Cinema Papers #129 January 1999

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25
ANNIVERSARY ISSUE
I believe that CGI is the most important new tool for cinema since the invention of sound. Rising Sun Pictures have shown to be real masters of that new tool, comparable to anyone in the world.

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an extremely challenging brief with the finest results and a dedication to perfection of an international standard.

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MUSEUM OF THE RARE
Walery Borowczyk was a critical darling of the early 1970s, but cruelly ignored since. SCOTT MURRAY continues his reappraisal of the overlooked director's work.

THE MOMENTUM THEORY
Brad Hayward is the latest filmmaker to get a feature on the screen with little more than a script, a few actors and a lot of perseverance. He talks to PAUL KALINA about Occasional Course Language.

SEEKING RAPTURE
Jeffrey Katzenberg has found a creative and spiritual home at Dreamworks SKG. He talks to SCOTT MURRAY about The Prince of Egypt.

25TH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL
Cinema Papers celebrates its 25th year of publication with a collection of articles specially written for this issue. We've rounded up the usual (and some unusual) suspects and asked them to write about their passion for cinema. And we've raided the unique collection of stills to remember some great moments from the heady days of the Australian film renaissance.

A NEW FILM BY ROBERTO BENIGNI
LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL (LA VITA E BELLA)
WINNER GRAND JURY PRIZE
1998 CANNES FILM FESTIVAL
A unforgettable fable that proves love, family and imagination conquer all.
NATIONAL PRODUCTION SURVEY 1997-98

The value of Australian film and television productions in 1997-98 was the highest on record at $421 million. Ninety feature films and independent television dramas worth $551 million were made during this period, compared to $561 million the previous year.

These findings and more are contained in the Australian Film Commission’s National Production Survey released on 3 November.

Spending on production and post-production in NSW rose markedly, boosted by the high-budget features, Babe: Pig in the City and The Matrix.

Independent television drama production sustained the significant rise in 1996-97. The total value of series and serials ($231 million) was up on the previous year, while mini-series fell ($52 million), and TV drama was just under the 1996-97 figure of $312 million with $306 million.

Cathy Robinson, AFC CEO, welcomed the growth in the value of Australian feature film and independent television drama, but noted that the figures for feature films had been skewed by a single overseas-backed film:

Australian independent production is cyclical by nature and it’s important that we don’t become complacent because of the major contribution of one project to the local production industry.

The total number of features was up from 39 in 1996-97 to 41 this year, reflecting a continuing trend towards budgets of less than $1 million.

Foreign investment in Australian product doubled the previous year’s result, bringing in $185 million across 61 productions the previous year.

Government financial contribution to feature films was less than 1996-97, due again to the low-budget nature of many of the projects completed, while TV drama was up from $27 million to $58 million. Australian commercial broadcasters and private investors also contributed less in 1997-98: $144 million across 62 features and TV dramas, compared with $173 million across 51 productions the previous year.

RAMBUNCTIOUS WINNERS

The Rambunctious Vidi-Digi Festival, held on 27 October at the Forest Lodge Hotel in Sydney, gave plenty of cause to celebrate new video-digital filmmaking technology.

Fifteen finalists were chosen from a field of 50 video-generated short films, and winners were chosen by a judging panel that included: actors Tony Martin and Sonia Todd; producers Jonathan Shteinman, Anita Jorgenson and Jenny Collins; cinematographer Kathryn Millis; AFTRS’s George Whalley; casting director Egil Kipste; and editor Keith Lynch. And those winners are:

Best Movie
All in a Day’s Work, producer Angela Barbour

Best Direction
David Barbour, All in a Days Work

Best Script
David Barbour, All in a Day’s Work

Best Performance
Kieran Darcy-Smith (All in a Day’s Work and Still Wind)

Best Cinematography
Daniel Askill, Static

Garden Street Editing Award
Static and Parking Patrol Officer 808

Metro Screen Encouragement Award
Life in the City (Bryan Moses and Craig Anderson)

Film ratings, titles, session times and cinema locations, and purchase their tickets over the phone if desired. Further plans for 1999 include purchasing tickets on the Internet and a preview fax service.

FINANCIAL RECoup

The Australian Film Finance Corporation (FFC) has announced that it invested $68.3 million in 58 new projects during 1997-98, and has recouped $24.3 million on its investments during that time. It’s the second highest result the FFC has recorded since 1988, beaten only by the 1994-95 result of $25.6 million.

The 1997-98 production slate comprised 33 feature films, totalling $57.8 million; 4 adult television drama projects ($19.9 million); 6 children’s television drama projects ($37.9 million); and 35 documentaries ($17.7 million).

The contracting international marketplace, and the apparent absence of “break-out” feature films is expected to dampen this success in the following year, with only $18.3 million proposed for 1998-99, supplemented by $25.6 million from the Federal Government financial contribution to feature films.

STREAMLINE MOVIE-GOING

A new automated film information and ticketing service, Movieline, has commenced operations in Victoria. This new joint-venture between Hoyts, Greater Union and Village Cinemas, and installed in 87 cinemas across the state, will enable customers to access information, such as showtimes, location and cinema location, and purchase their tickets over the phone if desired. Further plans for 1999 include purchasing tickets on the Internet and a preview fax service.

As this is a special 25th Anniversary celebration issue, several normal features and columns will not run this time.
inbits

has approved $2 million new project investment. Included in that are programmes such as Lies, Spies and Olympics, a documentary about Melbourne’s forgotten struggle to stage the 1956 Olympic Games, to be produced by Rob McAuley and directed by Peter Butt. Other projects underway include The Post, Sadness and Once Were Monks (see “inproduction”, Cinema Papers, 127).

FILM SCHOOL SILVER

The Victorian College of the Arts recently celebrated its 25th anniversary, with a season of its Film and Television School graduates’ films at the Longford Cinema in South Yarra. “From Blackboard to Big Screen” screened from 25 October to 4 November, and featured feature films from such alumni as Gillian Armstrong (Star Struck), Lawrence Johnston (Life), John Ruane (Death in Brunswick), Emma-Kate Coghlan (Love and Other Catastrophes), Alexei Vellis (Nirvana Street Murder), Richard Lowenstein (Dogs in Space), Ana Kokkinos (Only the Brave) and Geoffrey Wright (Romper Stomper). Each feature was accompanied by a student film from each of the directors. The Film and Television School, originally based at Swinburne University, transferred to VCA in 1992 and relocated to the VCA’s current site in Grant Street, South Melbourne, in 1994.

IN OTHER FILM NEWS...

Southern Star Film Sales has confirmed that Ana Kokkinos’ feature Head On has been picked up for North American distribution by Strand Releasing. It has already been sold to The Netherlands, Israel, Taiwan, Brazil, Greece, South Africa, Spain and France.

Rolf De Heer’s Dance Me To My Song has won the Australian Catholic
Film Office Award, for the Australian film that best dramatizes positive human values.

Murray Fahey’s new no-budget, short-shoot feature (nine-and-a-half days), Dogs, has premiered in Adelaide, with other states, surely, to follow.

Director of photography John Brock ACS, and Franc Biffone (2nd Unit DOP) recently won the Gold Award in the Features-Cinema category at the 1998 Australian Cinematographers Society New South Wales Branch Awards for their work on Fifteen Amore. They are now eligible for the national ACS Awards, to be held in early 1999.

THE ULTIMATE FILM FESTIVALS WEBSITE

Independent filmmaker and lawyer Tim Richards has spent a year and a half putting together a website that contains detailed international film and video festival entry forms for the convenience of filmmakers all over the world. Sponsored by Vodicka Lawyers, the website evolved from a service they have been providing since May last year, and contains information about genre, deadlines, entry fees, restrictions and awards. It was after the AFC withdrew its entry-form supply service that Richards first thought of taking on that mantle, and from there, a website seemed the next logical step. The website should prove a godsend to many an independent filmmaker keen on sending their work into international festival land. Check it out at www.film-fests.com.au

WESTERN FILM FEAST

The Festival of Perth Lotteries Film Festival, four months of first-release arthouse films screened at the Outdoor Somerville Auditorium, is now in full swing, with a different programme every week. Look forward to Gadjo Dilo, If Only, Hana-bi, The Hanging Garden, Love is the Devil, Le Mèpris, Artemisia, and a Taviani Brothers retrospective. Screenings commenced 30 November, and will continue through to the first week of April 1999.

PANDANUS FILM FESTIVAL by Scott Murray

In almost every way, the first Pandanus Film Festival in Noosa Heads was an extraordinary success. Short film festivals are multiplying like bug animations all over the place, but this has a freshness and specificity which singles it out. It also had more than 600 people turn up to the open-air screening in the Cooroy Botanical Gardens amphitheatre overlooking Lake MacDonald. There can hardly be a pleasanter and more enchanting spot to watch short movies in Australia.

The Festival was divided into two categories: up to five minutes in length and mentioning “Noosa” in some way; up to 15 minutes with the theme, “Character of Landscape”. The judges were Peter Castaldi (II-FM), Gary Ellis (Manager of Screen Culture, PFTO), Robbie Hoven (Noosa Film Society), Tim Lennon (ditto), Eve Mumewa D. Fesi, OAM (the first indigenous Australian to gain a PhD from an Australian university) and Brendon Williams (DOP).

Hosting the event was actor Tony Bonner, who also held an actors’ workshop and, in his own time, helped hopeful NIDA applicants on their presentations. Bonner’s open-hearted commitment to the Festival and its patrons would probably go unnoticed in most places, but not in Noosa. When he signed off his MCing at the end of the night, the audience called out their thanks and cheered his contribution.

All the Festival entries were on VHS, sourced all over the world. Sponsored by Vodicka Lawyers, and video festival entry forms for the convenience of filmmakers all over the world. Sponsored by Vodicka Lawyers, the website evolved from a service they have been providing since May last year, and contains information about genre, deadlines, entry fees, restrictions and awards. It was after the AFC withdrew its entry-form supply service that Richards first thought of taking on that mantle, and from there, a website seemed the next logical step. The website should prove a godsend to many an independent filmmaker keen on sending their work into international festival land. Check it out at www.film-fests.com.au

government assessors had to take a deep breath and select from what looked best on paper; now they have self-funded videos on which to make hopefully more informed judgements.

Home-video activity is occurring all over Australia, but it is festivals like Pandanus which reveal what is otherwise hidden and give filmmakers the chance to see how their work is reacted to and appreciated by an audience.

This is more important than at first appears. At the judging panel session on 13 November, Journey to A-Boy: With a Bush Yucca Ycee (Glenn Weychardt) failed to impress, appearing a rather childlike comedy about a gauche country boy (Weychardt) leading the viewer along several nature trails. Not one laugh was heard.

The next night, at the amphitheatre, the audience rocked with laughter the whole time. What had appeared tame was, in a different context, a witty and inventive film by someone with real talent. Weychardt is a young-teen Yahoo Serious and agents ought to track his progress carefully.

A particularly hilarious moment (second time around) is when the normally-garrulous Weychardt mumbles incoherently at Alexander Bay, as naked people wander in the far distance. A subtitle comes on: “Overcome by Nudists”!

This author has for many years largely abandoned going to preview screenings in preference to watching films with an audience. This was just one more example of how a fuller understanding of a film can come from being in a social situation with a paying public. This is especially true for any would-be director of comedies.

The first film on view was Crush (Jenny Fraser), about a bear who walks on to the beach and stumps on a sandcastle every time an Aboriginal girl (Georgia Mache-Johnson) builds one. A fight ensues, until the girl notices what the bear has...
Introducing the new Twin Deck video cassette recorder (MV8080) which has optimum duplication results and picture-perfect copies.

Twin Decks 'EZ Copy' takes all the frustration and guesswork out of copying.

Both decks automatically rewind, make the copy, rewind again and eject both tapes so they won't be reused.

It features continuous loop video playback, ideal for shows, presentations and sales training tapes.
inbits

APPOINTMENTS

S. greenrights has announced the appointment of Virginia Gordon as its Public Affairs Manager. Gordon comes from a marketing and communications background within the arts-cultural sector. She has formerly worked as the marketing director of ABC Radio National and as a marketing consultant to the Australia Television satellite service. She will be instrumental in strengthening Screenrights’ technological position.

Film Australia has announced that Cefn Ridout has been appointed as Programs Promotions Manager in the Sales and Marketing Department, and Bethwyn Serow has been appointed as Manager of Film Australia Site and Facilities.

The Australian Film Commission has announced that Sara Cousins has joined the Indigenous Branch for three months to work in the policy area, on secondment from Parliament House in Canberra.

The Melbourne International Film Festival has announced the appointment of David Pearce as the Festival’s General Manager. Pearce has many years of experience in diplomatic management, and has worked in Nigeria, South Africa and Canada. More recently he was based in Singapore, where he was Deputy High Commissioner and helped organize the first ever Australian film festival in Singapore.

The Pacific Film and Television Commission has appointed Casey O’Hare as its new Marketing and Communications Manager. O’Hare was previously a Public Relations Manager with Brisbane Tourism.

CORRIGENDUM

A gremil or two crept into the “Dirty Dozen” scores last issue. They’re obviously not Brian De Palma fans, because they got Stan James’ and Tom Ryan’s scores wrong for his film, Snake Eyes.

The scores should read: Stan James – 5, Tom Ryan – 7; which of course changes the average score from 4.5 to 5.3. Apologies to all those involved in this mishap.

PANDANUS FILM FESTIVAL continued

written in the sand: “No developers”. It is funny, light-hearted take on one of Noosa Heads’ two key social issues.

The other is teen suicide (the Sunshine Coast has the highest rate in Australia) and this was reflected in many films; in fact, it seemed as if every video made by a teenager was about suicide or death.

One gently touching film, though this reviewer seemed more impressed than anyone else, was Tomorrow Never Comes … (various directors), a 12-minute documentary which mixes interviews with the parents who have lost a child and a social worker, with footage of a funeral service. The film is simplistic, but a fine attempt at dealing with the loss of a friend through communal filmmaking.

Many of the audience responded well to Breath ing Exile (Venus Robertson), about death, gravesyards and roses (images common to many Queensland shorts, according to Gary Ellis), and Screw You (Lana Locke). The latter starts with a distressed girl huddling in the kitchen after having killed her husband. After wandering the streets, she meets on a train a boy who claims to have dreamt of her. Through their discussion about the uselessness of existence and the agonies of the past, they slowly fall in love.

Despite an infuriating desire to constantly repose the camera into weird angles and perspectives, it is an effective story of hope in a claustrophobic setting. While the dialogue totters and falls into pretentiousness often, this is an astonishingly brave attempt by a 16-year-old to move into territory that has challenged even mature masters like Kryzstof Kieslowski.

Screw You isn’t a film to be enjoyed, but a year later it is sure to be still remembered.

I am Doll Eyes (Ben and Megan) is a spooky tale of sibling rivalry tinctured with witchcraft, which is not always narratively clear but eerie nonetheless, with one of the Festival’s most haunting images: a face reflected in broken glass. This shot is almost a cliché, but the filmmakers here come up with their own evocative version.

Another favourite image is a home movie-like shot of a little girl running across a backyard during a black-and-white National Flashback in The Seeds are Sown (Brimy Ingleton).

A teenage girl (Johanna Wallace), living in a luxurious, parentless house, remembers back to her childhood and life on a farm, whose borders she has never been allowed to cross. One day she does, her parents screaming, “Noosa, Noosal”, as she flees into the bush. Reaching cliffs overlooking the beach, she witnesses construction overtake and destroy a once-perfect idyll.

It is an amusing and risky idea to personalize the town of Noosa as a repressed girl, whose natural desire to explore life leads to destruction. (The tale works equally well, of course, in terms of other social issues on the coast.)

The environment was dealt with in many interesting ways. Sequoia (Maureen Price) has an alien searching the back roads for a missing red crystal, but stops just as the film has successfully got one intrigued. Horse Play is an unhurried day on an Arab horse stud (with a horse castration scene that had many yelping in protest). Squash (Giovanna) opts for quirky comedy with a cucumber that pops up in odd bush settings and meets its fate under a boot. It Was Here (Matthias Cerwen) records a teenage boy break down in tears during a mock interview about the destruction of his favourite walking spot: a pine plantation. Given the views of many environmentalists, though, the destruction of a non-indigenous pine plantation ought not to be something which induces tears!

Betty’s Surf Burgers (Mark Shea) is a sweet, funny documentary about a remarkable woman who has been making burgers from dawn to dusk every day for 20 odd years, and still only charges $1. Needless to say, her shop is now about to be pulled down for a new development and Betty will soon no longer afford to make burgers at a price that has long meant a good cheap meal for the poor. The audience loved it and so did the judges.

Will (Kent Sherlock), which many also admired, is a near wordless tale of a young man (Tim McPhee) who departs hectic Brisbane and, from a bar in Port Douglas, is led by a girl (Sofia Dunn) on a mystical journey to her tribe, a group of grooving hippies. While not clear in all its intents, the film is hypnotic and shows a visual flair not all that apparent elsewhere.

