has escaped from the limitations of Australian life; that the fellow national, that is, is not back here putting up with the hell of it all on the frontier.

This rage I think shows up in my next specimen: an advertisement for the Australian Council offering funding which specifies that the recipient "must spend most of their time in Australia".

You Will Remain Seated: Do Not Attempt To Leave this country until it has come to a complete stop. This Little Piggy may have roast beef if she stays home.

There is, of course, the Little Piggies Who Go Away and then come back crying, "Wee Wee Wee", all the way home.

Those Australians who have chosen to live abroad and make their careers there are, upon returning to Australia on a visit, made to swear forms of loyalty oaths before they are received, applauded or rewarded.

The most famous loyalty oath was written by the late Peter Allen who, every time he visited, had to stand up in public and sing, "Wherever I wander, wherever I roam, I still call Australia home".

Expatriates such as Robert Hughes, Clive James and Germaine Greer, who can't, sing, are made to say in news interviews, "Australia has changed so much since the 1950s - it is not the same place which I fled back then. Circus Oz is fantastic, you are making fabulous films, and the restaurants are really world-class."

But things are changing. More often these days, in interviews and at dinner parties, I hear people remark that ideally they would like to be able to say, "I share my time between my apartment in L.A. and a humpy in the Flinders Ranges."

I have a warning: it is still not acceptable to say that "As soon as I can arrange it, I am getting the hell out of here for good. And I'm never coming back."

Seriously, we must give those entering the arts the chance to develop either here or where they feel they need to go. And it is the individual who must make these decisions, not funding bodies or restrictive social pressures.

I lived away for much of the last ten years, principally in France. After attending the Cannes Film Festival, I invited a party of brilliant young Australian filmmakers up to the chateau where I lived.

The young filmmakers were seated around me in the great hall of the chateau, drinking their Perrier waters, and pressing me for stories of the old days in the film industry.

I felt like George Smiley from Le Carre's The Secret Pilgrim, where now-retired George Smiley tells the young spies how it was in the Cold War when you could kill people if you felt you should.

In the old days the film industry was like that.

I cleaned my glasses on the bow tie of my dinner suit which I'd undone to put them at their ease, although they all seemed surprised and bemused that bow ties undid and were tied. I noticed some of them came over later and had a closer look at my bow tie.

The young filmmakers asked about surviving in hard times. I told them how in the early days, during one of the tough years for Cliffedge Productions, we had to fall back to living on our Frequent Flyer Points.

If we could have cashed our Frequent Flyer Points, we would have been rich. As it was, Cliffedge had to gain breathing space financially by living on the Frequent Flyer Points. Off we went First Class, in what we called the Big Restaurant in the Sky, with only our Frequent Flyer Points to see us through. Going out into the world on a smile and a shoeshine, as Willy Loman says in Death of A Salesman.

I remember once that we'd landed at Frankfurt airport. We stayed seated because we couldn't afford stopovers or to leave the plane. The cabin attendant came to where we were seated and told us that we had to vacate the aircraft, explaining that the plane had to be cleaned and serviced.

We explained to the cabin attendant that we preferred to stay on the plane. "The 100,000 kilometre service only takes forty-eight hours. We'll stay on board."

She went to the chief steward and we saw them whispering. The chief steward came down the aisle to where we were seated, both reading the single copy of Variety. She tossed us the keys to the aircraft galley and said "It's your plane."

So while the plane was having its engines stripped down in the maintenance hangar and going through the steam cleaner, we stayed on board and we watched in-flight movies. This was before the big breaks came for Cliffedge Productions.

"You are all", I said, sipping my Cognac, my eyes twinkling, "a much happier cultural and commercial blend than we were in my day. In our day, we worried about whether we were being 'too commercial' or whether, on the other hand, we were being 'too arty'. We had not realized that we were falling into a trap. We were making an erroneous description of the 'economy' of art by using this distinction."

Looking around the young filmmakers there in the chateau, I said, "Yes", surveying their determined Australian faces lit by the warm glow of the big open fire, "we were learning that the whole of the world is the 'economy' of the arts. The 'market-place', so called, for the arts is everywhere and everything. There is no distinction between the public and private sector."

Just to conclude, I did a script version for the film On Our Selection (not the one that was used), that little perfection of mine lies perfectly in a producer's drawer.

While working on the Steele Rudd, Dad and Dave material, I was interested that Dave Rudd is described as being "often reduced to silence". You could question Dave in an effort to get him to talk, but Dave's usual answer to a question was "It all depends."

That is, when faced with the malaise of reality, there are infinite imponderables and ponderables facing us when deciding whether to answer any question put to us. Whether to ever speak again. Dave Rudd seemed to understand that.

In place of having answers we have storytelling. Storytelling in all its forms. Yarning, even the most favourite of all, recounting at the tea trolley what one said on television the night before, is one way of having something to say in the face of the malaise of the real.

I think that it is the act of making and the audience's taking-in of the story, the relationship with the storyteller, that is the most stabilizing thing we have in the world, in all cultures.

Storytelling is a way of breaking the silence but, at the same time, every story is paradoxically an addition to the seething real and its malaise, to the labyrinth - but in a calming and stabilizing way.

The point of this is that all story writing does not have to be transgressive, or against the system, or against the grain. All storytelling is not about challenging commonly-held assumptions, or bourgeois prejudices.

We need this certainly. But there is also art and entertainment which stabilizes and gives respite. In the absence of Big Answers to Big Questions and in the absence at present of Major Ideologies which answer everything, we have the ever-renewing delight of the never-ending making of stories.

You are all involved as storytellers in the greatest art form of the twentieth century. Continue to try to out-talk The Monster. Or perhaps to change The Monster. Remember, all interaction brings change to those who interact - even to The Monster. At Cliffedge Films we always said: "Try to make money and art. If you can't make money and make art. If you can't make art, make money."

Good luck.
Yes, I read the novel and Polansimo before that.

As an actor you are looking for any clues you can find – detective work. If there is a book that the script came from you have to read it, you have to see what you can get out of it: mood, back story and things that may not even be in the film. They kick off your imagination and broaden the character, I think. You try to get stuff from anywhere that you can.

**AND YOU’VE JUST FINISHED THE DEAD LETTER OFFICE [JOHN RUANE].**

It is quite different to other things I have done, somehow closer to myself. Alice is a complex character, but she didn’t feel like a character that needed a particular physicality. It was working from a different place again, more from myself, I think, which can be more scary actually. You think, “I’m not doing anything here.”

It was harder playing this character after playing characters who have a particular way of moving, of speaking, with all sorts of idiosyncrasies. **DO YOU GET AFRAID ABOUT WHAT YOU REVEAL IN YOUR CHARACTER IF YOU ARE DRAWING ON YOURSELF?**

I don’t mind revealing myself, but I think film basically is its best when it is magic and things aren’t all worked out. You come in with a lot of work done on the character that basically lets things happen. But the best things are the things you didn’t expect to say or do, but when it happens it is so right that it just hits you in the stomach. You get nervous about trusting in that magic, about just trying to let things happen. Those moments in film are very rare, but that’s what I strive for. It is hard because it is a matter of letting go, really.

The work beforehand is very much about grabbing a hold of things, anything you can get a hold of. When you come on set, it is much more a matter of letting go of things, letting things happen. **ESPECIALLY TO SEE WHAT HAPPENS TO THE OTHER ACTORS?**

Everytime I get myself into a corner and make a mess of things, get really strung out if a scene is not working, it is always because I’ve lost contact with the other actor. It is when I spiral off into my own thing, worrying that I’m not going to get there. As soon as you turn around and see the other actor, it all falls into place. It could be a stupid thing to say, but people should realize that it is easy to get concerned about yourself and to lose contact.

**THAT SENSITIVITY PROBABLY CARRIES OVER INTO YOUR LIFE, AS WELL. IS IT HARD TO CUT OFF AND BE NORMAL WHEN YOU’RE NOT WORKING?**

There are all sorts of things about being an actor that stop you from being normal. There is the fact – which is sort of appalling, I think – that when things are really terrible, when I’m having an emotional breakdown, part of me is thinking, “This is very interesting. I must remember this, catalogue this.”

Sometimes it is good because you think, “Even though I’m going through terrible things, maybe it has a purpose. It is going to help me portray somebody else at some time.”