Jack’s Been Stalking (Nick Russell) got the most vocal response of any film (save perhaps the poor horse!). A young woman, working at the Pacific Blue Resort, is harassed by phone and note by a stalker. She tracks him down and stalls him, leading to a fight and, then, a kiss (!), which is photographed by yet another pere. The embrace brought a hardly-surprising and deepening cascade of boos.

Girl Boy Green (Caroline Campbell) also looks at relationships, with a high-gloss edge.

In summing up, one could say these are budgetless home videos which shouldn’t be compared to serious 16mm short filmmaking. But, while noting that nothing here is in the same class as, say, Tears (Ivan Sen), the films are so much better than any other one would have expected them to be.

Their faults are easy to detail, especially the puzzling lack of any semblance of editing craft. Individual shots may be arresting, but rarely do they coherently or effectively cut together. One doesn’t need money or training at a film school to understand montage; just a passion to do so and a few good movies to watch. The lack of craft here seems almost willful.

The reliance on ‘haunting’ flute and guitar music is also infuriating. But these are films from the Byron-Nimbin-Noosa coast and why should they not reflect that culture?

Ultimately, that was the strongest impression: these films are very much of the place. Even if some story interests parallels those of city filmmakers, the style and tone of most of these videos was unique and specific to a different consciousness and worldview.

In an increasingly-homogenized era, the very otherness of these films was exciting. The best were something more.

PRIZES

Under 18

I am Doll Eyes
Age Group Winner
It Was Here
Highly Commended
Screw You
Encouragement

18-25

Jack’s Been Stalking
Age Group Winner
Girl Boy Green
Highly Commended

25 and over

Will
Age Group Winner
Betty’s Surf Burgers
Highly Commended

Sequoia
Encouragement

Tony Bonner Award for Visual Excellence

Breathing Exile
People’s Choice

Journey to A-Bay: With a Bush Tucca Lychee
The Golden Pandanus
Jack’s Been Stalking

CINEMA PAPERS • JANUARY 1999
To celebrate a quarter-century of publication, twenty-seven
friends of *Cinema Papers* reveal their cinematic passions.
Jean Roy is the film critic for L’Humanité (Paris), director of La Semaine de la Critique (Critics’ Week) and, since seeing an unnamed Australian film at Cannes, carries a hip-flask full of whisky.

So, Cinema Papers is celebrating its 25th anniversary issue and would like to have a few words from a dedicated friend living so far away. What do you really want to know? My favourite 25 Australian movies of all time? No way. I would make too many enemies. The complete list issue and would like to have a few words from a dedicated friend living so far away. What do you really want to know? My favourite 25 Australian movies of all time? No way. I would make too many enemies. The complete list of the sixty or so Australian feature films released in France in the past 25 years? Sobering. An anniversary is not the proper time to be serious. It’s a love letter you send to a friend.

I don’t remember the first Australian movie I ever saw but I still remember, within these 25 years, the first one I fell in love with. It was Sunday Too Far Away, by Ken Hannam. I saw it in the spring of 1975 and I still feel the smell of the sheep while the workers are taking off their wool. I also remember the first time I attended an Australian Film Week. It was in Paris in April 1979 and we had Caddie, The Devil’s Playground, The Getting of Wisdom, The Last Wave, The Picture Show Man, Storm Boy and Summerfield. What a glorious year.

It was also in 1979 that I had a chance to read Scott Murray for the first time. He was interviewing John Lamond about Felicity and he had published these beautiful pictures of Glory Annen and Jody Hansen in the nude playing with each other under the shower in their convent dormitory (Cinema Papers, Cannes Special, p. 88). On the spot, I was convinced that Scott was one of the best film critics of all time and I still believe it, even if the pictures are not so attractive these days. (By the way, I still have not seen Felicity. Could you send me a cassette?)

Last but not least, it was in 1979 that I was elected as a member of the selection committee of the Critics’ Week in Cannes. I can’t remember if there was any Australian money in the first film which was ever submitted to me, but I do remember it was Skin Deep, from New Zealander Geoff Steven. We had this screening in the most elegant club one can imagine, followed by a lavish dinner by the pool, all of that one block from the Champs Elysées on 12 January, and it was just the first of a series of one hundred movies we had to watch for Cannes. I loved it. Twenty years and a couple of thousand films later, it’s still the last time I’ve been to this club and the last time I’ve been invited to lunch or dinner after a screening. Beginner’s luck, as they say.

Since that day, a lot of water has been passing under the bridge and a lot of ice cubes in my whiskies. I remember really learning about Australian cinema, seeing everything from the turn of the twentieth century in a series at the Australian Embassy (great lunches, too, with the most fantastic view on the Eiffel Tower one can have), to the most contemporary stuff.

We had Devil in the Flesh at the Semainee in 1986, with the director’s cut that Scott Murray was pushing to impose while some foolish French distributor wanted to mild it. What a fight...

Then, in 1993, the divine surprise showed up. After having already been in one hundred countries or so, I was invited for the first time in my life to Australia. I had a chance to check that people there don’t live with their feet above their head, even if they drive on the left, and, as a matter of consequence, female kangaroos don’t need a zipper on their pocket to protect their babies from falling down.

I met wonderful movie reviewers (hi, Paul, this one for you), great girls (hi, Vicky, give me a call some day), great female movie reviewers (hi Mary, give Paul a call some day). That’s where I definitely fell in love with you.

Happy 25th, Cinema Papers.

1 Caddie (Don Crombie, 1976), The Devil’s Playground (Fred Schepisi, 1976), The Getting of Wisdom (Bruce Beresford, 1977), The Last Wave (Peter Weir, 1977), The Picture Show Man (John Power, 1977), Storm Boy (Henri Safran, 1976) and Summerfield (Ken Hannam, 1977).

2 Ed.: When the French distributor recut the film, producer John B. Murray and director Scott Murray sought protection under France’s Moral Rights legislation. The distributor intending releasing the film prior to Cannes, which by the rules of the Festival should have meant it was ineligible for screening in Critics’ Week (or any other section of the event). However, Roy and Critics’ Week took a bold stand and publicly announced they would show the original film (billed as a “director’s cut”) if the case were lost and the recut film commercially released. This is just another example of the magnificent respect Cannes has shown for Australian film.
In the company of women by Lindsay Amos

LINDSAY AMOS is a cameraman currently based in New Zealand.

Imagine: you've given a stunning performance in a key role in a recent internationally-acclaimed, prize-winning film. Not only that, you've appeared in a dozen other films, you're just 19 years old—and virtually unknown. This is the fate of Canadian actress Sarah Polley. Remember, she's the one in the wheelchair who pulls the rug out from under class-action lawyer Ian Holm in *The Sweet Hereafter* (Atom Egoyan, 1997). What a scene! What a casually precious performance!

Polley has many equally-talented contemporaries. I'm nominating another eight, all of whom have made (movie) life worth living over the past few years. They are: Alicia Witt, Parker Posey, Joey Lauren Adams, Renée Zellweger, Reese Witherspoon, Charlize Theron, Judith Godrèche and Radha Mitchell. This bunch leapfrogged over their individual cinematic epiphanies—to what? Some have gone on to mainstream films in unremarkable roles. A couple work mainly in television. Most get very little coverage, even in specialist magazines. They are cover girls who rarely appear on covers. Yes, they have it all—except recognition. Call them unsung heroines. Call them not the usual suspects.

Radha Mitchell? Isn't she the one in *Love and Other Catastrophes* (Emma-Kate Crogan, 1996)? Yes, she's the “forgotten one” in a film which wholly haunted its frontline of talented youngsters. I can't have been the only one who noticed the way she wittily fished out a thinly-written role. Perhaps her classy beauty worked against the dazed and confused character she was portraying. No matter, Mitchell emerges triumphant from a larger, similarly ambiguous role in her first American film, *High Art*, opposite Ally Sheedy.

Alicia Witt was a heavenly creature well before Kate Winslet. She was one of the teenage thrill killers in *Fun* (Rafael Zielinski, 1993). Seeing this delicate, wispy, hyperactive (and unfamiliar) actress literally dance her way through the film was to witness the creation of a truly frightening character—a natural born killer. But this was a performance only hinted at in Witt’s previous roles in *Twin Peaks and Bodies, Rest & Motion* (Michael Steinberg, 1993). Yet, subsequent to Witt, Witt appeared in lacklustre films and the backwater of television’s *Cybill*.

Parker Posey is a scene-stealer from way back. This “queen of the indies” is a refuge from the television series *As the World Turns*, not to mention one of the token women in *Dazed and Confused* (Richard Linklater, 1993), and has appeared in nine (count ‘em) movies in the past couple of years alone. There were three Hal Hartleys—*Amateur* (1994), *Flirt* (1995) and *Henry Fool* (1998)—plus *Kicking and Screaming* (Noah Baumbach, 1995), *The Doom Generation* (Gregg Araki, 1995), *Waiting for Guffman* (Christopher Guest, 1997), *The Daytrippers* (Greg Mottola, 1996), *Bosquet* (Julian Schnabel, 1996) and *Suburbia* (Richard Linklater, 1996). She covers a range of characters who are sullen, flaky, acerbic, comic, audacious and, sometimes, all of these. Ironically, Posey’s only starring role to date, as a would-be librarian in *Party Girl* (Daisy von Scherler Mayer, 1995), seems to have been consigned to videoland. Meanwhile, she’s back to “also starring” with Meg Ryan in *You’ve Got Mail*.

When Reese Witherspoon first appeared (in Diane Keaton’s television movie *Wildflower*), she had to play second fiddle to Patricia Arquette. There were no such constraints in *Freeway* (Matthew Bright, 1996), a performance which copped a year which had already seen her in James Foley’s *Fear*. But Freeway’s variation on *Little Red Riding Hood* gave Witherspoon the opportunity for a performance which was quite literally sensational. Rarely has such unsophisticated, sweet-faced innocence concealed latent violence so completely. Her minor part in *Twilight* (Robert Benton, 1998) has led to the “ultra-hip, totally popular” twin sister role in * Pleasantville*.

Joey Lauren Adams needed only one great role to enter my hall of fame. Sure, everyone noticed her in *Chasing Amy* (Kevin Smith, 1997). No wonder. In a film which helped redefine movie sexual politics for the ’90s, Adams attacks her sexually-ambiguous character with an intensity which is disarming. Again, there is not a hint of this potential in her previous small parts in *Dazed and Confused*, *S.F.W.* (Jeffery Levy, 1995), *Mallrats* (Kevin Smith, 1995) and *Michael* (Nora Ephron, 1996). Keep your fingers crossed for her upcoming *A Cool, Dry Place*.

Anyone who has leapt from Texas Chainsaw Massacre: The Next Generation (Kim Henkel, 1997) to *Jerry Maguire* (Cameron Crowe, 1996) opposite Tom Cruise has to be doing okay, right? But Renée Zellweger first stood up to be counted in *Love and a .45* (C. M. Talkington, 1994). Her southern, white-trash girl-on-the-run is still her most exciting early role. (She’s another *Dazed and Confused* alumna, too.) Playing the bland, nice girl in *Jerry Maguire* gave her wide exposure, but she seems to be alternating interesting independents, like *The Whole Wide World* (Dan Ireland, 1996) and *A Price Above Rubies* (Boaz Yakin, 1997), with big studio pic *One True Thing*.

Charlize Theron’s first release was the underrated *Two Days in the Valley* (John Herzfeld, 1996). Despite the cast of seasoned players, the naive Theron blitzed the competition. Talk about a calling card film! Theron takes the clichéd role of “seductive hit woman” and forges it into something truly memorable. Somebody who matters must have noticed, too, though her part in *The Devil’s Advocate* (Taylor Hackford, 1997) was disappointing. She has two more chances to carry through the early momentum, with *The Astronaut’s Wife* and Woody Allen’s *Celebrity*. Somebody get this South African import a Green Card, quick!

Remember the girl in *The Man in the Iron Mask* (Randall Wallace, 1998), Christine, played by Judith Godrèche. I wonder if Americans, trooping off to see (the recently-released in New York) *La Désenchantée* (1990), realize that the sullen philosophy student who is the central character is the same person. This is one of my favourite recent French films (thank you SBS-TV); Godrèche has since blossomed into the Julia Roberts look-alike seen in Beaumarchais (Edouard Molinar, 1996) and *Ridicule* (Patrice Leconte, 1996).

There are dozens of others, languishing in obscurity. To think about the films we don’t get to see, many perhaps full of people who are better than they need to be, is depressing. Much better to admire the performers who seem to have missed the publicity train, discover them in films that are accessible, and be exhilarated. Even as I write I think about others: Amy Locane, Hope Davis, Stacey Edwards. Oh, you’ve noticed—they’re all women. No apologies. The guys can look after themselves.

GO AHEAD, SHOW ME WHAT TO DO WITH THE ROUGH END OF A PINEAPPLE

Aunt Edna (Barry Humphries) and Bazza (Barry Crocker) in Bruce Beresford’s *The Adventures of Barry McKenzie* (1972), which spawned what was to become a prolific cycle of “ocker” comedies.

Twenty-five years later, one thing’s clear: almost all Australia’s export hits have been raucous comedies.

LAST SEEN WORKING AT A GOVERNMENT FILM AGENCY?

This unimpressed viewer was at odds with Australia’s filmmaking public, who happily went to bed with *Alvin Purple*. The government may never have approved a project like *Alvin Purple* (Tim Burstall, 1973), but this privately-funded film went on to become one of the most domestically-successful Australian films of all time.
Rod Bishop is the Director of the Australian Film Televisi
on & Radio School.

Last summer, three events brought back the pathos of Jean-Luc Godard's sun-drenched world in Le Mépris (Contem-
ptempt, 1962). The first was the arrival of a new CinemA-Scope print, courtesy of Martin Scorsese. The sec-
ond and third events were books: Robert Fagles' exal-
itiating translation of The Odyssey* and Patrick Mc-
Guillan's Fritz Lang: The Nature of the Beast.*

In Godard's film, Fritz Lang gives the only screen per-
fomance of his career. He plays the illustrious German
film-maker Fritz Lang, working at Cinecitta on a version of
Homer's Odyssey. In Lang's first scene, he screened
ruses for The Odyssey's marvellously-cress American producer,
Jeremy Prokosch (Jack Palance), and for Paul Javel (Michel
Piccoli), the French screenwriter assigned for some of
"rewrites".

During the screening, Prokosch gleefully salutates over
a nude mermaid and is quickly angered by the widescreen
images of Greek gods – mostly statues photographed
against azure Mediterranean skies. Even in his anger,
Prokosch manages to exclaim: "Oh, gods! I like gods... I
like them very much... I know just how they feel!"

Poetic, beautiful and transcendent as these Odyssey
ruses were, they are clearly not the work of the director of
the silent classics Or Mabuse (1921 and '22); Die Nibelungen(1923)* and Metropolis(1927)* or Amer-
ican noir thrillers such as The Woman in the Window
(1944), Scarlet Street(1945) and The Big Heat (1953). A
brief, but informative account of Lang's involvement in
Contempt by Patrick McGillan suggests that Jean
Coeau was Godard's first choice for the Fritz Lang rôle.

In a film distinguished by its decisive precision, why
would the French director include images that appear more
Coeau than Lang? The reason may lie in the often sublime
nature of Godard's approach to this film. His films and
videos have an undeniably "authorial voice", and his work
is so distinctive, a few minutes with an unseen Godard film
is usually enough to pick the director.

Jump cuts, deconstructed soundtracks and elliptical
narratives are his trademarks. There are distinctive Godar-
adian passages throughout Contempt, including a
30-minute domestic exchange between Paul and his wife,
Camille (Brigitte Bardot). But, for most of the film's
length, the prolonged use of conventional principles such as
"continuous action", "seamless continuity" and "invisi-
ble editing" have given Contempt a reputation as
Godard's most "unGodardian" work, a reputation that has
grown so significantly during the past 35 years, Colin
McCabe now bravely claims it as "the greatest work of art
produced in post-war Europe".

Adapted from an Alberto Moravia novel,* the dominant
narrative in Contempt concerns Camille's unsalvagable
contempt for her husband, Paul. Beneath this plot lies the
swirling classical text of The Odyssey, driven by Homer's
opaque-sketching but heroic Odysseus and his ten-year
journey through strange lands and strange seas populated
by monsters, magic and gods.

The dramatic tension during the production of The
Odyssey in Contempt is derived from a continuing dialogue
between the German director, the French scriptwriter and
the American producer (the film is spoken in four lan-
guages). They focus on the nature of the relationship
between Odysseus and his "duffilf" wife, Penelope, who
waits for him at their Ithaca palace, holding by the
bail the scores of suitors who are eating his swine, drinking
his booze and sleeping on his fleece.

The American producer believes Penelope has been
faithful to Odysseus. The French writer, Paul, has his
own theory. Strolling through the chalk hills of Capri with
Lang (where the crew are shooting the Cyclops episode),
he suggests Odysseus' ten-year voyage is evidence of his
reluctance to return home to Penelope. Before leaving for
the Trojan War, perhaps things had not been so rosy for
Odysseus. Paul suggests the hero knew Penelope would
be faithful to him and therefore encouraged her to enter-
tain the suitors. But Penelope slowly developed contempt
for Odysseus, and, when he finally returns to Ithaca, he
slaughters the suitors to prove his love for his wife. Lang
grapically snears at the scriptwriter's attempt to make
Odysseus a "modern-day neurotic".

The classicism of Godard's Contempt is so astonish-
ingly assured for a 33-year-old, it seems more like the
work of a mature Bertolucci, or Visconti or Antonioni. Peal
off the sensibilities of the French New Wave and you find
an Italian cinematic aesthetic. Peel off that aesthetic and
you find the ancient Greeks and their quest for knowledge
of the human condition.

If the passing of 35 years shows us that Contempt is

easily the most conventional work of Godard's career,
then what caused this great deconstructor of cinema
to inexplicably embrace the cinema of formalism? Some
might be tempted to suggest the "international" nature of
the film (it was Godard's first big break into the "main-
stream") is reason enough for his restraint. anybody who
has seen his other "international" and "commercial"

effort, the dismal adaptation of Shakespeare's King Lear
(1987) with Woody Allen, Peter Selling, Molly Ringwald
and Burgess Meredith, would realize this explains very little.

Perhaps the answer lies in the text, particularly his use
of "the Coeau images" from The Odyssey. For some,
the regal and civilized presence of Fritz Lang in Contempt
is seen as another typical, nouvelle vague "in-joke". But
is this as frivolous as it appears, particularly when little else
in this film even comes close to frivolous?

Noel Burch has persuasively argued that Lang's Dr
Mabuse (1922) is the origin of "a literary genre in the cin-
ema".* Burch believes this silent two-part crime thriller
represents the first successful attempt to link "sequences-
to-sequences" in the minds of the audience, rather than
"shots-to-shots". In Dr Mabuse was the first crime drama

to make this breakthrough, then Metropolis and Die
Nibelungen are the first visionary, epic narratives to create
this "literary genre within the cinema".

In Contempt, Godard places Lang in charge of The
Odyssey — an epic, visionary poem that lies at the well-
spring of Western literature. The illiterate and blind Homer
recited or sang his work, using poetry to produce a seam-
less, flowing narrative. By linking the innovations of the art
of Homeric narrative with Lang's first attempts at seamless,
flowing narratives in the cinema, Godard has drawn a
believable line between Lang's life's work, the poetry of
The Odyssey, and the poetry of Jean Coeau.

Some scholars remain dismissive of The Odyssey, find-
ing its "domesticity" a major disappointment after the war
heroics of The Iliad. Godard has made a virtue of this
"domesticity", fusing it with his hip, existential, nouvelle
vague narrative. Contempt is Parisian youth culture
dumped into the searing Mediterranean sunlight, with
Camille, Paul and Odysseus gazing wistfully out to sea
in search of their personal Ithacas — their own, apparently,
unreachable homecomings.


THE TIMES ARE A CHANGING

During the 1970s, film studios mushroomed across Australia and the world. Cinema Papers joined in the growing controversy over violence in the cinema. Author Patricia Edgar is now the Executive Director of the Australian Children's Television Foundation.
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Marianne Collopy is the person one must treat with great reverence to be invited to previews of films distributed by UIP, where she has set a new standard for charm for film publicists.

Recently, I came across the ‘definitive’ list of the greatest 100 films of all time. Scanning the list, I had seen around 70 of them, and, while I would agree that they were memorable and at times brilliant films, there was only a handful which had, not so much changed my life, as formed it.

For me, the joy of cinema is the finding of a soul mate and there are films which make my heart soar with familiarity.

As a child, when all films were good, the big movies were re-enacted in my grandparents’ house. A rambling Victorian home with fascinating hidden doors and staircases that ascended into terror, the house could be the setting for anything. I skipped across the overgrown tennis court into Oz, fought Morlocks in the stables and sashayed from behind the window-box curtains in a flat-chested tribute to Gilda.

Cinemas were cold and old and huge and Victorian: heavy curtains, daunting Aladdin caves with ushers who wielded their torches like sabres. In this setting I wept as the beautiful, evil queen fell over the cliff while the simpering do-gooder bagged the prince, and I marvelled at the first grown-up movie my brothers and I were allowed to see, The Poseidon Adventure (Ronald Neame, 1972). Incredible stuff!

Without that house and surrounded by the comfort of the megaplex, I am constantly seeking the utter escapism that cinema gave to me as a child. Occasionally I will find it, and I delight in my son discovering films and in turn becoming a Power Ranger or a hip-swivelling Danny or one of the many varieties of Batman.

The charm of cinema is that the same magic is at work even now that I’m an adult. A great film still makes me forget I am watching it. A great film makes me imagine even more was in it than actually was and has me bewildered on subsequent viewings. Did they cut it? Is this a different version?

And a great film doesn’t need to be a Great Film to make it wonderful.
entire to a larger world than the one in which I lived in a Sydney suburb, and I preferred seeing supposedly adult movies to going to children's matinees.

Some people have the persistent hunger for something new. New is good, old is not as good, as interesting, as wonderful, as moving, as exhilarating. Nonsense! Have the movie palates of many today been numbed by television and movies? Having a penchant for movies involving prehistoric monsters, I was keen to see Roland Emmerich's Godzilla. I enjoyed it... with reservations. The first reservation involved the actors unable to bring to life interesting characters I could care for; Matthew Broderick was likable enough, but there was no one else in the film to feel anything for. Secondly, after a while I felt quite numb about the havoc and the series of catastrophes, one after the other.

In a few words, I was not involved. True, there was animation, impressive spectacle created one way or another and a truly, awesomely predictable script, geared for a movie audience seeking sensation and not much else. And what then do you take away from Godzilla? What a clever film? What fabulous special effects? And I felt quite detached. I had the same reaction regarding James Cameron's Titanic (1997). Strangely, I really loved Dante's Peak (Roger Donaldson, 1997).

Ken Anderson says it well:

Contemporary films seem to be mired in an adolescent preoccupation with technology and special effects. Movies now possess the ability to realistically create any effect imaginable except the ones they have always needed the most, plot and character. Sure I love vintage movies, but that is not my full story. I love film. I have loved film from the very first movie memory I have: of being taken to see W. S. Van Dyke's Naughty Marietta (1935) with Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy, and Walt Disney's Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (Ben Sharpsteen, 1937). When I was a little older, I began appreciating film more. I was very young when I saw, for the first time, Victor Fleming's The Wizard of Oz (1939). Judy Garland and her co-stars, especially Margaret Hamilton as the Wicked Witch, and the visuals, including the film beginning and ending in black and white and magically turning into Technicolor when Dorothy arrives in Munchkinland, and the music of Harold Arlen and lyrics of E. Y. Harburg. I didn't realize it then, but I was learning to love and appreciate more than film music, words, ideas, feelings.

An increasing intensity of desire for film was developed by each successive film with the above list of film classics. Some people have the persistent hunger for such experiences of my life, many of which I have shared with my wife and friends. Here are a few:

The Denver and Busters; The Virgin Queen; Woman's World; Desk and the Fabulous Films of the 1930s; The Arrangement; The Price of Salt; The Movie That Changed My Life.
When Australia started making movies (again!), foreign stars were lured to local shores. Dennis Hopper was one of the more eccentric breed, appearing in Philippe Mora's Mad Dog Morgan (1976) and freaking out the locals in downtown Holbrook (NSW). Twenty years later, the casting of foreign 'elements' continues to stir debate within the industry.

IT'S DAVID WILLIAMSON'S PARTY
Everybody who was anybody is in *Don's Party* (Bruce Beresford, 1976), the first in the long tradition of filmed David Williamson plays. It is also one of the rare adaptations that doesn't carry the words 'David Williamson's' in the film's title. (In what would prove to be a gesture to acknowledging Government support for the emerging film industry, ex-Prime-Minister John Gorton was cast in a small role.)

**BUT WHAT WHICH ONE?**
The double-page opening of one of the many serious articles about the work of major international filmmakers. 1970s feminists regularly attacked Cinema Papers for its use of images of female nudity (merely reflecting the films of the time), but were stamped by this pic – one of the butts is male.

**OF COURSE, THEY HADN'T YET SEEN BODY OF EVIDENCE AND DIDN'T KNOW WHAT YOU CAN DO WITH CANDLES**
Tom Allen (Simon Burke), right, and friend discuss the merits of sprinkling holy water on one's member to curb the onanistic urge in Fred Schepisi's brilliant début feature, *The Devil's Playground* (1976).

**PRODUCTION REPORT**

**DON'S PARTY**

**1976**

DAVID HANNAH is the venerable producer of numerous Australian films, including *Stone* (1974) and *Gross Misconduct* (1993).

It's 1974. Stone (Sandy Harbutt) is playing at the Forum in the Haymarket. Len Fancourt is the cinema manager. Every night, despite the sleeting winter rain, he stands out front like the welcoming host at an exclusive dinner party.

Three gleaming, rain-speckled Harleys slide to a stop. "Good evening, Earring. How are you tonight, Guitar? Saw you giving blood on television the other night, Mac. Good to see you all again. Enjoy the movie", he laughs.

"Good to see you too, Mr Fancourt", they respond. I wander over from where I have been standing in the shadows.

"That's the twelfth time they've been", he says.

"Going in?"

"Yes."

I go back to my place watching the crowd in the foyer. It certainly isn't your standard bikie crowd. There are as many women as men, and most of them don't look like they've ever been on the back of a bike.

We're well into our second month of full houses, broken box-office records all around the country, and I'm here for what must be the umpteenth time. I'm certainly here every Saturday night. I just like to be with and part of that big animal in the dark, the audience, enjoying the picture. It's the audience I watch now. I sit up the back, so I can get up and move around, and feel the reactions.

This Saturday is just like any other. It's cold, wet and windy, with the expectant audience now in the warmth, ready to enjoy the evening's entertainment. This night I sit behind a large and extremely beautiful woman. She's laughing and talking animatedly to her friend. I think I've found the right spot.

The picture starts with Jeannie Lewis' amazing voice, and the close-up of the Captain Cook monument at Botany Bay, and moves through to the opening sequence of the demonstration in Sydney's Domain. She's into it within seconds. She laughs, breathes, moves, chuckles, full of good humour and enjoyment. I have definitely found the right spot. But it's the funeral sequence and Vinnie Gill's Dr Death that really gets her. She's in love. This is her character.

Not that she doesn't enjoy everybody else. But whenever The Doctor's there, she leans forward, the old Forum seat creaking under her not-insignificant weight. I'm really having a good time now.

The thing I really enjoy about coming as often as I do is that everybody gets off on different characters. It's a big ensemble so there are a lot of different movies. But nobody before has 'got off' so totally. As the picture progresses, she becomes completely caught up, to the point where she is oblivious that I am not the only person in the audience aware of her involvement. She gasps, she giggles, she sighs, she shouts, she's ultra vocal.

But it's the climactic scene in the graveyard where she really kicks in. When Dr. Death is shot, she leaps to her feet, with a terrible scream, so loud I am absolutely sure she could be heard in George Street.

"Noooooo..." She falls back into her seat, her body literally racked with sobs. I'm stunned. Everybody's stunned. The hair stands up on the back of my neck.

I am completely stoked. This is what it's all about. This is what makes it so worthwhile: being part of something that has involved another human being to the exclusion of all else. What a privilege.
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DAY IN THE GREAT TRADITION

Lovell, seen here on location for pioneering series of production.

In the great tradition of Australian women producers: Pat Lovell, featured in the pioneering series of articles tracing the history of women in Australian film production.

WHAT CULTURAL CRINGE?

Bruce Petty won an Academy Award for his animated short, Lettuce. Australians always make a big noise when a local wins an Academy ("joins the big league", indeed!), but seem to forget five minutes later. This has led to the odd Aussie claiming he/she is the first to score in a category, with the actual debutant being long-forgotten.

DOMINIC CASE, a former "Technicalities" Editor of Cinema Papers, works at Atlab's DFilm.

Imagine, for a moment, an alternative version of the 20th century which started with the invention not of cinema, but of television. It's plausible: most of the technological advances of the late 19th century were in the field of electromagnetism, and some astonishingly early work had been done in transmitting images from one place to another.

The Kinetoscope, which was the first device for taking and viewing 'motion pictures', was developed by William Dickson, an electrical engineer (not a photo-chemist) working for Thomas Edison, and as a camera-viewer, it bore more in common with today's handycams than with modern film cameras.

As this alternative century progresses, let us assume, as was the case in our own twentieth century, that recording (i.e., videotape) only came some twenty years or more after television itself. And let us propose that at some later stage in the century, the concept of using photographs — hitherto the technique for capturing an instant in time — in rapid sequence to record moving images is finally realized, so that today, as the century concludes, our alternative history converges once again, and we have both cinema and television at the same state of technological advancement in both scenarios.

How would things have been different — in the context of a century of television and only fifty years of film?

The magic of television is in the viewing of images from somewhere else; with film, it is the viewing of images from another time. Even so, the early history of cinema is the history of an ephemeral art form: there seems to have been little thought of the long-term preservation of images. It seems likely, therefore, that a television-based industry in the early decades of the century would have developed in much the same way. Whether viewed in public on large screens, or at home on small screens, live television would have flourished. So by the time videotape was available for recording, it would have been developed for repeat screenings and then later for editing. Preservation for posterity would only have been an afterthought.

What of the programmes? In our present world, despite 50 years of television, we do not find the medium has become a natural home for the great visual artists. There have been great and significant events in television, from the Kennedy-Nixon debates to the Gulf War coverage to the Olympics: but these are quite different from the significant events in cinema history — from The Battleship Potemkin (Sergei Eisenstein, 1925) to Citizen Kane (Orson Welles, 1941) to Star Wars (George Lucas, 1977). Cinema and television are, and will always remain, quite different, despite the so-called convergence of technologies. Would the visual grandeur of a late-developing cinema have evolved by now? Or would it have been influenced by the precedent of a more naturally content-based television culture?

My point is this: that the art of the cinema, and its history, sociology and cultural significance, have been entirely determined by the technology of film.

It's become a cliché for film partisans to propose the scenario I have described: suppose we already had video, and someone invented film. Look at the information density-resolution (1.5 Terabytes per spool); look at the simplicity of viewing; look at the longevity; look at the international compatibility. We would fall upon film as a brilliant advance, and throw videotape out overnight. But it's not that simple. If television were the dominant medium, information density wouldn't need to be sharpened, brighter pictures. As it is, bandwidth on television means more channels, not sharper pictures. Ease of viewing is arguable: sure, you can hold film up to the light and look at it, but who does, except in publicity shots of film editors? And there's no doubt that a videotape is easier to play than a reel of film, assuming you have the right equipment.

It's not clear whether early filmmakers considered the future as much as we consider the past: but the fabulous inheritance we have in the film archives as a result of film's relative stability cannot be overstated. Clive James made a television series some years ago called Fame in the Twentieth Century. It was noticeable that, in the first half of the century, his subjects were all politicians, statesmen, public figures: they were all there in the newsreels. In the second half, most of the figures were film stars or musicians. Arguably, showbiz has overtaken world politics as the controlling influence on our society; but I suspect his selections were influenced by what footage was available and, as film newsreels have gone, so has our moving image record of world events. Videotape has not been stored well, nor can it be: a recent article in Image Technology magazine compared archival film life estimates of 100 years, with most video at 2-5 years, and CD-ROMs at 20 years.

Finally, the much-vaunted international compatibility of a reel of film raises an interesting point: when film first emerged as the century, it was immediately transportable, and became a world medium very quickly. Technical standards were naturally compatible, allowing the Hollywood phenomenon to cover the world very quickly with no natural barriers. Television was established as several incompatible local technologies at first, with film as the only inter-change medium (which is why we can still watch I Love Lucy.) Suppose television had started 100 years ago in the absence of film and at first with no videotape, and then with incompatible recording systems? I doubt if a pre-war Burbank in this alternative century could have reached the predominant world position that pre-war Hollywood in our own century did. It's possible that an Australian television industry could have become established in 1900, and survived the middle of the century, unassailed by foreign product. But the present thriving Australian film industry, gestated as it was until the 1970s renaissance by newsreels and documentaries, may never have become established in the alternative television century.

And we may never have had the stimulation of a quarter of a century of reading Cinema Papers. Food for thought.
Playing Silent Anne Démy-Gerée

Memories of my attendance at Le Giornate del Cinema Muto, the famous Pordenone Silent Film Festival, in 1996, linger not only as one of my most enjoyable holidays, but also as a vivid and unexpected experience of the power of film. Russian cinema between 1919 and 1924 provided one of the major programme strands. These previously-unknown films differ radically from those refined bourgeois works of the Classic period, but are also much rougher and more primitive than the familiar classics of the late 20s. At first, I found the films not so interesting though quite demanding. Although one film screened with the reels in the wrong order, resulting in the corrupt but fascinating bearded and wild-eyed priest rising from the dead, this did not account for my problems with the others. The coding was all wrong. The women with the gorgeous hats who ate in exotic restaurants were all bad, and I was expected to identify with the unwashed and hysterical peasants. But within a few days, I knew the cues. And when someone attended the opera or theatre or looked as if they’d washed that week, I knew they were villainous and found myself booing as the filmmakers intended! I found it quite extraordinary.