I get terribly guitty all the time about not doing the right thing, and I do sometimes get very sensitive to people’s moods... over-sensitive. **WHAT ARE YOU DOING NEXT?**

From *The Thin Red Line* [Terence Mallick] I go straight to *Irma Vep* [Olivier Assayas]. The other generational figure is an ageing gangster in search of the teenager’s father, who believes the best way to find the father is through the son. In the film’s final, chilling scene, the boy shoots the gangster after he pleads for his life by advocating a series of petty scams. They are the same scams the boy has been using throughout the film – to ultimately tragic effect. As the boy screams out while pumping the fatal bullets into the gangster, “Why do you make us live filthy lives like yours?”

Yang may well have a good case for blaming the fathers (and the mothers who exhort them on so as to pay for Chanel and designer chairs), but where is there a sense of a generation who will act less immorally, and not devolve further into self-pitying and impotent acts of violence?

On the same day as this father-son outcry was Jeni Thornley’s *To the Other Shore*, a highly-personal essay on psychoanalysis and maternity. (This will be discussed in a later issue by someone better positioned to discuss how well this poetic meditation evokes the sensations and issues of motherhood.)

On this critic’s final was the much ballyhooed *Irma Vep* [Olivier Assayas]. Others have had their positive say in these pages, but it is hard to agree. Feature films about filmmaking are invariably dull (Goddard’s and a few others’ aside), but this is a notably uninvetive and tedious one. Even the usually charismatic Maggie Cheung has little to do, except look sweet in a crisis. And when her character (also named Maggie Cheung) goes jewel-robbing to get more into the part of Irma Vep, not even Cheung can convince us this is anything other than a lame grab for a good idea.

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**CINEMA PAPERS • OCTOBER 1997**

**22 Miranda Otto**

*Love Serenade* was a fantastic experience, but I was depressed as hell the whole way through it. It sort of depends on the film, I think. *Patsy Cline* is a very fun film. Maybe Richard and Matt have a much better sense of humour and a better balance in their lives than I do, and maybe it rubbed off on me for once.

**WAS IT HARD PREPARING FOR YOUR PART IN THE WELL?**

I had a very strong response to the script as soon as I read it. It sort of began on me automatically, whereas with other things I skirt around and think for ages about where to start. We had a two-week rehearsal which was very good; we went through a lot, talked about the characters. I like to have the space to talk, to rehearse. It developed out of that.

**HAVING SUCH A YOUNG DIRECTOR MUST HAVE BEEN A HELP FOR YOU BECAUSE SHE IS NOT THAT MUCH OLDER THAN YOU.**

Eight days older than me. Sam [Samantha Lang] puts herself in the characters, I think. As a director, she’s very emotionally-based; she thinks of herself in those roles as well. I felt that she understood Katherine from the inside. She is very strong and indefatigable, she keeps going and that is what you really need from a director. You need someone who is constantly there, strong, always having ideas. She doesn’t settle for second-best.

She pushes on, even if it’s using a lot of film, until she gets what she thinks is right. I knew from the audition that it was going to be a really good experience with her. I felt we had similar ideas about what we liked in film and in performance.

**IT WAS YOUR SECOND TIME WITH DOP Mandy Walker. IS THERE ANY DIFFERENCE TO YOU WHEN YOU ARE WORKING WITH FEMALE DIRECTORS AND FEMALE DOPs?**

One thing that I’ve gradually felt from all of the women I’ve worked with is that they have a great eye for detail. I don’t know if that is just the women I’ve worked with or whether that is a general thing with women. They are very good with the detail of the film.

But, you know, every director is completely different. The women I’ve worked with have been completely different, as the men have been. It is not like all women are the same and all men are the same, and men and women are different. Tabloids like to put it that way!

**Did you read Elizabeth Jolley’s novel as well as the script?**

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**11 Brisbane Film Festival**

The people of Yang’s film are reptilian, uncarring and cruel, evoking no sympathy or sense of potential redemption – not that Yang would agree. Despite all the horrors he so convincingly evokes, Yang still believes in an essence that can perhaps be uncorrupted.

Yang blames the malaise on the older generation, represented by two characters in the film. One is a teenage hoodlum’s father, who hides out after scamming millions from a chain of kindergartens: “It is so easy to con three-year-olds.” He finds a late-middle clarity while living with a young schoolteacher and commits suicide, as if to acknowledge that as the one remaining pure act in a totally fouled world.

The other generational figure is an ageing gangster in search of the teenager’s father, who believes the best way to find the father is through the son. In the film’s final, chilling scene, the boy shoots the gangster after he pleads for his life by advocating a series of petty scams. They are the same scams the boy has been using throughout the film – to ultimately tragic effect. As the boy screams out while pumping the fatal bullets into the gangster, “Why do you make us live filthy lives like yours?”

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As a stunned Blake Murdoch (Hollywood Reporter) remarked at the end, the only interesting aspect about this film is how it managed to generate so much hype.

But that is not an appropriate image to finish a report on Brisbane, because this year the Festival delivered more than it promised and is an event to be revisited and followed with pleasure.

by Paul Kalina

Having witnessed the spectacle of Agnès Varda berating a cinema manager for not displaying posters of her own and Jacques Demy’s films at the 1992 Brisbane Film Festival (there was indeed nothing in the cinema foyer to indicate that a film festival was taking place), it was encouraging to see not only enough promotional materials to entice Varda back, but an overall sense of enthusiasm and confidence on the part of both organizers and audiences at the latest BiFF.

Whilst a 1925 film of J. M. Barrie’s play, A Kiss for Cinderella, unrelievedly lived musical accompaniment at the Festival’s principal venue, a less optimistic vision of the modern world was the flavour of two video-shot documentaries at the Metway Theatre. Shaheed is best described as a conventional, made-for television documentary; however, it is distinguished by its frank and unemotive narration as it deals with the highly-topical issue of suicide bombings in the Middle East. Methodically and rigorously, director and writer Dan Setton explains the rudimentary backboard technology of the detonating devices favoured by the growing army of ‘shaheed’. The centrepiece of his inquiry comprises interviews with a Palestinian presently languishing in gaol in Israel having survived his suicide raid due to a malfunctioning trigger. His account of carrying out his mission and waking up in ‘paradise’, only to discover that the besieged city to visit the birthplace of Sarajevo, Exile in Sarajevo. A seamless blend of a video diary, cinéma vérité and essay film, Bosnian-born, Melbourne-based actor and theatre director Cambis recounts his various journeys to Sarajevo between 1992 and 1995. On his first trip to the besieged city to visit the birthplace of his mother, he was injured and hospitalized, but eventually found himself compellingly drawn into the lives of proud and idealistic Sarajevans, whose true plight, he discovered, was vastly different to the story being told, and dutifully rehashed, to the western media by the UN-controlled ‘peace forces’. Amongst the friends Cambis found there was Alma Sahbaz, who joined the crew as a sound recordist but later took over from the cameraman who returned to Australia.

The images captured in their cameras are nothing less than terrifying. As one grimly watches the aftermath of a rocket attack at the open-air market at which scores of people are slaughtered, one is jolted into the realization of the blithé insensitivity with which the popular media purport to convey human suffering. Thankfully, Exile in Sarajevo is not a grandstanding sermon on how we armchair spectators ought to behave more ‘thoughtfully’. Rather, the images and what they convey are turned into a moving testimony of the filmmakers’ profound conviction: that at the twilight of the 20th century, Western civilization has all but died.

The diary film aspect of this film traverses some bleak terrain, not least of which is Cambis’ ambivalence about the very act of filming such events. It comes off not as a case of having your cake and eating it, nor as vapidness, but a fitting reflection of the despair into which the filmmakers inevitably sink as they encounter such suffering and injustice.

Exile in Sarajevo is an uncontestable evidence that documentary filmmaking in Australia is as alive, relevant and vibrant as ever. Those puntids fond of decrying the death of the documentary and the censorious politics of funding organizations could learn a lesson here.

On the documentary front, the Festival provided a rare opportunity to see a 35mm projection of Frances Calvert’s Cracks in the Mask, a 50-minute film that is most likely to find its home on television. Cracks in the Mask also introduced the year’s most unsettlingly appealing movie hero in the form of Ephraim Bani, a Torres Strait Islander who sets off with his wife to visit a handful of European museums that house numerous artefacts ‘appropriated’ from Torres Strait Islands by various colonial regimes. Calvert’s arresting film is, at one level, a droll fish-out-of-water comedy, as the soft-spoken and wise Bani engages with museum curators spouting forth the latest academic terminologies. At another, it is a fascinating inquiry into the philosophy of museums as guardians of culture, in particular those acting on behalf of people who have been forced to forfeit the right to protect their own.