A starting point for my interest in silent film was in 1988: the presentation of an Australian silent by Ron West at the opening of the Audiovisual Unit at the State Library of Queensland, which I was then managing. Ron has been accompanying The Son of the Sheik (George Fitzmaurice, 1926) on his mighty Wurlitzer organ at the Majestic Cinema, Pomona, for more than twelve years now. With some 1,400 performances under his belt, he must be eligible for the Guinness Book of Records.

More exciting is his annual silent film festival. Over the years, he has provided some memorable occasions with a programme that combines classics and popular silents with the bizarre and the odd forgotten gem. The tragic conclusion of Broken Blossoms (D. W. Griffith, 1919), accompanied by a sentimental violin solo and pink petals gently falling down either side of the screen (courtesy of an ancient brencograph machine), had the audience openly weeping.

At Pomona, I first saw The Dragon Painter (1919), one of a small bevy of Hollywood films made by Chinese and Japanese in the teens and 20s to combat racism, and starring the young Susse Hakayama (who played the prison commandant many years later in David Lean’s 1957 The Bridge on the River Kwai). A glorious tinted print of this fascinating film restored by the Museum of Modern Art is in the National Lending Collection. It has become something of a personal favourite. After converting many friends not interested in silent film with a screening at my fortieth birthday, I’m looking forward to its reception when accompanied by a shakuhachi and koto quartet at the next Australian and New Zealand History and Film Conference.

For many people, silents equals Buster Keaton and his colleagues or the peculiar sensation of melodrama projected too fast. Not that there’s anything wrong with Keaton, as those who’ve been introduced to him in the past two years by the fabulous Blue Grassy Knoll will testify. But the interesting thing about silents is their diversity. It’s discovering curiosities. I remember my amazement at my first silent stag film, the sailor, his boy, his stowaway girl and the captain in every possible, quite graphic, combination. And my excitement at experimentation by filmmakers such as Germaine Dulac. The sheer force of melodramas such as those mentioned earlier. The charm of Lubitsch’s Die Puppe (1929), the startlingly new performances in other classics such as Lois Weber — working before the production code! And the quaint representation of the exotic in North Queensland by Haddon so early in the history of film.

So, how about a bit more daring from programmers? Even for smaller films, once the audience is there, good films with careful presentation can win out. To my astonishment, Herbert Brenon’s Peter Pan (1924) and A Kiss for Cinderella (1922) topped the audience polls at the Brisbane International Film Festival last year. The National Cinematheque has a good record with silents. The beautiful print of Die Nibelungen (1924), brought out from the Munich Filmuseum as part of the recent Fritz Lang season, will long remain with me as a great experience despite reading out translations of the German intertitles for four hours!

Most international film festivals seem to present at least one large silent event. For me, Berlin has been the most consistently interesting with its comprehensive director retrospectives mounted by the Deutsche Kinemathek and other special screenings where international archives vie with each other to present restored prints (oh, envy!). This year, a small treasure was seeing People on Sunday (Menschen am Sonntag, Edgar Ulmer, 1924) come to life under a chamber orchestra. Pando­ra’s Box (Die Bűche der Pandorä, 1928), part of a Pabst retrospective, closed the Berlinale last year accompanied by an orchestral score. Unfortunately, I even tears didn’t score me a ticket. Of course, the film toured Australia a few years ago, but, although I loved the music, I felt it overwhelmed the film.

Which brings us to the first of the presenta­ tion problems. Live music is crucial to so-called silent cinema. The combination of moving image and live performance makes each presentation unique. But ensuring a synthesis of film and music is difficult. I was somewhat dissatisfied with the presentation of The Sentimental Bloke (Raymond Longford, 1919) when it opened the Melbourne Film Festival a few years ago. The music was very lively and the audience enjoyed the performance, but for me the film became wallpaper. I found Graham Koehne’s scoring for the same film as played by the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra at the Bris­ bane Biennial five nights earlier more sympathetic. Thank goodness they decided to screen film rather than video as first planned!

There are other problems of presentation. As that silent cinema guru, Kevin Brownlow, so eloquently puts it,

Poor silent films! Can any art have been treated so shabbily? Even those who respect the films often treat them with such rever­ ence — projecting them too slowly without music — that the life is squeezed out of them.

B.I.F.F.’s presentation in August of the delightful The Kid Stakes (Tal Ordell, 1927), with a new score and twelve-piece orchestra, attracted some 800 people. When I came onto the project, I was horrified to find the composer had been working for months off a telecine of the film at 16fps. He was delighted when we sliced about ten minutes off the duration by deciding on 20fps! But I would have preferred it at the standard 24 than the agonizing suspense of the cricket ball going through the window at 16!’

Silent blockbusters — with these problems overcome — seem to do well. The British Film Institute has re-released Battleship Potemkin (1925) for the Sergei Eisenstein centenary. Judging by my wistfully-declined invitations to gala performances from San Francisco to Argentina, it’s travelling the world as a prestige event. The huge productions of classics by Thames Television Silents with orchestral scores by Carl Davis have paved the way for the interest these special events are now able to generate. But the interest does seem to be in the calibre of the orchestras accompanying the works.

One of my own more memorable opportunities to present silent films involved the 1938 Chinese silent, Eight Hundred Heroes, about the fall of Shanghai (sound had been sus­ pended because of the war) at the 1995 B.I.F.F. The accompaniment by the twelve-piece Chinese orchestra included a Chinese opera singer. Unfortunately, the audience didn’t seem much bigger than the orchestra but those who were present still talk about it! Another Pordenone find, which was a hit at B.I.F.F. this year, was the enchanting Legong (Dance of the Virgins): A Story of the South Seas (Henry de Falaise and Gaston Glass), an ethnographic travelogue about Bali in 1922. Released in 1935, it was amongst the last of the two-colour Technicolors, “where suntanned bodies and emerald scarves are not restricted by reduced spectrum reproduction.” Although it was released with a contemporary music-track, the film used spectacula­ rly designed intertitles.

But my biggest event to date has been a recreation of Frank Hurley’s travelogue enter­ tainment, Pearls and Savages (1921). This absorbing project was kick-started when film­ maker Frances Calvert alerted my co-producer, Sally Jackson, and me to the existence of a different version of the film in a German anthropological museum. Further material was unearthed in the UK and the USA, along with various Australian institutions. The combination of hand-tinted print, hand-coloured lantern slides, copies of the original field recordings, Michael Pate “lecturing” on stage surrounded by artefacts, and Ron West playing an accompaniment developed from the original musical themes was an enormous challenge. However, the interest of a diverse audience has been more than rewarding.

So, what is it about silent cinema? For me, to quote Brownlow again, it’s “the potential capacity of silent cinema” to make the imagination work” more profoundly and more intensely than many of the easily-accessible pictures of today.
Supreme Sound Studios in Sydney's Paddington was like many other production houses of the 1950s, '60s and '70s: a 'school of hard knocks' and experience arena for many filmmakers. Its operators, Gwen Oatley and the late Merv Murphy, gave many a young career a kick up the ladder in the business. There was one young man who, in fact, appeared in his first feature film, thanks to Supreme—and was then seen never again on the cinema screen. But, he's done reasonably well in another sphere...

Journey Out of Darkness (Games Trainor, 1967) was a Northern Territory story based on an incident in 1900, where a uniformed black policeman was set on the trail to track and capture another, errant Aborigine. The casting (for the time) was immaculate: Ed Devereaux played the role of the police black tracker and Kamahl starred as the runaway. Ed managed to get into the part with the help of some Egyptian No. 7 make-up to darken his skin and some short lengths of conduit stuck up his nose to de-Europeanize his nasal passages. Kamahl, unfortunately, was garbed in a spotless white loincloth, brief enough to brilliantly display the golden skin of his Tamil forebears. A fairly unlikely pair of Aborigines the pair presented.

After the film was shot and went into post-production, wags at the Studios quickly christened the feature "Journey Into Disaster". The 11-minute trailer cut by editor Ian Maitland was acclaimed 'brilliant'. In contrast, the full-length feature world-premiered at the State Theatre, complete with marching girls, ranked as a fizzer.

The budget for the film was minimal, but sufficient to cover laundry costs and ensure that Ed Devereaux's immaculate white uniform and Kamahl's modesty-wrap remained Rinso-white throughout the three months' story frame. Costs were pared so low, however, that (now well-known DOP) David Gribble recalls his role as camera assistant was not eased by a continuing absence of carbon paper, in spite of repeated pleas to the Sydney office for those desirable slivers of black tissues. Each night he was obliged to write out his daily camera report seven times: one for the lab, one for the editor, etc.

At one point, Kamahl's character was required to point the bone at the copper. As often happens, time was never found on location to shoot the actual finger/bone/twine assembly close-up on Kamahl's forefinger. So, this writer had the diverting experience of directing a pick-up shot for the movie, back in the Paddington studios, as Kamahl accommodatingly popped in for a poke or two to enliven a reel or two.

**THE THREE MUSKETEERS**

One of the great producer-director teams – the Brothers McElroy (Jim and Hal) and Peter Weir, centre—during post-production on The Last Wave (1977). While still working together, the Brothers McElroy made, with Weir, The Cars that Ate Paris, Picnic at Hanging Rock (1975) and The Last Wave. Jim McElroy also produced Weir's The Year of Living Dangerously (1982).
The first issue of *Sight and Sound* that I ever bought was a 1962 edition which listed the results of a poll of 70 critics who had been asked to nominate the 10 best films of all time. The list included nine films I’d never seen. It provided a handy thumb-guide as to what I should be looking for. I had seen *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, 1941), but only in the version where some clown had shortened it to fit a two-hour time slot on Australian television and had thoughtfully removed all the references to Rosebud. And that was it.

I quickly caught up with *L’Avventura* (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1960), which left me perplexed because nothing seemed to happen, and *La Règle du jeu* (Jean Renoir, 1939), which left me perplexed because the film seemed to be shoddily technically; you couldn’t hear it, you couldn’t read it and it jumped about a bit like some home movie. It took me another 25 years before I finally completed the list by seeing what was left of Erich Von Stroheim’s *Greed* (1924). But in the main, by the time the 1972 list came along — we’re almost getting into Cinema Papers’ era now — I’d caught up. By then, Federico Fellini’s *Otto e Mezzo* (1962) and Ingnar Bergman’s *Persona* (1966) and *Wild Strawberries* (1957) were in, Orson Welles also had a second entry with *The Magnificent Ambersons* (1942), Carl Theodor Dreyer’s *La Passion de Jeanne D’Arc* (1928) had reappeared from the 1952 list, and Buster Keaton’s *The General* (1926) had made it. The selection seemed to be getting older.

The 1982 list was published in an edition which contained the individual lists as well as the poll. It saw the entry of *Shichinin No Samurai* (*The Seven Samurai*, Kurosawa, 1954) and *Singin’ in the Rain* (*Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen, 1952*), *Vertigo* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958) and *The Searchers* (*John Ford, 1956*). Fellini’s *Otto e Mezzo* had become the youngest film on the list following the exit of Bergman and Persona.

The feature of having one Japanese film was continued in 1992, when *Tokyo Monogatari* (*Tokyo Story*, Yasujiro Ozu, 1953) had made it along with 2001: *A Space Odyssey* (*Stanley Kubrick, 1968*) which, at 24 years old, was the youngest film on the list. *Pather Panchali* (*Satyajit Ray, 1956*) also made it that year, *Satyajit Ray’s first appearance. As well, in the comeback of all time, Jean Vigo’s *L’Atalante* (1934) made its second appearance and its first since the 1962 list. Of the list went those apparent oncers, *Shichinin No Samurai* and *Singin’ in the Rain*, as well anything from Italy, namely *Otto e Mezzo* and *L’Avventura*.

Out, as well, were *The Magnificent Ambersons* and *The General*.

The 1982 edition had one memorable Australian contribution to the composition of the final table when *The Age* in Melbourne, having been invited to join its illustrious peers press around the world, decided that its list of ten had to be compiled by not one person, I hesitate to use the word “critic” in this context, but two! Neither are writing about film for *The Age* or any other paper any longer!

Lists are fascinating but seem to be the domain of the movies. Do art magazines or literary magazines run ten bests each year? Do they publish monthly grids where critics get to put numbers or stars or dots in columns in appreciation of works recently brought to attention? Do the book shows or the theatre shows feel the need to end their notices with ratings? It doesn’t seem so. Is there anywhere else bar the movies where an institution like the Museum of the Moving Image in London can publish a list of 360 films and announce that it plans to screen one each day, so that in a year of dedicated filming a person will be able to see what is allegedly, by international consensus, the cinema’s canon. The accompanying catalogue contains much agonizing about the selection, what’s in and what’s out.

It’s only the movies that do this and only the movies that cause people to publish the array of dictionaries, guides, catalogues, directories, registers, compilations, collections, records and reference books with such endless facility. And why are they published? Because film buffs, filmmakers, film fans, film critics, film collectables, enthusiasts and collectors buy them. Everyone has *Leonard Maltin*. It is the biggest selling film title at Electric Shadows Bookshop in Canberra. Andrew Sarris’ *The American Cinema* was a bible. Bertrand Tavernier’s *50 Ans du Cinéma Américain* proved that my French had slipped too far to be really useful. But it has lists throughout.

*Sarris’ latest book, You Ain’t Heard Nothin’ Yet*, just has, out of nostalgia, become compulsive reading and, of course, the first thing I dipped into was its Appendix of “Best Directors”. I have almost memorized the latest edition of David Thomson’s *A Biographical Dictionary of Film*. Of all the things that set the movies apart, one of its most distinguishing features is the fascination with lists. In the last Sight and Sound poll, the critics’ lists were accompanied by directors’ lists, a revelation in themselves. It’s not just the meretricious observers who love to play the game. Martin Scorsese listed only five films that he “continues to live by”. John Woo listed films by Welles, Kubrick, Jean-Pierre Melville, David Lean, Scorsese, Sam Peckinpah, Francis Ford Coppola, Kurosawa and West Side Story (*Robert Wise, 1961*). Monika Treut included Russ Meyer and John Waters. Chen Kaige listed his own début feature (*Yellow Sunflower, 1982*). So let me set a hare running by re-working, revised and renamed “Best Directors” in Andrew Sarris’ *You Ain’t Heard Nothin’ Yet*, covering 1927-1949.


2. Andrew Sarris: *The American Cinema, Directors and Directions 1929-1968*; *Directorial Chronology 1909-1967*. Re-worked, revised and

Honorific Mention: *Leonard Maltin Movie and Video Guide*. Still the biggest and, therefore, the most indispensable of the paperback guides. Invaluable, it puts in the hard slog of an annual update. The judgements are often dubious and occasionally arrogant.

The List to Give Lists a Bad Name: the American Film Institute’s recently-announced top 100 American films of all time. Shameless and ignorant, not the least for its expropriation of David Lean.
The state government has established a fund for the encouragement of young filmmakers. Eligible projects will be mainly short fiction films, documentaries, or experimental films.

The fund is administered by the New South Wales Film & Television Office.

- The Fund is open to individuals or teams of individuals between the ages of 18 and 35 years who are NSW residents.
- The Fund will make direct grants towards production and post production costs only.
- Projects must demonstrate cultural and economic benefit to NSW and be entirely produced in NSW using NSW based service providers.
- Each project’s principal photography must begin within six months of approval.
- There is no restriction on the format [film or tape], subject matter or type of film.
- The maximum grant will be in the range of $20,000-$25,000, but the assessment committee may recommend a larger grant for a proposal of exceptional merit.
- The closing date for the next round is 19 February 1999.

Guidelines and applications for the Young Filmmakers Fund must be used and are now available from:

New South Wales Film & Television Office
Level 6, 1-15 Francis Street East Sydney NSW 2010
Phone (02) 9380 5599 Fax (02) 9360 1090 www.ftosyd.nsw.gov.au
As one examines the industrial topography of the Australian film production, distribution and exhibition industry in 1973 and compares it with the landscape in 1998, one cannot but be appalled by the depressing similarity of so many of the issues confronting us. In some ways, it's going through a time-warp.

Let's look at a few of them.

Censorship
In 1973, the Melbourne and Sydney Film Festivals were still being assailed by censorship scandals as major international movies were being hijacked by the Commonwealth Film Censor. We were fighting for the introduction of the R-certificate. We got it in 1976.

Now, a new wave of right-wing, retro conservatism and PC-family values is progressively eroding the freedom of adults to view what they choose. Pasolini's Salò o les 120 giornate de Sodome (1975), yet again rebranded, is the most obvious example. There are a myriad of genre-based, B-thrillers pushing the erotic or violence envelope that are not even submitted for classification; major titles are being trimmed to avoid more restrictive classifications and the more conservative states continue to threaten and blackmail the federal board.