Sadly, many in the audience met the curators’ explanations and self-justifications with smug derision. Few, it would appear, were prepared to take seriously the philosophical pursuits they articulated (with admittedly varying degrees of success), or to consider the extent to which they tactfully admitted the ethical limitations of their profession when asked what they would do if they received a formal request to return the objects to Bani’s community.

This year’s Festival featured a strand of films on “New Generation Japanese Independent Filmmakers”. Suwa Nobuhiro (2 Duo) and Kawase Naomi (Suzaku, winner of the Camera d’Or at the 1997 Cannes Film Festival) presented their films and were the subjects of a Forum chaired by Chris Berry on new independent filmmaking in Japan (an article on this topic will be published in a forthcoming issue of Cinema Papers).

The forum offered some interesting insights into filmmakers and the current wave of films. Most notably, both directors vehemently denied having any overt concern with social or political issues, but only a steadfast interest in their and their collaborators’ inner, personal lives. Unlike the previous generation of Japanese filmmakers, they did not learn filmmaking through studio apprenticeships or formal training. There was also ample mention of one “Sento San”, a leading producer in Japan who tries out first-time directors by leaving them to their own devices on low-budget trysts!

Easily the most polished and accomplished film in this section of the programme was Labyrinth of Dreams, whose director, Isito Sogo, is best known for Angel Dust and August in the Water. Perfectly shot in 35mm black and white, and designed as much around its spare sound effects as its monochromatic images, this tale of doomed love between a bus conductor and driver is astutely mannered and stylized.

The experimental feature Heaven-6 Box, on the other hand, harks back to the traditions of the German avant garde and the city films of the 1920s. Director Oki Hirokuni was commissioned by the city of Kochi to make a film to celebrate the opening of the new museum of modern art. As the programme notes state, “No one could find their way around Kochi with the aid of this film.” With no narration and only an industrial sound-track to accompany the kaleidoscopic, overlapping images, the film is a portrait of moods, of random sights, of house guests and passing faces on the streets of ‘our town’.

Apart from Muhjiong, the only other entry from Taiwan was Wang Tsai-Sheng executable A Cha-Cha for the Fugitive, which, with the arrival of the first plot point around the 60 minute mark, had this viewer rushing for the exit and pleading mercy from the barrage of television commercial clichés and pretentious ruminations on an avant garde dancer’s search for fulfilment in modern-day Taipei (he eventually opts for New York City instead).

The Indian film, Tunnu’s Tina, provided the perfect antidote to the pretense and narrative stasis of the former. Parmesh Kamdar makes his directorial debut in this enjoyable tragic-comedy which, while honouring many of the standard tenets of ‘Bollywood’ movie-making, strikes some cautionary notes about the callousness of Indian men and the harsh dynamics that are propelling India’s burgeoning middle classes. Though the deliberately-ambiguous ending isn’t quite as trenchant in its attack on bourgeois hypocrisy as one would have expected, the rest of this racy and often very funny film bears a realist edge that is quite at odds with the escapist entertainments of many Indian films.
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The Final Round-Up?

Can the technology of filmmaking go any further? Will Gold Coast CGI company Photon Stockman pull in the stragglers and unify the Australian industry? Barrie Smith investigates.

Computer Graphics Imaging, or CGI, is becoming many things to many people. To some DOPs it is a monster, willing and able to subsume their skills; to most editors it is merely another stage in the post-production process. To a few, ill-advised directors it's a new and expensive toy, just waiting to be deployed in the aim of saving the next flimsy film script.

But there is admitted conflict in the industry and a general lack of agreement as to whether computer manipulation of the filmed image is a 'good thing'.

But according to Dale Duguid, co-founder of Photon Stockman, a Warner Bros. MovieWorld-based company specializing in visual effects design and production for film and television drama, the conflict more closely resembles an ignorance with certain industry personnel.

Mountain to Mohammed

At the time of the interview, Duguid was based at Point Cook on Port Phillip Bay, heading a 12 - 15 person team of CGI operators, running on a 24-hour shift to make the great white whale a thing of absolute cinematic wonder!

The man from Photon sees part of his company's strategy is "to take the mountain to Mohammed", allowing the team's skills to be displayed "face on" to the director and the rest of the production team.

Duguid: What we have done in Melbourne is set up a full facility within the production office building and physically next door to the editor. An Ethernet cable runs through a hole in the wall, straight from our computers into their Avid. And we have a network of 3D computers, Silicon Graphic computers, with some Flint work stations – eventually we'll be getting an Onyx. We are hiring software and equipment through Melbourne-based supplier Future Reality.

We develop the concepts very thoroughly after taking a brief and storyboards from the director, beginning and finishing shots in a production-like process as they are shot. The editor gives us the principal elements with the timing – and a couple of days later he is given a master scene. So now we are basically online and the system works very well in a bilateral manner.

What Photon is trying to do is to recognize those concerns, insecurities, frustrations and make CGI work so accessible and obvious, by being part of the team and by being there, that those stigmas or inhibitions will go quite quickly and then everybody can get on with the job.

POV

From Dale Duguid's point of view, CGI work should not be placed "on a pedestal" or treated as "new magic". He sees a danger: if you tag something as "magic", people often "lumber you with unrealistic expectations or you find yourself having to deal with something that is impossible to fix."

He sees key crew, director, DOP and editor as "intelligent people", adding:

They have to be able to do such a complex job. They are also usually philosophical kinds of people who explore the boundaries. Initially, there is a little bit of reticence and caution because they have seen bad examples of digital effects in their careers and they fear it couldn't be that great on their project. But as soon as they start to see quality results and photo-realistic illusion you can't keep them out of the place. They see the potential and they want to be part of it. That's a great moment in the production when that happens.

Ethics

Asked how he views the ethics of his activities, requiring the creation of virtual actors (vactors), changing the elements of a scene, etc. Duguid is positive and sees his contribution to the filmmaking process as legitimate: On the issue of vactors, I think they have a good role to play – there have always been body doubles, and if vactors play that role then they haven't really affected the art form. I think it is a good development; even if it only saves the lives of one stunt man in the history of filmmaking, it has been a monumentally good thing – but maybe not good for the careers of some stunt men! But I also believe it is highly unlikely that any digital tool will totally replace any traditional component of filmmaking.

Time was ripe

Talk to Dale Duguid and you become aware that he is unusual in the industry – multi-skilled and a lateral thinker. Early on he wanted to write and direct films that would exploit the use of visual effects in order to realize them on Australian budgets. But very soon he discovered that Australia had no visual effects industry as such: Aussie films always had those clever individuals, but their talent wasn't easily managed or utilized, other than in impromptu situations by filmmakers who didn't understand their skills or needs. The time was ripe for someone to commoditize visual effects in a manner that allowed 'normal' filmmakers to exploit those talents in a planned and user-friendly way, so I created it in the form of Photon Stockman.

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 Studios in 1989 and fitted out our own studio there in 1991.

Did you make your movie?

It was very much a case of the more one learns, the more one realizes how little one knows. I’m mentally prepared for the task now, I just hope I’m physically up to the rigours of directing when the opportunity finally arises. In the meantime, visual effects for feature films remain, for me, one of the most interesting aspects of filmmaking.

Do you see Photon Stockman becoming an Industrial Light & Magic in the future?

No. In the first instance, nothing in this Australian domestic film market can become another ILM. In fact, I don’t think anything in the world can become another ILM. There really is such great depth and breadth, in its research programmes, developments, skill base and just credibility.

It’s like saying that Toyota or Daihatsu could become another Rolls Royce. I don’t think anybody could become another Rolls Royce.

When are you doing your first feature?

When am I doing my first feature? [Laughs]. I think unless it happens sometime in the next twelve months I would burst. I don’t think being a visual effects supervisor or designer automatically qualifies somebody to be a director by any means. I think there are a lot more skills needed to be a director.

But there are plenty of television commercial directors out there who have come from agency art direction.

I think commercials are an entirely different thing to feature films. Commercials draw attention to the products over a very short period of time – the narrative form of it is minute. I guess one has to rely on clichés and images developed elsewhere to compress the story-telling process.

Stick a hat on a guy and hang a whip off his hip, you know he is an Indiana Jones-type character. A movie takes 90 minutes to describe who he is; you can do it in one second in a commercial, because you have stolen that image. But I think within the feature-film domain, where the storytelling skills are in the long form, it is an entirely different game.

I do think if a person has the learning and skills to be a director, what the visual-effects background gives them now in this point of history, is the ability to profoundly exploit the technology to produce immense production values that might otherwise be outside the range of the budget of the film.

Is CGI getting simpler?

Duguid feels that future implementations of the technology will be simpler, adding that it will no longer be housed in remote facilities under special air-conditioned environments with men in dustcoats. It will be plonked down on a trestle table in the production office somewhere near the editor and the machine may even be owned by the individual artist. It is wonderful, because we are now going to see digital artists integrated into a film crew in the same manner as sound recordists or an editor.

Virtually all of the hardware and most of the software used in film CGI is imported into this country. Can you see a contribution coming from Australia’s recognized expertise in imaging software into motion picture activities.

I can’t see why not. If you look at what I think is the most popular and powerful tool in the film industry – which is Inferno and Flame – they were developed by Gary Tra-gaskis, an Australian. Similarly, although owned by Kodak, the Cineon software was created by a development team working in Melbourne. For the size of our nation, it is incredibly prolific in developments in that area.

Back to the great white whale: are you able at this stage to describe some of the tricks you have achieved?

In a general sense, I feel very strongly about the ethic of not revealing the nature of one’s magic tricks until the magic show has gone ahead, because it makes the tricks seem pretty rum if you know how they’re done. For that reason, I could only generalize and say what we are doing is the best way – and the best way is always a combination of physical and digital effects. It is an essential first commandment of visual effects that the technique of the illusion-making be constantly varied, and if you don’t do that audiences are consciously or sub-consciously smart enough to figure it out. But if you use a complex cocktail of techniques, your illusions can sustain all the way to the end of the credits. That is always what I would recommend to a film project and that is what we are doing on Moby Dick.

We have some very large robotic whale pieces which would put T-Rex to shame. One of the large pieces is throwing 13 tons of robotic whale into the air. Moby is 100 feet long, which is I think about three times as long as a T-Rex. So that’s a sort of impressive object and some aspects of him are so immense, that we have to do those digitally. Other aspects of him are in such proximity to the camera that we do them physically. It’s a combination of physical and digital that will always give us the best result.

Will you be drawing a fair quantity of mattes to replicate the 19th century Nantucket Sound of the story?

Indeed. There isn’t too much of the old whaling-era architecture and ambience in Melbourne, although we do have fog and cold water! Apart from that, we need to introduce a horizon line of ships.

Well, you’re here in Melbourne, but could you outline your equipment base on the Gold Coast?

We use a Silicon Graphic network of computers and the mainstay of that is an Onyx super computer running Flame. We feed that with lesser machines, Impact machines running Flint, and, further out on the periphery, Macs with Photoshlop and After Effects and so on for matte painting. In the 3D area, we run Alias and Softimage and similar machines. We also use a proprietary Japanese software called Links. That has been particularly useful in maritime creature feature work.

Recent features that Photon Stockman has worked on are Joey, Acri and Paradise Road.
Mr In-Between

A former film editor supplies the growing need for some high level work ‘in-between’. By Barrie Smith.

Post-production has now become a wide-ranging and varied sector within the total industry itself. The ‘post’ process, in its simplest form, used to involve a little editing, a dash or two of titling and some sound mixing – then you could go to answer print or a tape conform.

Now, the post-production schedule of many projects has to take into account the ever increasingly-important activity grouped under the umbrella title of CGI – Computer Generated Imagery.

And even the CGI area itself is gaining complexity as film is digitized at one facility, enhanced at another, then returned for film output – to be handed to a laboratory for the final print.

Creating computer imagery is a time-consuming task and many bureau operators are finding that the sheer grind of rendering the in-between frames of shots is a costly burden, tying up work stations and personnel.

Enter DDR – Dedicated Digital Rendering.

David Waddington is possibly better known to the more mature ‘filmies’ still around from his days as a film editor. Instead of sweating over a hot flatbed, these days he is piloting a new company, offering services of a nature so novel it takes the average person a while to comprehend their function.

David Waddington, Managing Director of DDR, explains:

It enables client companies, working on CGI sequences, to devise and set the style of the key scenes – then send selected frames or sequence files downline to DDR. These are pre-rendered by DDR and the action returned upline for approval. Following approval, the entire job can then be rendered and the finished frames returned to the production company as they are completed.

This rendering facility is ideal for large and complex projects requiring speed and flexibility. This allows the production company to streamline its technical decision-making processes, whilst enhancing its creative decision-making processes.

The company has the endorsement and support of a number of international hardware and software suppliers as the first in the Asia-Pacific Region to offer a dedicated on-line digital-rendering facility to the film, television, animation and CAD industries, both nationally and internationally.

Waddington:

We are a certified render site for Softimage – the first time that’s happened in Australia or the south-east Asian area. We are also endorsed by Digital Corporation, Silicon Graphics, Digital Masters and Softimage, who basically support what we are doing in technology and are totally behind us.

Waddington claims that CGI is now utilized in 40 per cent of films produced in the USA and other parts of the world. As he explains, this computer imagery can be deployed subtly or full-on, like Arnie Schwarzenegger pulling a face; the outcome from that is, once the animation is done, that imagery has to be rendered.

With computer-generated imagery, you need to render it to a format that suits the production’s release – be it film, video or CD-ROM. But that is very time-consuming and cuts down the time available for animation, because the animation houses have to throw their machines into render mode – and they just have to sit back and watch the frames glide through. So, it’s downtime.

What we are offering is like a “dailies” render where animation can be produced. They can fire their animated files down a dedicated line to us, we can render it out at a low res initially, like a 25 percent or 50 percent resolution, and then send that animation back to them on the format of their choice.

Once approved, DDR is given the okay to go ahead with a full high-resolution render and to deliver it on the format of the client’s choice.

Waddington:

Until you render it out, what you see is not really what you get. For the client, if you are doing a high-end commercial or whatever, you can show the client the rendered out sequence and then they can approve it or make changes and it can be done very quickly.

Another service DDR offers is ‘hardware on location’. If you are a producer of a film that demands high-level security, DDR can install a mobile render farm into the production unit, complete with hardware and staff – so the rendering of all frames can be done within the production company precincts.

It would seem that it’s early days for the company, but already it has rendered the opening title frames for the feature Joey. A render was also performed for the Crown Casino opening commercial, finished three days under schedule.

Nigel Robertson is DDR’s production manager. When asked to offer some average render times, he felt it was like being asked to quote the length of a piece of string.

It depends on the complexity of the project the client delivers to us. Most work that we receive we turn around and put straight online – so that it is really over by the next day or the day after.

If we are doing low-end work for someone, you would be looking at turnarounds of maybe 5 to 10 minutes a frame. With motion-picture footage you have much higher resolution – you might have a frame that could take 5 or 10 hours to render.

The investment in plant and infrastructure exceeds one million dollars. Important parts of the set-up are the communication links.

Robertson:

We use all mediums. We’re able to receive data across telephone lines, using ISDN and above that. ISDN is probably one of the slowest for transferring data at the moment, but we also use frame relay and another protocol called DDS [Digital Data Service]. We are also in negotiation with a company at the moment to put in almost permanent links between here and America for transfer of data.

It is kind of weird, because you would think in this day and age to transfer a Gig or two of data from one country to another would be quite a straightforward process, but in fact it is not. It can be very very expensive, if you want to get it there quickly.

DDR caters for a variety of storage formats for in/output: DLT (Digital Linear Tape), DAT, Exabyte, Zip, Syquest, as well as servicing clients who use various computer platforms – Digital Alpha, SGI, Apple Macintosh, Pentium.

The final render can be returned in a wide range of formats: analog and digital videotape, Imax, Panavision, Standard 35mm, 16mm.

For further media information, contact David Waddington or Deirdre O’Driscoll at Tel: 613 9429 5233 Fax: 613 9719 7244.
Audio Buzz

If you thought motion-picture cameras and their peripherals were getting more complex, get a handle on the new range of German and US audio equipment now handled by Melbourne’s John Rowley Sound Services. By Barrie Smith.