Australian Film Production
In 1973, the embryonic Australian film industry was re-learning Ken G. Hall's lesson from before World War II that low-brow populist comedy like The Adventures of Barry McKenzie (Bruce Beresford, 1972) and Alvin Purple (Jim Butzall, 1973) make commercial box-office waves, while personal down-beat nihilistic pieces like The Cars That Ate Paris (Peter Weir, 1974) or Between Wars (Michael Thornhill, 1974) fail.

In 1998, once again, we relearn that low-brow populist comedies like The Castle (Rob Sitch, 1997) succeed, whereas personal, down-beat nihilistic pieces like In the Winter Dark (James Bogle) and The Sound of One Hand Clapping (Richard Flanagan, 1998) fail.

Australian Film Subsidy
Direct subsidy via the Australian Film Development Corporation (later Australian Film Commission) and state funding bodies was replaced by tax shelter indirect funding in the 1980s as the industry pushed for less-regulatory analysis and a multi-door marketplace. The tax shelter imploded at the end of the 1980s due to a mix of abuse by some producers and manoeuvres and astute PR by film bureaucrats who wanted their power back.

In 1998, the Australian Film Finance Corporation formally reintroduced script assessment in the face of budget cuts and other constraints. Subjectivity is again on the rise, and the future of the industry 25 years on remains at the whim of government.

Australian Audience Tastes
In 1973, Australian films' share of the national box-office struggled to hit one percent. By the end of the 1970s, it had carved out a range varying from year to year, but averaging five to ten percent.

With occasional spikes into the teens — and 24 percent in 1986 (the year of Crocodile Dundee, low-brow populist comedy?), it has held under 10 percent over the quarter century. What does this tell us about the tastes of Australian producers and directors versus Australian audiences?

Trade Practices
In 1973, independent exhibitors' submissions to the Tariff Board Enquiry focused on difficulties with print supply, rental terms, the power of Hoyts, GUO and Village, and the distribution groups' affiliations (formal and informal) with them.

Twenty-five years and many multiplexes later, the Independent Exhibitors and Distributors Association has finally signed off on a code of conduct which addresses some of these issues.

Australian Distribution
Twenty-five years ago, the Australian distribution landscape was dominated by the majors and Roadshow. An independent, Seven Keys, pushed the margins with some success, but collapsed due to under-capitalization and aggressive competition.

In the 1980s, Filmac achieved some success but collapsed for similar reasons.

Now in the 1990s, Beckers-REP is trying again, but is finding the going just as tough.

The Fear of the Foreign (read "USA")
In 1973, we were bouncing off the walls in fear of Jack Valenti's ability to render our then nascent film industry reborn still-birth. The leftist anti-USA, anti-Vietnam stand underpinned the thinking of most of the industry-founder movers-shakers and has never really gone away.

Through the late 1970s and the 1980s, we steadfastly resisted signing any co-production treaties and became the last English-speaking country in the world with a film industry to sign a co-production treaty with anyone.

The GATT debates swirled through the late 1980s and now our world seems to be in danger of falling apart because of the High Court decision regarding New Zealand eligibility for Australian content, which can (to no one but politically-agendaed hysteric) in the real world of film and television industry commerce, have any practical effect on Australian production. Inane, misleading and inflammatory suggestions are made that New Zealand is a USA stalking-horse or that every other country with which Australia has a treaty (from Azerbaijan to Zaire) will try to emulate New Zealand's strategy.

Why do we not embrace New Zealand, our closest English-speaking neighbour with a micro film and television industry, bring it under our wing and welcome the co-ventures and opportunities the High Court decision provides? Why has this protectionist paranoia muddled our thinking this past quarter century?

But there have been some changes that are worthy of note. We are not at all timid and afraid. One cannot but be full of admiration for the empire that Graham Burke and the Kirby's have built at Village Roadshow. It's taken longer than 25 years (more like 45), but their development from a group of drive-in theatres in Victoria to what will probably emerge as the biggest cinema circuit in the world, excluding the USA, coupled with distribution interests in a variety of territories and substantial production interests in Australia and the USA, is something we should all be proud of. Hoyts, too, to a lesser degree, and now, belatedly, GUO have also moved onto the world stage.

In another, but related, arena, the development of the international distribution arms of Beyond and Southern Star have, to a degree that has not been fully recognized, underpinned and supported the activities of the FFC and our film industry in the 1990s. While it is undoubtedly true that John Morris' decision in letting those two (then embryonic) groups handle the slate of the initial Film Funds kick-started both their activities, if government support for the FFC were pulled tomorrow the international expertise and connections built up by these two companies might well prove the industry's life boat.

Other plusses to note include the Warner-Village Gold Coast Studio and new Fox's facility in Sydney and the upcoming Paramount Melbourne set-up.

Finally, I'm not overlooking the cultural success our productions have achieved in festivals, from Cannes to Katmandu, over the past 25 years. But the cultural machine dines out on those successes to an almost monotonous degree. Let's praise also the changes that have occurred in the industry's industrial landscape over the past 25 years and, at the same time, ponder why so many pieces of the matrix remain depressingly the same.

Pierre Rassenti, the French film director and cinema activist, has had an (often silent) hand in numerous international filmmaking careers. Who else would promote a public test screening of Apocalypse Now (Francis Ford Coppola, 1979) in a 90-seat (only!) cinema in Cannes, making sure the world's media captured the ensuing riot?
TRAVELLING NORTH... and south and east and west, and anywhere there is a film festival of interest to be covered.

YOU'VE SEEN THE BIG PINEAPPLE, NOW COP THIS

Sex comedies were big in the 1970s. John D. Lamond's mockumentary, The ABC of Love and Sex, exemplified the decade's claims for sexual liberation.
WALTER SAUNDERS is a Gourndit-Jmara man from the south-western dis­
trict of Victoria, who has been involved in the development of the
Indigenous media and television since the early 1980s. He is currently
Director of the Indigenous Branch of the Australian Film Commission.

The Australian Content Standard (ACS) is a great thing. First implemented
in 1961 and set at 40 percent (4 hours per 28 days between 7.00pm and
9.00pm), the ACS has assured that our commercial television stations
must show Australian stories. It has been a boon for audiences and indus­
try alike: there is nothing like seeing stories that are quintessentially
about us; and, there is nothing like earning a quid doing something you
like. Where would we be without programmes like Home and Away, Divi­
sion Four, Homicide, A Country Practice and Blue Heelers. Where would
the industry be without companies like Crawfords, Grundys or a Southern
Star, to name a few? Screen life has been quite rosy for Australian stories
and their storytellers since the inception of an ACS. Without a doubt, the
ACS would have to be one of the most effective pieces of public policy to
be implemented.

But things are not as propitious as they appear. There is something lacking
in the programmes screened on the com­
mercial networks. There are no stories from the first Australians! Sure, we have
some children’s programmes that have a
touch of the tar brush about them and occasionally there are some episodes of
popular series which are written by Indigenous Australians. And at other
times we have Indigenous characters
introduced in major series, albeit
because of ethnicity. But, really, we do not have any programmes written,
directed, produced and starring Indige­

nous Australians on commercial television. Unfortunately, without their
view of the world, Australia’s television
landscape is pretty much a cultural
desert.

At various stages throughout the
1980s, Indigenous people have tried to
increase the amount of Indigenous con­
tent on commercial television through different means, like the National
Aboriginal and Islander Broadcasting Association, and organizations like
CAAMA and TAIMA. It was tried again in 1988 and 1993 as part of a push
designed to increase cultural diversity on commercial television. The
result was that the broadcasters, through the Federation of Commercial
Television Stations, agreed to be more sensitive in this regard and pro­
duced a series of Advisory Notes: The Portrayal of Aboriginal and Torres
Strait Islander Peoples, The Portrayal of Cultural Diversity and The Por­
trayal of Women and Men. On face value this has worked for ethnic people
and women with the appearance of more women in lead rôles and ethnic
people being cast as regular characters and not introduced because of
their ethnicity. But this has not necessarily worked for Indigenous

African filmmakers are not intelligent parasites.Wal Saunders

Indigenous people have also benefited from good public policy with
the establishment of the Indigenous Branch of the Australian Film Com­
mission. Like the broader industry, Indigenous filmmakers have made the
most of the opportunities created by the implementation of good policy to
make some quite fantastic films. From Sand to Celluloid remains,
arguably, the most successful series of short films produced in Australia’s
filmic history. Its stories are about living within the dominant white soci­
ety: deaths in custody (No Way To Forget and Payback); identity (Two-Bob
Mermaid and Blackman Down); understanding (Fly Peewee Fly and Round
Up). Similarly, the stories in Shifting Sands; From Sand to Celluloid Con­
tinued... moves people but, unlike From Sand to Celluloid, its stories are
about Indigenous people from within indigenous society: the family who
are visiting relatives and have a ghostly experience (Passing Through); the
relative living far from home who attends the funeral of her sister to find
she is not accepted (Grace); having your husband or wife selected for you
(Promise and My Bed; Your Bed); wanting to escape mission life (Tears);
and missing and wanting family (My Colour, Your Kind). Given the level of
public debate about all things Indigenous at the time both series were
made, it is astounding that the programmes in Shifting Sands did not
wave the flag more. Who could really blame Indigenous people from being
critical of government in the face of the extinguishment of Indigenous
property rights; the lack of a formal apology from the government for the
generations of stolen children; and, the irascible mean-spirited speech the
Prime Minister made to all Australians when he addressed the Reconcilia­
tion Conference, compared to the “You will love it” speech he made earlier
the same year to farmers at Long Reach? Nevertheless, the films con­
tained within these two AFC initiatives are not didactic or overtly polemic.
Yet they are Iconoclastic in what they symbolize to Indigenous people.
Above all, they are engaging enough for even the most discerning audi­
ences who want to know what concerns and what affects Indigenous

African Australians.

At present, apart from some features and programmes made for com­
munity consumption, all Indigenous product is made for government
television with some of it enjoying a theatrical release. SBS and ABC have
long been supporters of diversity. You
can switch to either channel at least once
or twice a month and find not only Indige­
nous stories which are written, directed, pro­
duced and created by Indigenous people.
Yet a surf to the commercial channels and
you will not find a ripple. Indigenous
shows on commercial stations are scarcer
than an ironed shirt in Bob Ellis’
wardrobe! Why is Indigenous product rel­
egated to be screened only by public
broadcasters? I do not mean to look a
gifthorse in the mouth, and I am
extremely grateful to SBS and ABC, but it
is an extremely limited audience both in
terms of numbers and demographics who
watch the government broadcasters.
Moreover, those who do watch predomi­
nantly have a higher level of
understanding of Indigenous issues; it is
a bit like preaching to the converted.

Is the creation of an Indigenous Con­
tent Standard (ICS) the solution to this dilemma? What would its creation
do for Indigenous productivity and inclusion into society and understand­
ing in general? At the beginning of 1998, the ACS was increased from 50
percent of programmes screened between 6am and midnight (around
9,855 hours per annum) to 55 percent (an increase of 985.5 hours per
annum). Why not set an ICS at 2 percent of the current 55 percent per
annum across the three networks? This would amount to 216.81 hours per
annum of Indigenous content across all genre. I can almost hear the cries of
aghast. I heard similar cries at the 1998 SPA Conference when I
broached the subject with a few: “An Indigenous standard would be
alright as long as the quality is there.” This reminds me of the comments
made by the commercial broadcasters in response to the establishment of
the ACS: “There are no quality Australian writers”; “Australian directors
are not skilled enough”; and “We don’t have good Australian producers.”
In hindsight, one can see how spurious these arguments really were. We
can also see how the industry grabbed the opportunity an ACS presented
and established the vibrant television industry we have today.

Indigenous filmmakers are no different. For them to be, feel and act
like valuable and accepted members of society, they must be woven into
it. The way for this to happen is for as many Australians as possible to
hear their stories. They must not be treated as the “other” any longer. Ini­
tiatives designed to improve the participation rates of Indigenous people
in industry are great. They are a sure way of creating space within indus­
try. But initiatives must advance and evolve if the recipients of them are to
mature and develop into real industry players. The creation of an ICS by
government is a way of ensuring that industry, through the commercial
broadcasters, assists in the development of the Indigenous sector of the
industry. Then, perhaps, Indigenous filmmakers will not feel like intelli­
gen parasites.
THERE’S SOMETHING GOING ON HERE, BUT YOU DON’T KNOW WHAT IT IS, DO YOU, MR JONES?
Barry Jones, one of the instrumental figures in establishing the Australian Film and Television School (later AFTRS), checks his facts at an Australian Film Awards presentation.

George Miller and Byron Kennedy, founders of Kennedy Miller productions.

THE MADNESS OF KING GEORGE
One of the Australia’s most successful film directors, George Miller, after making the breakthrough action film, *Mad Max* (1979).


Sometimes in the early 1970s, before the days of SBS, before the time when the Valhalla and other repertory cinemas became a refuge for frustrated cinephiles, before European or independently-produced art films were accepted as a form of mainstream cinematic entertainment, when screenings of these films were a rarity and not a commodity, at a time when films shown at the Melbourne Film Festival rarely got a commercial release, my father took me to a screening at Melbourne University’s Union Theatre. I was thirteen years old.

We arrived at what seemed to be an endless queue of people that snaked out the main glass doors, down the steps and into the courtyard. We walked along the length of the queue and approached the side door of the ticket box. The door was opened by a friend of my father’s (I think they had known each other in the Communist Party). He looked kinda stressed and anxious. There was a “sold out” sign sitting in the box-office window. “I think we’ve sold more tickets than there are seats, but I’ve got some camp stools sitting up the back, so I can sneak you in”, he whispered. We nodded and bowed our heads in shame as we walked along the frustrated queue and headed towards the welcome darkness of the cinema. A Japanese man pressed in tight behind a row of other desperate moviegoers impatiently waved around a fistful of dollars (sorry, I had to put that in). “I’ve waited five years to see this film!” he shouted angrily at the closed box-office as we disappeared inside.

Dad’s friend led us towards the camp chairs set up at the back of the theatre and sat down beside us. There was not a spare seat in the house. People were sitting in the aisles. A sense of excitement filled the air. The lights went dim and two scratchy black-and-white Japanese calligraphy characters appeared on the screen superimposed over some sort of logo. A fuzzy subtitle appeared underneath translating the calligraphy into TOHO FILMS. To a young teenage boy, deprived of “the opiate of the masses” by two Marxist book-reading parents who objected to daily doses of talking horses, thoroughly modern witches and other such examples of American Imperialism, what followed was a cinematic revelation. The exploitation of the under-classes, the respect of the aged, the bonding of friendship, the loss of a father, true love, noble moral values, honour, loyalty, weakness, strength, fear and solidarity, all combined with a sense of balletic violence, stillness, visual language and action that affected you more by what it didn’t show than what it did. The depiction of all this was via an array of sharply-defined, standout characters, portrayed both aurally and visually with a vivid clarity, texture and empathy unsurpassed today.

I sometimes wonder what would happen if just one of the endless stream of lame and bland big-budget action flicks that continue to emerge from the American sausage factory they call Hollywood, touched upon no more than ten percent of the skill, proficiency, characterization, dimension, humanity and profundity of Akira Kurosawa’s *The Seven Samurai* (*Shichinin no samurai*, 1954), what size of box-office take would be realized. Surely it would be of titanic (sic) proportions.


This was the era of our “Father and Son Night” at school where we watched scratchy old, Education Department-approved sex-education films, full of diagrams and naked human pritames staring blankly at the camera. We migrated from this to *Renoir*, *Lang*, *Pabst*, *Buñuel*, *Von Sternberg*, *Von Stroheim*, *Pasolini*, *Borowczyk* and *Fellini*, amongst others, all of which completely messed up what the Education Department had spent so much money trying to set right. (How was I to know that bathing in the blood of the local peasant virgins was not the thing to do?) There was a lot of different kinds of bonding cinematic experiences through that time, but nothing really compared to the delicious rush of that golden stretch of Kurosawa films seen for the first time.