It is fortunate for the Victorian film and video production industry that John Rowley has taken up a number of exclusive agencies for state of the art audio gear. These include Ambient Recording and Cooper Sound.

Ambient Recording
The humble fishpole and mike boom have come of age with Ambient’s new carbon fibre models. Its Quickpole booms run to 12 metres in length and are fashioned from carbon fibre tubes, capped with stainless steel 3/8 inch threaded tips and an aluminium collar for added tip strength.

The jumbo booms also reach up to 12 metres, using segments up to 40mm in diameter. At their lengths, they are ‘a little too far ‘out there’ for hand-hold­ing, but fortunately there are a variety of accessories for fitting the poles to a Manfrotto stand, with a cantilevering bracket and counterweight.

A floater suspension is used in all poles to reduce handling noise. The floater is a membrane suspended acoustic decoupler that fits between the boom end and the windshield.

Time-code
Also from Munich-based Ambient is a range of time code products.

This includes the Clockit Controller ACC 101, which supplies crystal calibration along with a master clock; it also has a master clock which can be set to a GPS position. Another is the Lockit Synchroniser ACL 201, a time-code generator and synchronizer.

The Master Slate ACD 201/301 offers four different display modes working with variable frame rates and 47.97/59.97Hz. PAL/NTSC composite sync. Ambient time code products adhere to an accuracy of less than one frame in 24 hours. Said to be “light years” ahead of Comtek receivers – and camera speeds can be checked with strobe bars.

Cooper
Rowley also handles Cooper Sound Systems of San Juan Capiistrano, Ca. Cooper is renowned for high-quality, portable sound mixers used in film and television production.

The CS104 is an extremely rugged and versatile four-channel over-the-shoulder mixer which even incorporates PLLSSs, and can feed up to four BetacamS in stereo. Dimensions: 10.9x6.8x2.5 inches and weighs 4.8lbs.

The CS106/108 model is regarded as the world standard for feature film use. Size: 14.x12.3x3.3 inches. Weight (no batteries) 16lbs.

For more information: John Rowley Sound Services – Tel (613) 9593 2000. Fax (613) 9593 2100.

THE SOONG SISTERS

Born in China at the turn of the century, the Soong Sisters were legends in their own time.

The three sisters, who were born into the most powerful Chinese family of the period, influenced the political and business arenas of China as no other family has.

Their father, Charlie Soong, was an emigré who returned to China from the USA at the end of the Qing dynasty. Strongly westernized, he was upset by government corruption and widespread poverty. A missionary and printer of bibles, he secretly financed Dr Sun Yat-sen and his revolutionary cause.

Through marriage and their careers, Soong’s daughters assumed positions on different sides of China’s turbulent political struggles, culminating in Chiang Kai-shek’s victory for the Communists and the retreat of the defeated Nationalists to Taiwan in 1949.

To date, several attempts have been made to capture their tumultuous lives on film, though none as successfully as the version produced by Golden Harvest, with special effects completed by Centro Digital Pictures. It is regarded as one of the most difficult and highest budgeted ($HK40 million) films produced in Hong Kong.

“The Hong Kong version of Dr Zhivago” is how John Chu, chairman of Centro, describes Soong Sisters.

Chu, a graduate of cinematography at the School of Visual Arts, New York, worked on the film for almost three years and completed about 700 visual effects.

“With dzieci background, with special effects completed by Centro Digital Pictures.

“My Love of beautiful images and special effects impact on the way I run my business, and that reflects how a product such as Soong Sisters can be made even better. Directed by Mabel Cheung Yuen Ting, the movie was filmed predominantly in the PRC.

Adds Chu:
Filming in China is incredibly diffic­ult. The crew were often forced to travel many miles for location shoots. Also, issues surrounding the script, financing and receiving approval from authorities has meant that previous attempts to depict the Soong Sisters’ lives on the screen has failed.

Centro provided computer animation on approximately 30 scenes and com­posited these images on the Quantel Domino.

The Domino was used throughout the film on the compositing. SGI work­stations operating Alias software produced all CGI images. These images were then sent to the Domino via the gateway to be rendered on film.

Ultimately, the final product was ren­dered on 3k high-resolution film.

One of the most vital scenes for the film, according to Chu, was Chiang Kai-shek’s arrival in Nanjing.

This scene could not have been done in the traditional way. Techni­cally, it was impossible to illuminate the cars used to light the runway for the plane’s landing at night. Even when the plane was almost touching down, the cars were coming to form the runway – that was all computer-generated.

Only when the plane touched down was that real action. Even then, most of the cars were touched up because only one-third of the cars were old-fashioned.

Chu’s next project, The Storm Riders, is based on a popular Hong Kong comic book series. The $HK40 million Golden Harvest-Centro co-production will incorporate live-action with photo­realistic computer effects. Computer animation will be used to create the actors’ power and to provide realistic CGI backgrounds to replace much of the set building.
Getting the ideas that live in your head to live on the screen isn’t always easy: the line between hold-your-breath creative and been-there-done-that mediocrity can be razor thin. So you have to go for it. The question is, how do you make a profit while you’re trying to make a name? The answer is simple: Avid® MCXpress

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Day/Night Vision

June saw Kodak launch two, new motion-picture emulsions — removing more barriers as cinematographers attain increased freedom. By Barrie Smith

for DOPs, the old bugbears of film stocks used to be film speed, grain and the ongoing battle of dealing with mixed lighting in a scene. Those began to disappear in 1996 when Kodak introduced its new Vision stocks.

In June this year, the company went further by adding two new emulsion types to the line-up and "roadshowed" test films to industry personnel in all mainland state capitals. The Kodak team included Jeremy Goddard, Boris Mitchell, Tim Waygood and Gary O'Brien.

The two stocks are Kodak Vision 200T and 250D colour negative films. Both new films are available in 16, 35 and 65 mm formats.

The Kodak Vision 200T film is optimized for an exposure index of 200 in 3200 degrees Kelvin tungsten light, typically used on film interiors. It can also be used in natural or artificial daylight with a colour correcting filter.

Kodak's Vision 250D film is optimized for an exposure index of 250 in natural and artificial daylight, and also with mixed sources of warm and cold light. It can also be used in tungsten light with a colour-correcting filter.

Alternative

Vision 200T film is designed for use as an alternative to Eastman EXR 5293/7293 colour negative film — this will still be available. Sue Zygco, who headed the product development team in Rochester, admitted: We frankly wondered how much we were going to be able to improve upon the 5293 film. It (5293) is a relatively new film that is popular with our customers. However, we weren't disappointed. The improvement in sharpness and reduction in grain was obvious to cinematographers who participated in the tests.

Decade old

Vision 250D film will replace Eastman 5297/7297 colour negative film. Powell indicated the 5297/7297 film was designed 10 years ago, before we incorporated T-Grain emulsion and other advances in technology into the EXR family of films.

Powell added that test films (shown on the Australian roadshow) covered a wide range of applications. There are gorgeous underwater scenes. Cinematographers who shot tests also extended the magic hour into the dimmest remnant of sunlight. We anticipate that as cinematographers experiment with this new film, they will interpret it in ways that we never dreamed of, and they will invent applications that are unimaginable today.

The first Kodak Vision films were introduced exactly one year ago. The Vision 500T and 320T have been widely accepted for applications where pristine image quality provides an artistic advantage. The Vision films are also frequently used for visual effects applications, including shooting blue- and green-screen elements that will be scanned into digital format for multi-layered compositing.

Addendum

Team head Sue Zygco claims the selective use of an addendum made silver halide crystals more efficient in terms of their ability to collect light. All four Kodak Vision films are manufactured in Building 38, at Kodak Park in Rochester, designed to be the world's most advanced film manufacturing facility. Here the manufacture of films can proceed that are sensitometrically invariant and virtually free of contamination.

According to Powell, production managers and cinematographers may not now need to order in a single batch number to ensure consistency, but are able to requisition the type of film they need when they need it and be sure the film they receive today will intercut with the film they received last month.

Test films

This writer was present at the Sydney showing of the Vision test films — with material shot by numerous cinematographers, including John Bowring, Roger Buckingham and Les Parrot of Australia.

One, an arcane piece of filmmaking if ever there was, was made by a French company and comprised an assemblage of material shot by international DOPs. Shot in both 35mm stocks, it showed a vast variety of shots: studio, full-sun exteriors, white wilderness with sled dogs, tungsten, HMI, daylight, high key and low key — there was even some under-water footage of manta rays!

Confusing the film may have been, but it acted as a perfect showcase for intercutting the stocks — and convinced some of the production people in the audience that future films using the new emulsions can now include many scenes shot with mixed lighting, tungsten, fluoro, HMI, daylight. Expect also to see films using lots of dark areas with beautiful blacks and areas of a single tone with little sign of grain. On the screen we witnessed exquisitely sharp images with great detail in the shadows.

"We anticipate that as cinematographers experiment with this new film, they will interpret it in ways that we never dreamed of, and they will invent applications that are unimaginable today."

One test film, shot on Super 16 (and blown up to wide screen 35mm) by John Bowring and Roger Buckingham, surprised many — without foreknowledge you could have presumed a 35mm original was the source.

A more traditional and thoroughly executed test film, shot by Chris Hart of Kodak USA and others, took the stocks through an exhausting process of side-by-side comparisons.

Sydney DOP Les Parrot shot a separate film in both stocks, capturing overcast, full-sun and low-key interiors. Les spoke after the film and confessed his amazement at the quality, stating that he had never been a lover of daylight colour temperature stocks — but that the 250D had changed his mind. It was apparent, though, that the new emulsions can bravely handle and suppress heavily overexposed "blow out" windows — previously a favourite with some commercial directors!

General audience opinion was that the stocks were a major step forward in quality from previous emulsions. Not only mixed lighting was used in the test scenes, but mixed skin tones — African-Americans, pale Caucasian, Mediterranean, and Asian — all with convincing results.

Local boys

Some of the Australian DOPs commented.

Roger Buckingham described Vision 200T "as a very useful general stock. I like the advantage of using one for all situations — helps the budget as well". He felt it had "a very fine grain structure, with slight under-exposure". Overall, Roger "liked its performance when forced processed — certainly improved on the 5293 and provided an interesting look."

David Lewis felt Vision 200T was "sharper, with less grain and better colour separation". David felt it was a good multi-purpose stock and was "excellent" for blue- and green-screen work.

Ernie Clark also tested Vision 200T, and was suitably impressed. Ernie felt "Vision 200T handles underexposure very well; it does not go milky. Flesh tones are accurate and there is detail both on the shadows and highlights", going on to say, "The Vision 200T is a fine-grain, medium-speed film which is very sharp and has a very good exposure latitude — both over and under. The blacks are rich whilst the shadow detail is very good."

Use of the films in Australia will very much depend on supply; however, it is known that The Boys will use 16mm versions of both 200T and 250D. Bobe 2 is still evaluating the stocks, bearing in mind that unused material from the first feature (shot in 5293) will be used alongside new footage.

(Vision 200T: Types 5274/7274, Vision 250D: Types 5246/7246)
Film? We’ve got some around here somewhere

Fred Harden reviews the best of SMPTE ’97

Trade shows and exhibitions such as the bi-annual Society of Motion Pictures & Television Engineers event (Darling Harbour over 1-4 July) are valuable benchmarks even when the new-product-to-old-favourites ratio is low. Finding the new and innovative at these shows usually means looking for the biggest stand, the biggest crowd around it and the biggest number of free hand-outs.

Attendance was good, the conference sessions well-attended, but down in the Darling Harbour exhibition halls the stands were smaller, less attractive (read less expensive) and more cluttered. For an equipment junkie like me, that meant standing patiently in line to get the attention of a ‘sales someone’, who’s smart financial blood in a customer and is full tilt on a hard sell of another fifty grand device, to say “What’s that great looking thingo around here somewhere?” So if this ends up as a list of “I want one immediately, of course, but if I was using DV as a professional format, I’d go for the two larger camcorders; the DSR-200P (one piece) and the DSR-130P (two-piece design). The big plus with these cameras is the Firewire output. That’s the new fast (and simple) digital output transfer format that lets you suck raw digital data out of the DV cassette and, with a low-cost card in your PC, stick it on your hard disk for editing. There’s even a new cheap Recorder/Player (DSR-30P) that everyone was using to replay their DV tapes for hard disk-based editing, and two larger production suite models: the DSR-60P and DSR-85P (a high-speed replay version to get all the images on your cassette into the computer faster). Lovely solid technology.

However, there was a distinct sense of deja-vu about the Sony ES-7 Edit-Station, the hard disk-based non-linear editing system Sony has developed for the DVCAM range. This uses a proprietary editing interface which was awkward and clunky looking, with lots of “It’s only the first version; the next beta of the software will fix this or that” remarks made. I can understand Sony wanting to own its interface but re-inventing one will put Sony behind the pack. Given the sophistication of the Media 100s and Avid interfaces, why Sony didn’t do a partnership deal with someone else I can’t imagine.

Sony Australia Ltd: contact local offices or Gary Rhodin (612) 9887 6666 Web site www.sel.sony.com/SEL/bpg Down the Non-Linear Path

M y modus operandi after many years of trade shows is to walk quickly clockwise around the outside of the halls and then in concentric circles to the center, just to survey the scene and target the most interesting stuff. The path to non-linear editing is a much clearer one. Significant was the Avid push to attract lower-end users (multimedia developers, corporate videomakers, etc.) with the MCKpress range, starting at an amazing $6,000 for an NT-based system and an inexplicably priced $20,000 for a Mac-based version. (The Mac, however, gives you real-time 3D effects.) Ask for a copy of the CDROM MCKpress demo disk from Polaroid Computing (1800 066 022) or via the web at www.avid.com/mckxtda.html. It’s a bit slight on hard facts, but an attractive overview.

The Media 100 range shows sophistication and is a real Avid competitor across the full range of the non-linear market. It’s the system of choice because of its price for a lot of people, and on demo at the Adixen stand was the Media 100x5, with full 4.2.2 digital component YUV broadcast quality. There’s real-time transitions, colour and motion effects, and titling, with alpha keying without rendering. Speed’s the key in non-linear replacing linear tape suites, which is why systems like Quantel’s EdiBox are so good in a commercial environment. It’s now getting there on PCs at an affordable price. I didn’t get a chance to check out the Slingshot option for the Media 100 which translates EDL’s into a film neg cutting list, but with it the Media 100 pushes closer to the Avid for true 24 fps film editing. For more Media 100 details, email Adixen at sales@adixen.com.au or call (612) 9332 4444.

Of course, the whole non-linear market is in for a low-cost shake-up with the advent of DV and the Firewire IEE 1394 data transfer standard. There will be a number of capture cards around soon, but I really only had a chance to look at the cheap and half-size PC card Miro DV 100. It comes with simple editing software and intriguing script and storyboard tools for the PC and the Mac. It offers a real low-cost option, but you’ll want to use Adobe Premiere to edit and plan on big hard disks because the uncompressed data format hogs space. The Miro DV100 will be available at most computer outlets and details are on the Web at www.miro.com and www.miro.de

One company that had DV/FireWire stand-alone nonlinear edit systems was Draco Systems Australasia, a Queensland company. You can buy a Motorola 68060 Amiga (I remember them) based box for around $13,000 ex tax or their simpler Casablanca system, priced at around $5,000. The latter had a replay DV deck and removable storage but may still be a bit rough for professional use I watched, as a number of demos called for a reboot, and parts of the interface were still in its developer’s German. I’m sure it will be more stable and you can see the full story of the Draco line at www.abtec.com.au/comm/abtec/droco

Loyd Richards at Cotton Tree Media (also in Queensland) was showing the English-designed hybrid machine control/non-linear editing option called Plum. Adobe Premiere-based, it consists of a PC card for $6,000 and comes with an interface box that gives RS232 machine control, Adobe Premiere, and a 9 gig hard drive for $12,000. Details at (617) 5479 5737. Email digital@beachaccess.com.au.

Gimme dat thing

The production tools for sound and lighting took their share of attention. Looking for significant trends, HMI power supplies continue to shrink, making the smaller portable units more portable. Bytecraft (which took over the Strand agency here) had the integral ballast Strand 200i Supernova, more compact and lighter to hold (or hang) than I expected (Bytecraft P/L 03 9587 2555). The Frezzi NPs series of mini arc HMIs on the Lemac stand also had a lot of punch, and its use of the same NP batteries as the cameraman’s BetaCam, etc., makes a lot of sense when you’re lugging things around. All the details are at www.frezzi.com.
CINEMA PAPERS • OCTOBER 1997

new products

like an obvious idea now – as the film unspools from one core, the other, of course, gets bigger – but the wasted space on the now depleted side can be used if the feed spool can move out of the way as it empties. The result is a magazine not much bigger than the can the roll came in.