See ya round, y’ol bastard.
With Jane and Aaron, Brooks has given us one of the great male-female screen friendships. They are perfect pals. They share goals, values and ambitions. They confide in each other. They speak at a pace and communicate at a level that leaves others confused. Witness the late-night phone chat: “Wouldn’t this be a great world if insecurity and desperation made us more attractive, if needy were a turn on?”, sighs Aaron after recounting the disasters of the day. “Call if you get weird”, replies Jane, sympathetic. As platonic friends, they’re totally in sync: “I’ll meet you at the place near the thing where we went that time”, Aaron instructs Jane. “Okay, I’ll meet you there”, she agrees. No explanation necessary; she knows exactly what he means. It’s consummate writing: simple and eloquent. Tom, of course, is the wedge that drives them apart, the man Jane recognizes is flawed but also finds irresistible. Tom can’t touch Aaron or Jane in the brains trust department, but he’s got a natural savvyness they could only dream about. Unlike Aaron, who’s too smart and prickly for his own good, Tom knows how to get help when he needs it and he’s an expert at working the angles in order to turn situations to his own advantage. In one very real sense, he does represent everything Jane and Aaron fear and loathe about their business. But as he sets up and develops this intricate and dynamic triangle, one of Brooks’ inspired moves is to restrain himself from making Tom a total monster. His characters have more depth. Jane might be a control freak at work, or when issuing directions to a driver from the back seat of his taxi. She’s fierce, fiery, a barker-inner, a woman who walks and talks fast, who runs on a furious energy and acts on instinct rather than calculating the consequences. But she regularly dissolves into fits of despair when she’s home alone (even though she’s so organized that she sets aside time in her busy schedule for the tears). Aaron might seem seasoned and whip-smart, but he’s a smart aleck and often his own worst enemy. Talented, yes; a diplomat, never. And Tom, well, Tom might well be the Devil – as Aaron suggests – a demon with a deceptively benign guise. But we also see him as a guy who knows that he’s not too bright, who wistfully recognizes his limitations and craves the approval of his peers. While we are given ample reason to be wary of him and all that he represents, we also know that he’s desperate to be better at what he does, keen to learn and to improve.

Both streetwise and naïve, Tom at times also even emerges as being more honest than his righteous colleagues. “You could get fired for things like that!”, Jane shrieks at Tom after learning that he has faked tears in order to gee-up the emotional drama of a news report. “I got promoted for things like that!”, he retorts angrily, utterly-insincere, massively-egotistical, handsomely-remunerated reptile who’s all puffed up on his own importance inside his well-tailored cashmere coat. Following in Rorsh’s footsteps through the network ranks, Tom knows his best angle and he’s learned how to sit on the tails of his jacket to stop the sleeves from wrinkling up around his shoulders while he’s on air, even if he can’t name all the members of the Cabinet.

Canny as it is in its depiction of the news business, it’s the seamless counterpoint between the personal and the professional that is one of the film’s great strengths. At the same time as it provides a cutting insight into the workings of modern media, it offers a vibrant, delicately-nuanced trio of central characters. They’re an unlikely bunch – and beautifully cast as such – and they’re ideal for the film’s exploration of loyalty, the bonds of friendship and the thrill of romance.

Brooks’ characters are rich, full of contradictions and ambiguities. Tom’s a shy charmer, but he’s also touchingly earnest in his desire to learn and do better. News producer Jane Craig (Holly Hunter) is a driven professional, ruthless and exacting in the standards she applies to herself and others on the job. But she’s not above conniving to dispatch a rival to Alaska in order to clear her route to Tom’s bed. And skilled as she is at work, she’s also hopelessly clumsy in matters of the heart.
BRIAN McFARLANE has laboured for Cinema Papers for 21 years. For relaxation, he is an Associate Professor in the English Department at Monash University.

The answer is not, as a colleague suggested, a porn star, but one of the most-neglected and undervalued of British directors. When I was asked by Cinema Papers to write, on this historic occasion, a short piece reflecting “the author’s passion for cinema”, the opportunity to trumpet this unsung hero was too much to resist. After my 21 continuous years of hard labour in the Cinema Papers vineyard, it seemed like a reward for good behaviour.

Lance Comfort entered movies in 1929, fulfilling such functions as Sound Recorder, Special Effects man and ‘Technical Supervisor’ on several dozen films before directing his first feature, Hatter’s Castle, in 1940. This was based on a seditiously downbeat novel of domestic tyranny by A. J. Cronin (does anyone remember him?), with wild-eyed Robert Newton as Brodie, the Scottish hatter with ideas above his station and a family under his thumb. Comfort released the novel from the shackles of its dour and spurious realism, and brought real melodramatic panache to bear on its tableaux of obsessive aspiration and patriarchal cruelty. Brodie browbeats his careworn drudge of a wife; brings his barmied mistress to live in the ‘castle’; and kicks his pregnant daughter out into the snow – and that’s only when he’s feeling good about life. The youthful James Mason, Deborah Kerr and Emlyn Williams respectively vivify the doctor hero, the put-upon daughter he rescues and her slimy seducer; and cinematographer Max Greene’s luminous chiaroscuro does justice to James Carter’s Gothic production design. I mention these names because, if Comfort was never a candidate for auteur status, at very least he was able to orchestrate some impressive talents.

He was at his most buoyant in the 1940s when he made a series of melodramas that are worth anyone’s time and which draw regularly on such rewarding collaborators. Great Day (1946) affects a combination of English pastoral (a village prepares for a visit from Mrs Roosevelt) and the melodrama of obsession (a former World War I captain steals a ten-shilling note and is brought to the brink of suicide). Bedelia (1946) is a handsome wicked-woman thriller, with Margaret Lockwood, the decade’s archetypal ‘Wicked Lady’, murdering her way through several husbands and towards handsome insurance pay-outs. The film is sharp about her sexual distaste for men; and this theme is even more potently treated in Daughter of Darkness (1948), in which an Irish nymphomaniac servant girl, Emlyn Baudline, comes to work on an English farm and seduces and murders her way through the local eligibles. Remarkably for its time, the film retains our sympathy for her ‘otherness’ at the expense of the clipped vowels which seek to keep her in her sexual and social place.

If there is a continuing preoccupation running through these films it is that of the obsessive personality, and Comfort is not afraid to give some showy actors their enjoyable heads as they render this condition. Not only Newton, who appears for Comfort again in the sombre 1947 Simenon-based thriller, Temptation Harbour, but also Lockwood, who narrows her eyes and flares her nostrils to dangerous purpose as Bedelia; the Irish actor Slob-han McKenna, who brings a compelling intensity to the genuinely strange, mad Emmy; and Eric Portman, whose neurotic edge superbly serves the needs of the declared captain in Great Day. The last of the 1940s obsessives is the parvenu country gent in Silent Dust (1949), played to suggest chilling monomania by Stephen Murray, his physical bleakness acting as an index of his blinkered dedication to the memory of his wastrel son. And the actors’ pyrotechnics in these films are again and again reinforced by full-throttle musical scores and cameramen with more on their minds than pictures of people talking.

Comfort never enjoyed the acclaim accorded those filmmakers who worked in the critically-privileged literary and realist strands of British cinema of the period. Melodrama had a strong commercial innings from 1943 to 1946, with the Gainsborough bodice-rippers, disdained by critics then, but recently re-evaluated in some of the most acute exegeses to be found on any aspect of film, Comfort’s first melodrama was too early for the Gainsborough cycle launched in 1943 with The Man in Grey (Leslie Arliss) and, by the time he hit his stride in the later 1940s, the vogue had passed. During the war his films were untouched by the new fashion for ‘authenticity’ in the fiction film: he made spy thrillers (Squadron Leader X (1943), Escape to Danger (1943), both for RKO’s London operation), a stoody biopic (Penn of Pennsylvania, 1941, which brazenly solicits American solidarity with beleaguered England), a director-proof Old Mother Riley farce (1942) and a charming version of Priestley’s regional comedy, When We Are Married (1942).

Sadly, Comfort never seemed to be doing the right thing at the right time, for either major critical or audience support. As the industry changed in the 1950s, as different kinds of genres commanded popularity, as the studio structures grew more precarious and the audiences less reliable, he found himself confined mainly to making B-movies – that is, supplying the bottom half of the double bill which was then the standard exhibition mode. However, some of these are very good indeed: for the record, his best are probably Bang! You’re Dead (1954), a monotonous piece of postwar malaise; Eight O’Clock Walk (1954), a thriller which quite daringly turns on the issues of child molestation; Touch of Death (1962), in which robbery is complicated by unexpected poison; and the gripping kidnap drama, Tomorrow at Ten (1962). All these films move smartly, create the right tension, and often look stylish beyond their modest means.

The budgets grew less, but Comfort adapted himself to strained circumstances, tightened his belt and his plotlines, worked second-string stars to often striking effect, made resourceful use of locations within easy reach of London, and kept his eye on the changing social climate. He had the advantage of a number of recurring collaborators, including cinematographer Basil Emmott, screenwriter Lyn Fairhurst and editor John Trumper. It’s encouraging to see what can be achieved in discount filmmaking if the personnel care enough about it. Comfort’s is not a solitary case: others such as Vernon Sewell, Lawrence Huntington, Montgomery Tully and Arthur Crabtree are similarly rich for reappraisal: Lance Comfort, perhaps, hurried the decades more persuasively than any, until his untimely death in 1967; it’s time to give him his due. That’s why I’m writing a book about him.
AAKEN MOGG is a devoted Hitchcock scholar and Editor of The MacGuffin.

Every night a new adventure! My ISP (Internet Service Provider) is pledged to give me just 75 minutes a day of access-time on the Net, but, if I wait till midnight before going on, I can usually manage to stay connected as long as I need. Which is fortunate! For a film fan or film scholar, especially if s/he has a Web site to be regularly updated, it’s connected as long as I need. Which is fortunate! For a film fan or film obliged to give me just 75 minutes a day of access-time on the Net, but, if I wait till midnight before going on, I can usually manage to stay connected as long as I need. Which is fortunate! For a film fan or film scholar, especially if s/he has a Web site to be regularly updated, it’s possible to spend easily a couple of hours a day on-line. Importantly, it’s my experience that most of that time can be fruitfully spent. There are some wonderful individual sites on the Web. I’m simply in awe of one devoted to the Czech animator Jan Svankmajer, for example. Then there are the academic-type sites brimming with learned essays and updated frequently. A long-standing favourite of mine is the UK Film-Philosophy site, though it’s rivalled these days by Screening the Past, based at La Trobe University, Australia. Often, I make use of the Internet Movie Data Base and, for information on film books and general books, both the Amazon.com site and the Blackwell’s Bookshop site. Of course, sometimes I don’t know if a particular topic is on the Net at all. At such times, I typically first see what the powerful AltaVista search-engine will turn up.

But what really engages me on the Net are the opportunities it provides to discuss and research my favourite topic, the films and career of Alfred Hitchcock. For a start, the public Usenet group, alt.movies.hitchcock, is seldom a dead-loss, thanks to someone like Fergal Hughes in the Irish Republic who regularly posts good comments; however, the site’s overall standard is low, and ‘flaming’ is always breaking out. Much better, I find, are such academic groups as H-Film (for discussing matters of film history and general film culture), Screen-l (similar, with an emphasis on teaching), and Film Theory. All of these have helped me this year to formulate various positions – most recently, concerning the significance of women wearing glasses in Hitchcock’s Shadow of a Doubt (1943), Strangers On A Train (1951), and Vertigo (1958). Sound mundane? It wasn’t!

Best of all for me has been corresponding with many of the people who’ve stumbled on my Hitchcock Web site. Hero, I’d be churlish if I didn’t single out Dr Tag Gallagher, a good Irish Catholic who lives in Massachusetts, and who is the author of a standard book on John Ford. A year ago I sent Tag my analysis of The Wrong Man (1957), which he had told me was his favourite Hitchcock film, and ever since then we’ve swapped thoughts by email almost every night. Lately, he’s had me reading St Augustine (in part for an alleged Hitchcock connection). Tag, though, is just one of my regular email correspondents, whose messages are nearly always welcome. Nearly always welcome?! Well, I read an article somewhere about information overload, and I must say it rang true! Some mornings, I have to spend a good half-hour just filing the hardcopies of the previous night’s messages, before I can start on the day’s business. And, of course, I’m committed each night to updating that Web site I mentioned. It includes a nightly ‘column’, a News section, and a New Publications page for books and journal articles on Hitch. The Research & Information library of the Australian Film Institute regularly alerts me to such material – especial thanks, Aysen! – and, though there’s been a lull just lately, I’m expecting the floodgates to open next year, the Hitchcock centennial.

So those are my nightly doings! All things considered, I’m grateful. It’s a whole new medium operating up there on the Net, in some ways embracing movies as the latter, historically, embraced novels and plays, to nobody’s ultimate disadvantage. Well worth getting into, if you just keep your head about what your needs are, and develop a sensible game-plan for best meeting them.

URLs (Web addresses) mentioned. All of these are prefaced by http://

- filament.illumin.co.uk/svank/index.html
- us.imdb.com (Internet Movie Data Base – US)
- www.amazon.com/ (Amazon.com)
- bookshop.blackwell.co.uk/ (Blackwell’s Bookshop, Oxford)
- www.labyrinth.net.au/-muffin

MEL’ODRAMA

By the time he starred in The Year of Living Dangerously, Mel Gibson had become one of the world’s hottest screen idols. He has travelled a long way from his first feature rôle, as Scoullop (inset below, centre) in Summer City (Christopher Fraser, 1977).
THE KULTURE OF MULTI

"The Migrant Experience" (by Adrian Martin) was one of several articles chronicling the rise of multicultural themes in Australian film and television.

UNIQUE VISION

Jane Campion, an expatriate New Zealander who has lived in Australia for the past seven years, is a recent graduate of the Australian Film and Television School (AFTS). Her short films Peel, A Girl's Own Story and Passionless Moments (with Gerard Lee) have already attracted considerable praise and theatrical distribution. Peel was a finalist in the 1983 Greater Union Awards; A Girl's Own Story won the Rouben Mamoulian Award at the 1984 Sydney Film Festival and Best Direction in the Non-Feature section of the 1984 Australian Film Institute Awards; and Passionless Moments won Best Experimental Film at the same Awards. Campion is currently working on a project with the Women's Film Unit at Film Australia.

Campion is interviewed by Mark Stiles.

UNIQUE VISION

The daringly-original cinema of Jane Campion has been the focus of many Cinema Papers articles. Campion was first interviewed while still making short films, the year after Peel was a finalist in the 1983 Greater Union Awards.
Cinema Papers • January 1999

Michael Powell — my favourite director — called the first volume of his memoirs, A Life in the Movies. What follows is a lay view from the audience. Individually as list-making may be — and so subjective as to ensure that no list ever stays the same for more than a few hours after preparing it — some highlights tend to be constant. Those chosen in no sense purport to be a best-films-of-all-time list, but simply those which seem — as of this moment — to have given me my greatest movie-going moments.

Come and go as do other titles, Abel Gance's 1927 Napoleon always stands out among my favourites. Seeing Kevin Brownlow's restoration of it for the first time in 1983, on the big screen at the Palais Theatre in Melbourne, with the accompaniment of the full Melbourne Philharmonic Orchestra, was a rare moment of revelation. My breath was taken away by the sheer majesty of Gance's conception and the sweep of his technical mastery and audacity. A passage from the post-production script catches the intoxication of the occasion: while the Beggars of Glory, their stomachs empty but their heads filled with songs, leave history to become faster and faster, the triptych becomes one great tricolour flag, and the chant is succeeded by the "Marseillaise". A maestro fills all three screens. "The whole Revolution", the passage concludes, swept on at delicious speed towards the heart of Europe, is now one huge tricolor flag, quivering with all that has been inscribed upon it, and it takes on the appearance of an Apocalyptic, tricolor torrent, inundating, inflaming and transfiguring, all at once and the same time.

Casablanca (Michael Curtiz, 1942) usually takes second place, both for its excellence as a popular film and for the uniquely poignant mixture of idealism and lost innocence which it conveys — if anything, more strongly as the events which inspired it recede from popular memory. I thought for a long time that Claude Rains had given the performance of his life in Casablanca — that, until I saw him as the diplomat in David Lean's Lawrence of Arabia (1962).

Bogart was the perfect Rick. Dooley Wilson's rendition of "As Time Goes By" is about as sublime a match of music to mood as movies have ever managed. And how many other movies are there where, after repeated viewings, your heart still rises into your mouth as in the "Marseillaise" sequence of Casablanca?

Frances Ford Coppola — whose generosity enabled the print of Brownlow's reconstruction of Napoléon to be made — usually comes in third, for the Godfather trilogy as a whole, and sometimes rates a further mention around number six for Apocalypse Now (1979). If The Godfather is technically by far the better film and the more likely to endure, Apocalypse Now has the advantage for my generation of having made, explicable to us the nature of the war in Vietnam through images of astonishing poetic force and virtuosity. It's hard to imagine a more complex layering of meanings than in the helicopter attack on the Vietnamese village.

Orson Welles almost always rates two mentions, more often than not with Chimes at Midnight (aka Falstaff, 1966) in fourth place and Citizen Kane (1941) at number eight. The strength of Chimes at Midnight include: Gielgud delivering what must surely be the most heart-wrenching ever rendition of the great Henry IV speech; Welles' Falstaff; and the skill with which Welles brings together Shakespeare's two plays in a single seamless cinematic masterpiece. Chimes at Midnight also has one of cinema's more striking battles. Citizen Kane calls for no comment other than that, in the present context, it deserves a higher ranking than the competition allows. See Kane as often as you may, it loses none of its power to astonish.