There’s a few other clever developments in the Aaton range. Ask Lemac about them or see the Aaton website at www.aaton.com

The display for the Schneider filters on the Lemac stand showed a conclusive demonstration of the colour-neutral nature of their glass filters, and their ‘absolute’ polarizing filters. I’ve always wondered why, when you twist a polarized filter so that the two filters are at ninety degrees to each other, you didn’t get a completely opaque result. With this one you do. It seems that there are polarizers and Schneider polarizers.

I would also have liked to walk away with the new Criel 3 x 3 clamp-on mattebox designed for the new DV and Hi8 cameras. The only problem, Peter Hobson said with a sigh, was that they’ll now have to start stocking 3 x 3 filters again in the Hire Dept. He’d thought they’d gone for good. Contact Lemac Melbourne (613 9428 336) and Sydney (612 9438 3399).

Also a sign that the new smaller digital cameras are becoming production tools was Miller’s range of Digital Support tripods and heads. The two sizes, DS-5 supporting up to 5lb (2.3kg) and the bigger, up-to-10lb (5kg) DS-10, both have the same control features, fluid-drag design and accessory list as Miller’s larger broadcast/EFP products. You buy them as complete, ready-to-go systems, consisting of an alloy diecast fluid head with 75mm ball levelling, lightweight alloy ENG tripod, above-ground detachable spreader, rubber feet and pan handle. They’re a big change from the Miller Super 8 head tripod I bought for that other mini-camera ‘revolution’ about twenty years ago.

Contact (612) 9439 6377 or see the details on Miller’s website (which is a bit clunky, like that Super 8 head) www.miller.com.au

Barry’s/Sammy’s was easy to find in the Hall, with the big Moonlight balloon glowing above the stand. I’d read about it but seeing it working was great. It’s one of those nice imple-

ments of technology, like Garrett Brown’s SkyCam, that make me smile.

If I’d been looking down rather than up, I might not have tripped over the Microdolly. Fresh from NAB ’97 (it’s picked up Best New Product at NAB ’96), this is also a case of ‘heat’ technology. Small dollies usually equate with flimsy, and hence wobbly, and why would you bother? Well, this very portable unit carries an amazing payload and doesn’t match that equation. The lack of vibration on the demonstration model was surprising and once you start thinking that small all the other accessories on offer seem logical. The basic Microdolly kit includes one T-Bar Dolly, 3ft (1m) of Track, two 1ft3 Track Pads, 1 Dozen Track Shims, two Track Bumpers, 1 Ratchet Tie-down, 1 Wheel Wrench Tool and a soft case. The Dolly and Track are made of structural-grade anodized aircraft aluminum and fold to a compact 30 in (76 cm) in length. It’s a bit hard to see from the video graph the client supplied, but the reason it’s so good is the construction quality.

I liked the (low) High Hat option, a great camera track, just inches off the ground. The Website at www.microdolly.com has a newsletter, and further user information.

Jim Frazier was also on the Barry’s/Sammy’s stand with his Paravision-Frazier Lens system. He said it was pleasing to see his name alongside such an industry great and the support he’d been given to continue to develop his optics. You’ll get some idea from the photograph what it looks like, but you’ll need to see the free demonstration video, that Jim obviously had fun making, to see the real potential of a lens mount that can quickly place a camera viewpoint almost anywhere, and keep focus from macro foreground objects to infinity. It all came from Jim’s nature cinematography background, but it’s now squarely in the commercial production area. The gossip was to watch out for the next development using motorised axis movements and an anamorphic version. John Barry Group and Samuelson’s Film Service (622) 9439 2375.

Graphic results

The other stream of equipment at SMPTE that interested me was the broadcast and high-end 3D graphic and animation systems. I slowed down as I passed the demos from Quantel and SGI, and stopped at two motion-capture rigs. The first was at the Future Reality stand and you’ll see from the

for games 3D modeling, and is now available for rent. It’s called MCM, Motion Capture Magic, and can be rented by the day with a daily charge for then processing the data. Contact MCM at (613) 9866 83600 or details are at www.beam.com.au/mcm

To round this off, I’m going to bring the swing back to film with a plug-in that I saw on the DPS stand, running in Digital Fusion. Digital Fusion, from Eyeon Software, is an amazing resolution independent compositing package that uses the DPS Hollywood or Perception cards. It ran like the dickens on a dual-processor NT machine and, even adding an NT box into the price, it all seemed very cheap for a film-resolution effects package. And you can use the same 5D Monster plug-ins as on the Flame/Flint.

The one I liked, however, was a film effect filter. In a world of video, where the source just doesn’t look like film, or when you want to reproduce an archival or period feel, that’s were the plug-in processing came in. It might be a gimmick looking for an application, but you can choose an era and get a range of options: lens fall off, neg or pos scratches, grain, colour fading. The sample image shown here, from a colour original, reproduces a 3921 black-and-white newsreel, with some vicious scratches added but some of the other effects where very realistic. “Try another one!” I urged. “Dial in 1900! Technicolor!” Details from DPS Asia Pacific (612) 9586 0088, and www.eyeoneonline.com, and www.dps.com

So you can run out and shoot with your DV, add some film quality and feed it to the film recorder. No one will know that it cost you heaps more than shooting film in the first place. Oh, and did I mention it’s obvious that Windows NT is a growing platform of choice for editing, graphics, animation, etc.? And that there were a lot of sound effects and music libraries offering royalty-free buyout sound tracks? And that D-Vision’s online quality system looked good?

Well I should have.
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Funding Decisions

FFC Funding Decisions

Following a Board meeting held in July, 1997, the FFC has entered into contract negotiations with the producers of the following projects:

**Feature Films**

**PASTMASTER**
CM Film Productions

**Feature Films**

**Pastmaster**

57

**The Missing**

57

**Children’s Television Drama**

57

**Thunderstone**

57

**The Search for Treasure Island**

57

**Documentaries**

57

**Paying for the Piper**

57

**Praise**

57

Production Survey

**Features in Planning**

Brothers at War

57

Land of the Long White Sheila

57

**Features in Pre-Production**

Liquid Bridge

57

The Venus Factory

57

**Features in Post-Production**

Amity

58

The Ali Way

58

Dead Letter Office

58

Doom Runners

58

Justice

60

Oscar ad Lucinda

60


**Features in Production**

The Boys

58

Head On

58

Hurrath

58

In the Winter Dark

58

The Thin Red Line

58


**Documentaries**

**PAYING FOR THE PIPER**

(52 MINS)

PROSPERO PRODUCTIONS

D. Julie Redwood P. Ed Purchard W: Ed Purchard

**FUEN** DISTRIB: BEYOND INTERNATIONAL

In 1988 the North Sea oil rig Piper Alpha blew up, killing 167 people. Ed Purchard is one of the only 62 men who survived the worst ever offshore oil disaster. 1998 marks the 10th anniversary of the tragedy when Ed is going back. Back to his fellow survivors and back to the questions which have gnawed at him all these years. How could an oil company kill 167 people and get away scot free? Paying for the Piper asks the question: Are corporations getting away with murder?

At the last Board meeting held in Sydney, June, 1997, the Board also approved the following production:

**Productions**

**The Search for Treasure Island**

(12 x 30 MINUTES)

**Children’s Series**

JONATHAN M. SHIFF

**THUNDERSTONE**

(26 x 30 MINUTE)

**CHILDREN’S SERIES**

JONATHAN M. SHIFF

Dr. Colin Budds, Mark De Freest P: JONATHAN M. SHIFF

W: Michael Joseph, Peter Kingach, Alison Nicolls, Jenny Shaw, Barbara Bishop, Ernest DeRicche, Anne Fox, David Phillips, Maree Hardy, Helen McDonald, Victoria Osborne

**FNE** NETWORK 10, AUSTRALIA, THE DISNEY CANAL

D: BEYOND DISTRIBUTION, TELEVISION (IT)

Thunderstone is a futuristic live action drama series. It tells the story of 16-year-old Noah who lives in the future when no animals roam the Earth. By unlocking the secrets of time travel, Noah finds a way of bringing animals from the past to re-populate the world.