Powell and Pressburger are mostly in fifth place for their Tales of Hoffmann (1951). It is not for nothing that Martin Scorsese credits Hoffmann with having inspired him to become a filmaker. What Powell sees as having been his "totally composed" film fits squarely into the category of neglected cinematic gems. How else could the savagely-mutilated, stripped-of-its-colour version the young Scorsese saw on television have established so comprehensive a hold on his imagination? Innovative use of colour was always one of the glories of the films Powell and Pressburger made in the course of their partnership as The Archers — and nowhere more so than in Hoffmann. Scenes such as Helpmann's first entry and his entry with Ludmilla Tcherina in the gondola in Venice are powerful testimony to Powell's eye and the exotic sensibilities of his designer, Hein Heckroth. Was ever a woman's face captured quite so sensually as in Tcherina's reflection in the canal? I was so bowled over seeing the original release of Hoffmann at the Athenaeum in 1951 or 1952 that I went back seven more times before it was taken off and — to the best of my knowledge — has never since been screened publicly in Australia, although a video cassette and a laser disc of it are available in America. Not least, Hoffmann was my first experience of feeling passionate about an actress: Pamela Brown, who played Hoffmann's Muse. Nicklaus. Powell's movies disclose that, at the time, he and Brown were lovers. Perhaps something of the electricity which must have crackled between them came through to me. Other actresses, notably Alida Valli, Audrey Hepburn and Julie Christie, later captivated me, but never remotely like Pamela Brown!

The Seven Samurai (Shichinin No Samurui, 1954) usually rates around number seven. While the Western began as an American genre, it took Akira Kurosawa to perfect it. Deep as is my affection for almost every Western John Ford ever made, Peckinpah's The Wild Bunch (1969), George Stevens' Shane (1953) and Sergio Leone's Once Upon a Time in the West (1968), the combination of lyricism and explosive action in The Seven Samurai transcends all of them. From an opposite perspective, Sergei Eisenstein's highly-static and formal Ivan the Terrible Part I (1944), Grove, Part II (Boyarskii Zagovar, 1958) shoulder aside his Alexander Nevsky (1938) for ninth place, simply because its examples of the sort of pictorial composition in which Eisenstein and his cameraman, Tisse, excelled — scenes such as Ivan's Last Rites, the wedding feast and Ivan looking out across the procession of czars which calls for his return to Moscow — are more numerous.

Les Enfants du Paradis (Marcel Carné, 1945) mostly makes it into tenth place by a fine margin over ump teen other possible candidates which from time to time seem to have better claims. Those which miss out narrowly include, for example, Powell and Pressburger again for: The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp (1943), The Red Shoes (1948), A Matter of Life and Death (1946) and I Know What You're Going (1945); Alfred Hitchcock's Rear Window (1954) and Rebecca (1940); Bob Fosse for All That Jazz (1979) and Cabaret (1972); Franklin J. Schaffner's Patton (1970) and Stanley Kubrick's Paths of Glory (1957), Jack Clayton's The Innocents (1961), Robert Altman for Nashville (1975), Andrei Tarkovsky's Andrei Rublev (1966) and Quentin Tarantino for Pulp Fiction (1994). Flawed movies which nonetheless retain elements of something special — for example Coppola with The Cotton Club (1984) and Michael Cimino with Heaven's Gate (1980) — are a big headache for list-makers.

And so it all seems, as of 10am on Thursday 28 August 1998. Irrespective of which are at any given point the inclinations and which the exclusions, or in what order of preference, none of them have been other than memorable.
**MERYL, QUEEN OF THE DESERT**

... and Queen of the Accent. Streep is a “bit of an o’righter” as Lindsay Chamberlain in Fred Schepisi’s Evil Angels (1988).

**ON THEIR WAY**

John Duigan’s evocative drama of adolescence, The Year My Voice Broke (1987), introduced three unforgettable faces, when Noah Taylor and Leon Carmen (and Ben Mendelsohn) made their feature debuts.

**SAY, IS THAT THE INCOME TAX ASSESSMENT ACT 1932 IN YOUR POCKET, OR ARE YOU JUST GLAD TO SEE ME?**

The system of tax concessions utilized in the mid-1980s to increase private investment in Australian film has now been all but totally discredited. Yet the question remains: how else would Paul Hogan, Jane Campion, George Miller, Gillian Armstrong, to name but a few, have made what in some cases represent their finest works to date?

**FRONT LINES**

10BA RIP?

Taxing questions for the film industry

There are problems of the death with more grace. How will the Independent Film Commission keep up with the new Australian Film Commission? Will the Australian Film Commission adjust its funding policies to help the troubled film industry in this time of crisis? The Australian Film Commission has announced that it will refuse to fund any film that is not a commercial venture. This is a serious blow to the film industry, which had been hoping to receive financial assistance from the Australian Film Commission.

William A. Tyler, based in New Lambton, NSW, is a poet and author of the book, Making the Best of Invalid Life.

This is an article about Maria Montez, an old Hollywood star of my childhood, whom I believe deserves more recognition for providing sheer entertainment, if only as an escape from the depressing World War II. She starred in a number of Eastem, to do with harem, etc., as distinct from the Westerns, to do with cowboys.

Montez was born Maria Africa Vidal de Santo Silas on Sunday 6 June 1920 in Santo Domingo, a seaside community in the Dominican Republic. Her country was later to honour her for her screen success, with the Order of San Pablo Duarte and the Order of Trujillo. She was a fiery, temperamental woman, a regular beauty, who seems to have had that elusive quality of charisma — that is, judging by the way patrons queued up to see her films. She was called a Queen of Hollywood and was a leader amongst the “glamour girls” actresses of the ’40s.

Montez began to take her place in the 1940 film from Universal Studios, The Invisible Woman (A. Edward Sutherland), and in 1941 appeared in the island fantasy film, South of Tahiti (George Waggner). This was followed the same year by Moonlight in Hawaii (Charles Lamont). However, her first film of note was Arabian Nights (John Rawlins), of 1942. This Eastern saw the first teaming of Montez, Jon Hall and Sabu, remarkable for the beauty of Montez and the mounting in Technicolor. Montez plays an enslaved, curvacious dancing girl, who succeeds in marrying above her status the dashing hero, the Caliph (Hall).

Also, in 1942, Montez played in, and is murdered in, The Mystery of Marie Roget (Phil Rosen). The next year, White Savage (Arthur Lubin) was released, starring the trio of Montez, Hall and Sabu. In glorious Technicolor, the island princess (Montez) is trying to remove the obstacles that bar her marriage to shark-hunter (Hall). Sabu acts as Calip.

Then, in 1944, the trio was joined by Turhan Bey, as a slave-boy, Jamiel, in a role he was born to play, in Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves (Arthur Lubin). Scotty Beckett played Jon Hall as a boy. The film is basic-level entertainment, with the credits, at the beginning, washed-down stone walls, which is an original and pleasing thing. The pace is quite fast, as the Calip’s son (Hall) finds refuge in the cave of the Forty Thieves (“Open Sesame”) and becomes their leader. Ultimately, they rout the Mongul Khan and save Montez from having to marry him, when she is promised, from childhood, to Ali.

This film was remade in 1965 as Sword of Ali Baba (Virgil Vogel), in which much of the original footage is reused.

In 1944’s Cobra Woman (Robert Siodmak), the trio were seen again. Montez plays twin-sisters: one good, one bad. This is Technicolor fantasy-escape of the ’40s at its zenith. The charismatic Montez is a joy to behold, especially as evil Naja in a cobra ritual with some of her subjects in agony. As Tolea, the good twin, she wears sarongs, whereas the bad twin wears sequined evening gowns. Bill Collins has called this “a movie treasure”, though, thinking back to my boyhood when I saw it, I was not altogether happy about my favourite star’s playing the evil role along with the good.

Also in 1944 came Gypsy Wildcat (Roy William Neill), a low-brow but engaging Montez film, with pace and artistry, as she depicts a princess, raised by gypsies, in a colourful, splashy, if routine film in a mediaval setting. For this film, the heroine was coached for dancing and one wit remarked: “If they make her any more fiery than she already is, they will have to call the fire-department!”

It was in 1944, too, that this star appeared in Follow The Boys (A. Edward Sutherland), a war-effort film.

Then, in 1945, the trio starred in their last film together, Sudan (John Rawlins). The poster says “Where Adventure Lies ... And Love Rules”. It’s 76 minutes of supercharged pace, which Bill Collins “loves” for its “consummate artistry”. Another critic, Leonard Maltin, thinks of it as “colourful, but empty adventure romance”, though Collins has praise for its photography, art direction, costume design, make-up artistry and wonderful music score, on themes of love, anguish and majesty. Queen Montez escapes evil Prime Minister, played by George Zucco, with the help of Hall and, with them again, Turhan Bey.

This show was filmed in New Mexico in a Navajo Indian Reservation and involves the incident where Montez wanted a loose lion in her place, but, once the lion roared, she quickly changed her mind and said it would best be kept in a cage, though it was the Queen’s pet!

In 1946, Montez starred with Preston Foster in Tangier (George Waggner). And, in 1947, she was second-billed and in one lengthy scene as a countess in The Exile (Max Ophuls). Her last Hollywood films were Pirates of Monterey (Alfred L. Werker, 1947) and Siren of Atlantis (Gregg C. Tallas, 1948).

Montez made several films in Europe, including Wicked City (François Villiers, 1950) with real-life husband Jean-Pierre Aumont, before she died young of a heart attack after stepping into too hot a bath.

As to Academy Awards, it is noticeable that The Invisible Woman received an award for special effects. Arabian Nights was Universal’s first colour film, and received a number of awards in 1941.
THE INCIDENT AT OWL CREEK (Le Rivière du Hibou), By Andrew L. Urban

I don’t remember the cinema, the year, the month or the day, except that it was in London in 1962 or ’63, but I do remember the film, every frame of its 24-minute running-time. It has been in my head ever since, like a video on demand. I marvel at its economy and its ability to convey an extraordinary array of emotions and ideas, without a single line of dialogue. I felt this film. I felt more than I’ve ever felt a film since. In its haunting images and simple yet moving story, its leap of imagination, I discovered what truly affecting cinema can be.

I was a teenager already accustomed to the French New Wave, although I didn’t hear that phrase until many years later. I didn’t know that I was seeing arthouse films by choice; L’Année Dernière à Marienbad (Last Year at Marienbad, Alain Resnais, 1961), it seemed to me, was just what cinemas should be playing; inventive, experimental, ambiguous works of motion picture arts. My youth and lack of experience gave me enthusiasm if not critical skill, and 0

HOW DO YOU KEEP THEM DOWN ON THE FARM, AFTER THEY’VE SEEN LA?

JOHN FARROW: INTERNATIONAL MAN OF MYSTERY
Rarely acknowledged in his homeland, Farrow remains one of Australia’s finest filmmakers. Scott Murray’s monograph on Farrow resulted in more mail than any other article published in Cinema Papers. Daughter Mia loved it, too, as is clear from her autobiography.

EVERYBODY’S DOING IT...
... even Mel, in this cheeky subscription form. Always a mate of Cinema Papers, Mel Gibson contributed to the two-hour television documentary made to honour ten years of Cinema Papers, Australian Movies to the World.
ing in the age of digital enhancement. DePalma recently-choreographed dénouement, it represents extraordinary opening sequence to the magnification.

prowess.

lived-in passion of the band's performance, too. Jarmusch's grungy concert film. Like the candles that provide intimations of mortality in Max Ophuls' Madame de (1953), his belief in the melody of "Let Me Call You Sweetheart" rises through the doorway of the home he can never enter, at the end of The Year of the Horse (Michael Apted, 1983). Or the memorable closing shot of Waylon Jennings dying alone in the snow in the last shot of The Black Knight (Raoul Walsh, 1954); Saskatchewan (Raoul Walsh, 1953); Sea Devils (Raoul Walsh, 1953); Powder River (Raoul Walsh, 1954); or Running for Cover in crouched position in Connecticut, Rock Hudson (during his time as an action hunk, in films like The Lawless Breed and Sea Devils), Rory Calhoun (so cool, I thought, in Powder River), and, of course, Errol Flynn, everyone's favourite swashbuckler. The princes, most of whose appeal still makes perfect sense to me: Audrey Hepburn (Roman Holiday), Grace Kelly (High Noon, To Catch A Thief) and The Country Girl, which I managed to see as a kid, despite its 'adult' subject matter, Elizabeth Taylor (mainly in the Father of the Bride films), Julia Adams (The Lawless Breed, The Man from the Alamo), Barbara Hale (In Lemma Dione). For better or worse, these actors, locked inside the straitjackets of the parts they accepted but somehow transcending them too, all played important roles in my early filmgoing years and my childhood fantasies. My earnest young eyes wide open, I translated them into my own private scenarios, according to my own needs and desires. The innocent yearnings they satisfied and the pleasures they brought me are long gone. But I can still find their echoes in the Sunday-morning previews of children's films which distributors run for critics and their families, correctly surmising that the best way for a hard-headed adult to come to grips with the appeal of The Rescuers Down Under (Hendel Butry, 1990) or The Parent Trap (Nancy Meyers, 1998) is through the eyes of their children.

As friends and students alike will attest, I'm usually intolerant of those who so thoughtlessly and irreverently disrupt the relationship between films and their audiences with distracted chatter or noisy nibbling. They should know better. But the excited responses of a group of little kids watching a movie exists on a different plane altogether. In their exuberant, unqualified and often noisy surrender to its invitation to immerse themselves, there's a reminder of how it ought to be, of the sense of enchantment that allows us to soar until we think we're able to make of it? It's why the end of The Ice Storm (Ang Lee, 1997) is so poignant, identifying the middle-class family as both a nightmare and a haven in much the same way as Sirk and Minnelli's films do. This is not to say that the exhilaration of a happy ending can't be equally exciting. But only as long as it's been earned, and isn't simply another example of a filmmaker desperately inserting what Sirk in his wisdom used to call an "emergency exit".

The work of critics in books or in journals like Movie and Film Comment have long been part of the passion, too: for the insights they have to offer and the models they're able to provide. This delight in the art of criticism, in the ability to make the pieces of the jigsaw fit together, sometimes in ways that were never intended, has been hard, in fact, become inseparable from my love of the cinema. It's why I love to read the work of good critics and others, too numerous to mention here, who've helped to shape my sensibility, who've enhanced my understanding of the ways in which particular films weave their magic, and from whom there's still much to learn about the art that is the movies.

1 Shane (George Stevens, 1953); Desert Legion (Joseph Pevney, 1953); The Black Knight (Ray Garrett, 1954); Saskatchewenan (Raoul Walsh, 1954); The Lawless Breed (Raoul Walsh, 1952); Sea Devils (Raoul Walsh, 1953); Powder River (Roy Huggins, 1953); one of the women in the film is an Unknown Woman (Baptiste, 1943). And the revelation that there were other ways of looking at the main American films I'd grown up with, the realization that the real heroes were the artists never seen on screen. Budd Boetticher was one, but there were many others too: Ford, Howard Hawks, Frank Capra, Alfred Hitchcock, Ernst Lubitsch, Douglas Sirk, Vincent Minnelli, Fritz Lang, Joseph Losey, McCarey, Jacques Tourneur, Orson Welles, Ruben Mamoulian, Erich Von Sternberg, Preston Sturges, Billy Wilder, Raoul Walsh, Sam Fuller, Robert Altman, Robert Mulligan, Alan J. Pakula, Sam Peckinpah. And then all the writers and cinematographers and those countless unseen artists who left indelible marks on my sense of what films could be. Alongside this, largely through the good graces of the Monash University Film Society, the National Film Theatres in Melbourne and London, and film festivals, came the lesson that films with subtleties mattered, too. And as my sense of the artists behind the scenes continued to multiply — Ophuls, Jean Renoir, Godard, Chabrol, Yasujiro Ozu, Kenji Mizoguchi, Luchino Visconti, Ingmar Bergman, Robert Bresson, Jacques Demy, Maurice Pialat, Jean-Pierre Melville, Nagisa Oshima, Wim Wenders — new horizons opened up.

My passions also came to include the kinds of films that openly resist definitive readings, that make us really work at them, that insist on ambiguities rather than certainties, that leave us (or at least me) uneasy rather than reassured. It's one of the reasons that Laura (Otto Preminger, 1954) remains so fascinating: if Mark McPherson (Dana Andrews) is taken to be "dreaming" the second half of Preminger's film, how might that affect the sense we're able to make of it? It's why the ending of The Ice Storm (Ang Lee, 1997) is so poignant, identifying the middle-class family as both a nightmare and a haven in much the same way as Sirk and Minnelli's films do. This is not to say that the exhilaration of a happy ending can't be equally exciting. But only as long as it's been earned, and isn't simply another example of a filmmaker desperately inserting what Sirk in his wisdom used to call an "emergency exit".
Aborigines in film! Long ago, when making _The Day of the Dog_ into _Blackfellas_ (James Ricketson, 1993), I said that cinema was the White Man’s Dreaming at an AFI conference attended by our American brothers (one of whom was the son-in-law of _The Bush’s_ Sam Peckinpah).