**THE SEARCH FOR TREASURE ISLAND**

(12 x 30 MINUTES)

**Children’s Series**

HUGH HUME

**GRUNDY TELEVISION**

D: Howard Ribe P: Roger Miram, Andrew Bridge W: David Phillips

**FNE** CHANNEL 7

**D: NDR INTERNATIONAL, COMMEDIA, PIKE TELEVISION INTERNATIONAL**

A group of misfitted voyagers join forces to sail into uncharted waters in search of the legend of Treasure Island. When our modern castaways are flung ashore, they only thing in their favour: their environment, our modern children have plenty of trouble. They learn that while knowledge can mean power, it can also get you into trouble.

**Features in Pre-Production**

**Five Bells**

62

**Magnum Opus**

62

**Television Drama Production**

**Inferno**

62

**Tales of the South Sea**

62

Oscar & Lucinda: The Complete Credits • Hurrath for Porn Stars

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57
The Thin Red Line

Production company: Phoenix Pictures-Fox 2000
Production: 23 June-November 1997, Portugal, Queensland, SX Distribution company: Twenty-First Century Fox

Director: Terrence Malick
Producers: Grant Hill, Robert Geisler, Steven Cohen
Executive producer: George Stevens Jr.
Line producer: Grant Hill
Screenplay: Terrence Malick
Based on a novel titled: The Thin Red Line by James Jones
Director of photography: Gordon Willis
Editors: Bill Berke, Leslie Jones
Production designer: Jack Fisk
Costume designer: Patricia O’Connell

 other Oelwaters
Fantasia in Production

The Boys

Distribution company: Arena Films
Distribution company: Footprint Films, Glaze Film Co
Production: July 1997

Principal characters

Director: Rowan Wood
Producers: Rob Connolly, John Maynard
Screenplay: Stephen Stvell
Based on the true story: The Boys written by Gordon Graham

Government Agency Investment

Production: SBS Independent, Prime Movie Partnership

Marketing

International sales agent: Arvion Films

Cast


Filmography

Security: Peter Collin
Still photography: Lisa Tomasetti
Public relations: John Lang
Catering: Keith Fish, Yvette Simms
Runners: Jolleen McCann, Mathew Saville, Sandi Austin

Art department

Art director: Philip Boston
Art department co-director: Mark Long
Art department assistant: Geraint Reky
Editor: Monty Montgomery
Colin Robertson
Stylist: Ben Bauer
Assistant: Antonia Morris

Wardrobe

Wardrobe buyers: Catherine Herbert
Wardrobe stylists: Karen Faltin

Costume

Sonja artist: Colin Burchall
Construction manager: Dave Franks
Men’s Costumes: Royston Preece
Women’s Costumes: Gordon Symonds

Casting

Marnie Canals, Tusha Benson

Synopsis

Based on the novel Bitter’s End by David Owen, it tells the story of a man who, after the tragic death of his wife, turns his back on everything and buys a house in the middle of nowhere. There he meets the mysterious Julie, who crashes her car on his property, and they begin a passionate affair.

In the Winter Dark

Distribution company: R.B. Films
Distribution company: The Glaze Film Co
Production: 28 August

Principal characters

Director: James Boole
Producer: Peter Gilroy
Line producer: Brenda Pam
Screenplay: James Boole, Peter Gilroy
Based on the novel: In the Winter Dark by the Dylan Thomas
Director of photography: Martin McDonagh
Production designer: Nicholas McCallum
Costume designer: Wendy Cook
Editor: Sue Kay

Production crew

Production manager: Michael Davis

On-set crew

Still photography: Peter Finch, Jo Reissner
Unit publicist: Gabe Lake, Tracey May
Government Agency Investment

Distribution: Australian Film Finance Corporation
National Film Finance Corporation
Television and Film Office, Prime Movie Partnership

International sales agent: Southern Star

Cast

Brenda Blethyn (Steve Stubs), Ray Barrett (Maurice Stubs), Richard Roxburgh (Murray Jacob), Miranda Otto (Ronne).

An intense psychological drama, in the Winter Dark is set in a secluded country village where Maurice Stubs, a retired army officer, attempts to hold together a lost life but fragile relationship, while Murray Jacob and his wife Bette struggle to find love.

As the pain from an unresolved tragedy threatens to erupt from Maurice and Bette’s past, Jack and Ronne are drawn into the older couple’s desperate attempts to stop their lives unravelling.
...and suddenly, overnight, the olive shot to stardom...

and never looked back.
**Production Survey continued**

**DOOM RUNNERS**

Production company: MILLENIUM PICTURES
Production office: MAX STUDIOS
Production manager: Branden Mullens
Principal credits: Director: Brendan Manners
Producer: Evangeline Mays
Live producer: Perry Stapleton
Director of photography: Steve Arnold
Production manager: Derek McKay

A
doctrine of vengeance, set on revenge, is born and will

**CAST**

MARCUS GRAHAM (BOBBY LEWIS), KEVIN ARMITAGE (JOHN MARKHAM), PAUL RILEY (ERIC MACLEAN)

Justice is an 'against the odds' story of hope and inspiration. Set against the backdrop of the city's slums, an alcoholic detective is framed for the murder of a female Internal Affairs officer. In order to prove his innocence, he has to use his intelligence and conquer his personal demons before he is able to challenge the legal system and, in doing so, discover the truth and bring to justice.

**Oscar and Lucinda**

Production company: DALTON FILMS
Distribution company: Fox Searchlight
Pre-production: July 1997 – August 1998
Budget: $12 million
Principal credits: Director: Gillian Armstrong
Producer: Robin Dalton, Timothy White
Scriptwriter: Laura Jones
Based on the novel Oscar and Lucinda by Peter Carey
Production designer: Lucia Arena
Costume designer: Janet Patterson
Editor: Nicholas Pope
Sound designer: Andrew Pain
Production manager: Peter Brown

Extra casting: Jackie Quater
 Acting casting: Tracey Walker
Middle eastern casting: Karen Abul-Magin
Derek Walker
Costume consultant: Vanessa Correll
Voice casting (UK): Brendan Donnison

Production co-ordinator: Kate Spikes
Production coordinator: Vanessa Brown, Paul Randere
Production co-ordinator (UK): Joanne Thompson
Production assistant co-ordinator (UK): Melanie Jackson
Production assistant: Mr. Assange
Production assistant: Lisa Mallon
Production assistant: Siân O’Dowd
Production assistant: Dawn McDonald
Unit manager: Matt Matthews
Unit manager (US): Richard Moore
Unit manager (UK): Peter Keating
Unit manager (UK): Claudia Mitchell

Production: West Coast pictures Distribution company: New World
Budget: $1.75m
Pre-production: 2/6/97 – 6/9/97
Post-production: 5/5/97 – 1/9/97
Production: 5/5/96 – 1/9/96

**Justice**

**Cast**

MARK RYAN (BILLY LEWIS), KEVIN ARMITAGE (JOHN MARKHAM), PAUL RILEY (ERIC MACLEAN)

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There's a perfect time to open anything.

Our time is now.

Java on Quantel.

Now anything is possible.
A panel of ten film reviewers has rated a selection of the latest releases on a scale of 0 to 10, the latter being the optimum rating (a dash means not seen).

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**THE GODFATHER** Francis Ford Coppola, 1972

The Godfather, celebrating its 25th anniversary (yes, it has been that long) with a new print, remains one of cinema's best films.

Nominated frequently by critics, filmmakers and actors as one of their favourite films, it has been honoured by our culture with two sequels, pastiches, imitations and homages, and has given us immediately recognizable images (the horse’s head; Brando’s portrayal of Don Corleone, mafia patriarch), and dialogue ("I made him an offer he couldn’t refuse").

Its effects are still being felt today in films like The Funeral (Abel Ferrara).

And still the quiet horror when Michael (Al Pacino) realizes his Italian wife, Appolonia (Simonetta Stefanelli), is sitting in a car bomb, the brutal objectivity of the camera as Santino (James Caan) is gunned down at a tollway, or the doom-laden editing as all the mafia bosses are killed during the baptism of Michael's godson, is affecting and remains with the viewer long after the film has finished.
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