For me, going to watch a film has meant a good story and a hero I can feel close to. So, in the old days I identified with Jim Brown saving Raquel Welch in _100 Rifles_ (Tom Gries, 1969) or saving the world in _The Dirty Dozen_ (Robert Aldrich, 1967); I laughed with the hero in _Blazing Saddles_ (Mel Brooks, 1974) and with Richard Pryor films. I identified with Burt Reynolds in _Run, Simon, Run_ (George McCowan, 1970). _One Flew Over The Cuckoo’s Nest_ (Milos Forman, 1975) would have to be one of my favourite films, not just because it was a fantastic film but because it had a strong non-white hero (Will Sampson) who was even better than John Wayne (whom I never really liked much anyway, with his “The only good Indian is a dead Indian”). Sampson was also in _Orca_ (Michael Anderson, 1977) and _The White Buffalo_ (J. Lee Thompson, 1977). I saw all these films because I was searching for an identity myself. But where were the Aboriginal Will Sampsons, Burt Reynolds, Jim Browns?

One of the first films I saw that made me proud to be Australian was _Walkabout_ (Nicolas Roeg, 1971), acknowledged now as a classic. But it was not only my screen love affair with the delectable Jenny Agutter that made this film special for me; it was seeing a film about Aborigines with an Aboriginal in the starring role.

Not too many years later I saw _Mad Dog Morgan_ (Philippe Mora, 1976). Again, here was someone I could truly identify with — an Aboriginal survivor who becomes best mates with a white bushranger who, let’s face it, had not the charisma of Ben Hall nor the courage and folklore of Ned Kelly. In fact, I doubt if _Mad Dog_ will ever make it on anyone’s best-ten list, but I was happy to see David Gulpilil (this time his name spell correctly at least) just as I thoroughly enjoyed _Storm Boy_ (Henri Safran, 1976), made not long after.

No longer did I have to choose Native Americans (Little Big Man, Soldier Blue, A Man Called Horse, The Return of Billy Jack) or African Americans (Sidney Poitier, Brock Peters, Richard Roundtree, the indomitable Jim Brown) as my screen heroes. And this is something so many Kooris, Nyoongahs, Murris, Nungas really desired. Even when sitting in the segregated sections of the various cinemas back in the bad old days, you can bet they also worshipped Tim Mox and Jimmy Rogers, Tarzan and Charlie Chaplin, just like everyone else.

And this wasn’t Robert Tudawali and Rosie Kunoth Monks — both talented Aboriginal actors who deserved better screenplays and more of a fair go. This was not the motley crew in _Bitter Springs_ (Ralph Smart, 1954) who get chased away by the timely arrival of the ‘cavalry’ and thus let the brave settlers continue settling with impunity. They were not the other extras in other best-forgotten films stereotyping Aborigines as untrustworthy savages, child-like, or ignorant sad remnants of a primitive race. Neither was this Ed DeVereaux nor Kamahl.

For a while, in the 1970s and ‘80s, a number of films were made that largely were criticized as being less than kind to Aborigines. The much despised Skippy Costume Dramas where all the women were raped, it appeared; the ‘mumbo-jumbo magic’ of the natives without really exploring the Aboriginal mind; the great sense of humour, dark and bitter-sweet though it might be existing in the camps, settlements or missions and goals — and especially the wonderful, complex Aboriginal culture. But films like _The Last Wave_ (Peter Weir, 1976), _Eliza Fraser_ (Tim Burstall, 1976), _The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith_ (Fred Schepisi, 1978) and _We of the Never Never_ (Igor Auzins, 1982) were all important, I feel, because they gave Aboriginal actors a chance to work and develop their skills. Don’t forget, some of these films were made a mere few years after 1968 when Aborigines became citizens in their own country.

Even _Mavis’s Secret_ (Tim Burstall, 1983), _A Walk Through the Hills_ (Frank Arnold, 1988), _Deadly_ (Esben Storm, 1992), _Dead Heart_ (Nicholas Parsons, 1990), _Backlash_ (Bill Bennett, 1986) and _The Fringe Dwellers_ (Bruce Beresford, 1986) might have their critics (and in some cases well-justified), but I was proud to pay my two bobs’ worth and sit there with my popcorn watching my people — and often my dear friends — performing up there on the screen, 20 feet high and giving it to the white man. There were the pioneers like Bob Mazza, Justine Saunders (who can forget her performance in _Stephen Wallace’s_ 1984, _Mail Order Bride_, one of the few times she didn’t have to get raped?), Tommy Lewis, Ernie Dingo, Lynda Miller, Bryan Syron, Franklin Nannup, David Ngoombuajarra, John Moore and others — and, of course, of the first, David Gulpilil himself.

Just like the Blaxploitation films of the late ‘60s and ‘70s that surged forth in America, Aboriginal filmmaking is having its own renaissance. For years, there have been documentaries and shorts made for television by the likes of the wonderful and much-missed Essie Coffey, but now we are shouting and yelling out a war-dance of pure joy as we charge onto the big screen. Look out Australia!

With compilations like the marvellous _Shifting Sands and From Sand to Celluloid: Shifting Sands Continued_ …, the great short film _Shortchanged_ (well-acted by David Kennedy), Bryan Syron’s _Jindalee Lady_ (1993), Rachel Perkins’ _Radiance_ and _Blackfellas_, Aboriginal producers, directors, editors, writers, performers, technicians and a whole score of crew are making Aboriginal films as they should be seen: told completely by Aboriginal people. The success of the two mentioned compilations here and overseas is testimony that, just as Aborigines enjoyed the old Westerns and Elvis Presley of years gone by, white people are coming to terms with our own particular stories.

And, do you know, I wonder how many people really realize how absolutely special it is for an ordinary Aboriginal man or woman, not clever, not rich, not anything very much, to sit down alone among a crowd of whitefellahs and hear — even feel — the intimacy imparted by the largely white audience as the magic of the White Man’s Dreaming brings the story of the Blackfellahs’ Dreaming to them, as well as making us laugh, cry and believe in ourselves.
After contributing to the cannon of Australian cinema, Dutch-born Paul Cox became dissatisfied with the direction of his career and moved to Canada. He is now filming in Fiji.

My Best Friend's Wedding would become the hit director Paul J., then just P. J.) Hogan of WEDDED TO SUCCESS

The aficionados loved the short, of Lapaine) and Muriel (Toni Collette). IT'S NOT THE MELBOURNE CUP

The start of Chris Long's ground-breaking, 19-part series on the beginnings of film in Australia, which sent ripples among those too lazy or uncaring to reconsider the historical myths (or correctly re-label the horse-race footage as the 1989 VRC Derby).

GO-GO FIGURE

The FFC announced investment in a film about three drag queens driving a bus to Alice. The film industry groaned. The film made a fortune.

FOLLIES À DEUX

The creative bond between New Zealand and the mainland (whoops) is a regular pre-occupation of Cinema Papers.

A LONELY HEART IN EXILE

After contributing to the cannon of Australian cinema, Dutch-born Paul Cox became dissatisfied with the direction of his career and moved to Canada. He is now filming in Fiji.

What is remarkable about American film is its range: the best cartoons, the best musicals, the best blockbusters, but also films which can be remarkably political subversive and moving, whether it be On the Waterfront (Elia Kazan, 1954) or Do the Right Thing (Spike Lee, 1989). Thus, that great taboo of American political life, class, has been dealt with in a large number of mainstream films such as Saturday Night Fever (John Badham, 1977) or Down and Out in Beverly Hills (Paul Mazursky, 1986). The one area where American film still lags behind is sex, even if it produces large numbers of the world's pin-ups and the largest pectorals (both male and female). Thus Hollywood was very slow to allow inter-racial sex, even if it produces large numbers of the world's pin-ups and the largest pectorals (both male and female). Thus Hollywood was very slow to allow inter-racial sex, even if it produces large numbers of the world's pin-ups and the largest pectorals (both male and female).

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It's the 39th minute of *Psychotic Overload VII: The Return of the Final Revenge*, starring Jamie Lee Curtis and Jennifer Love Hewitt, and they're running around the darkened corridors of an old school building being stalked by the axe-wielding, serial-killing son of a defrocked priest who was meant to have died in childbirth but who has been stalking women in small-town America for seven films now.

And I'm sitting there thinking: Why? Why am I doing this? I've never seen this film before, but I've already seen it 100 times. Why? Why am I doing this?

This film is bad - real bad - but it's not as bad as this morning's screening of the $50 million special-effects action-adventure extravaganza, *Mid Oceanic Ridge*, in which a team of international terrorists led by Art Malik plant nuclear devices along the ocean floor and threaten to breach the Earth's crust unless they are given $20 billion and the only people who can save them are a team of renegade bomb-diffusion experts lead by George Clooney and a group of straight-laced, by-the-book intelligence experts lead by Harrison Ford, two men who are at loggerheads at first but who soon develop a begrudging respect for each other as they put aside their differences and pool their talents to save the world before it splits in two.

It's the 48th minute of *Psychotic Overload VII* now and Jennifer has just swung an axe unsuccessfully at the madman who has turned around just in time not to see Jamie Lee Curtis run around the corner brandishing a block splitter ...

Why? Why am I doing this? ...

When Melbourne had a Valhalla cinema in North Richmond, I used to love going to the evening double bills. I always found out beforehand what the second feature finished to see how much time I had to get to North Richmond station to catch the last train home. Sometimes I could walk it. More often than not, though, I had a scant few minutes to run the several blocks from the cinema's foyer to the station.

Often I'd see the train pulling in as I scurried like a drug dealer fleeing a bust towards the on-ramp. I'd leap into a carriageway and onto a seat, panting, covered in sweat, relieved that I'd made it. Sometimes I'd almost faint from the exertion. But I never asked, "Why am I doing this?" The love then was unconditional, the devotion total. There was no need for questions.

I ask a lot more questions now, questions like: How did this get made? Who green-lighted this turkey? This had a director? This was paid for with Australian tax dollars? $120 million for this? Where? I have to ask a lot more questions now. It's my job.

The cynicism, the scepticism, the turns of phrase you develop are inevitable when most of the films you see are films you would not see if you didn't have to, and would not wish upon a tax auditor.

But the love for the art is still there, undiminished, even in the 49th minute of *Psychotic Overload VII* as Jamie and Jennifer, having been drenched in the blood that spouted from the decapitated body of the madman, run out of the school grounds, into their four-wheel drive and off into the night, where even darker terrors await them.

Even in the face of the gravest cinematic adversity you must remain, in your heart of hearts, an optimist. And *Psychotic Overload VII* doesn't look like it's going to get any better - but it might. That's what keeps me in there, that's what keeps me watching, against every instinct I have, against every fibre of intelligence. It must have that chance at redemption, that chance to give me a moment, anything - an image, a line of dialogue, an idea, a nuance - something to keep this from being a complete waste of time.

I had the feeling *Psychotic Overload VII* was going to stink. Since *Overload IV*, they've all stunk - but to assume it was a stinker, to not give it the chance to prove itself, would be to deny the love. And denying love is one of the few impossibilities in life.

This is why, in the first picosecond of every film I see, there is a moment of complete surrender. I can carry all the prejudices, preconceptions and jokes about the next lumbering, over-hyped Hollywood behemoth heading our way, but the second the curtain parts and the film starts, it evaporates in an instant of utter submission. Whether the expectations are high or low, whether the advance word is good or bad, every film might just be the best film I ever see. It has to be allowed to breathe and weave its own magic on its own terms.

*Psychotic Overload VII* has had 73 minutes to weave and breathe and I'm nearly dead. But will it give me a moment? Because sometimes a moment is all you need.

Discussions about cinema can spend inordinate amounts of time on one film, or one type of film, or one director's work. This can be fun, but the best conversations are the ones that free-associate scenes from hundreds of films. Whenever you think about a passionate relationship, it's not a coherent analysis of it that springs to mind; it's the moments that make it worth enduring the pain and sacrifice that course through the mind.

And so it is with cinema. As I fight off the delirium of semi-consciousness being thrust upon me by *Psychotic Overload VII*, I see Colin Friels telling Claudia Karvan about her mother in *High tide*, the underwater shower of shrapnel in *Gallipoli*, the final shot of Mia Farrow's face in *Rosemary's Baby*, Woody Allen attempting to play the cello in a marching band in *Take the Money and Run*, the opening of the refrigerator in *Heaven and Earth*, Gene Hackman tearing his room apart in *Conversation*, the fate of the suitcase full of money in *The Killing*, the screaming baby in *Four in the Morning*, Bob Dylan with his crossbow as he is about to pierce the rapist in *Deliverance*, the double sunset in *Star Wars*.

These moments are from great films, but a film doesn't have to be great to give you a great moment. And in this world where the flood of cinematic mediocrity is reachingbiblical proportions, the hope that *Psychotic Overload* will give me a moment survives.

It's the 81st minute and Jennifer and Jamie have happened across the local sheriff in his patrol car who we thought was on their side but who is actually the father of the madman they've just killed, so now he's after them and they run off screaming into the night with the angry dad in hot pursuit.

This can't get any worse, you think - then it does. Jamie and Jennifer try to piece together an ad-hoc mantrap they learned how to make on one of those self-defence summer camps.

There's going to be nothing to take with you out of this, you think. Nothing but another wasted experience. Wasted, sure, but an experience nonetheless. And if they make *Psychotic Overload VIII* you'll sit through it - all of it. And the chances are it might be even worse than this, but you'll still give it that chance because, deep down, the love is there and the love is unconditional.

When asked why he kept making films when he found the business side of it so maddening, Orson Welles likened the situation to being with a woman who drove him nuts. So why did he stay with her? "Because I love her."

The wicked police officer of *Psychotic Overload VII* has spotted the mantrap, and he's run around it and he's taken a shot at Jamie Lee Curtis but Jennifer Love Hewitt has just stuck an old kitchen knife into the base of his neck and the blood is pouring out everywhere and as he buckles to the ground screaming they kick him and drop rocks on his head hoping against hope that the writers will be able to dream up another sequel to this.

And you watch, and bad and boring and chronically void of ideas as it is, you let out a small, involuntary laugh.

Well, at least they thought I'd like it when they made it, you think. It's some consolation. A bigger consolation is that the law of averages is on your side, and in the next week or two you'll probably see something you like, which will be a welcome experience, because at the moment the experience is hurting.

So that's why I'm doing it, sitting through this crap, hoping against all odds for just a moment to take with me. It hurts, but love is supposed to hurt. It's part of the deal. How does that quote go? "If you love me, then you must love the least of me as well as the best of me." Or something like that. It's from *The Bible*, I think.

They were probably thinking about cinema when they wrote it.
STARRY, STARRY EYED
Cinema Papers caught up with Rachel Griffiths the minute she stepped into the spotlight, as it has done with countless actors (and directors and writers and DOPS and...).

OUR BUDDY
In 25 years, many friends have passed away, and are greatly missed. Ivan Hutchinson loved cinema and Cinema Papers loved Ivan.

PIG POWER
The (sometimes) annual round-up of turkeys, dogs and occasionally-good films.

Send in the Clowns Geoffrey Rush

Geoffrey Rush is one of the great actors of the day, seen most recently in Elizabeth and in Shine, for which he justly won an Oscar.

I got hooked on silent films when I was ten. The English comedian Bob Monkhouse hosted a television series called Mad Movies which screened in the early 1960s — from memory, on Saturday nights.

Each episode was only half-an-hour long and focused on extracts and sequence montages from comedy two-reelers made in the teens of this century, when the medium of filmmaking was barely a decade and-a-half old. It was all rhythms and gags. With wild and eccentric performances. There were lots of Mack Sennett's aptly-nicknamed Keystone Cops from Keystone, packed with outrageous spend-up madness. Fortunately, this is the image most people seem to have of silent films in general. But we were able to see Chaplin fresh from vaudeville in his pre-tramp mode, Keaton when he was still a foil and support for Roscoe Arbuckle, and the endless breathtaking array of lesser-known team players: Al St John, who jumped with both legs played before ever setting off; Billy Bevan's unique, walrus-moustached cop; Ben Turpin's insane and hilarious cross-eyes. They all riffed and it was giddy viewing. Adrenalin and laughter from action and timing. Brilliant schtick with unrelenting invention. Mad Movies was only a beginning and an ideal visual companion piece to the streetsmart dialogue of the Bugs Bunny Show on, I think, Friday nights.

At about the same time, Disneyland (on Sunday nights, for sure) treated us to a comprehensive survey of the development of the Kinetoscope, the Cinematograph, and a curious array of other competing patents struggling for commercial supremacy in their infancy. Horizontal, vertical and oblique contraptions projected or reflected a beautiful study in movement. On Saturday afternoons, we went to the Flicks, not ever realizing this word derived from the erosion of Flickers, the imaginative and accurate early slang for the Pictures, Photoplays or the Movies. The terminology, interestingly enough, has always favoured the visual and the kinetic. Even when Jimmy Cricket was moralizing to us at school that he was no fool, nosieirre, and could live healthily and through caution and safety to be 103, you couldn't avoid appreciating the clacking and whirring and spoooling, the sprockets and lamps and fragility of celluloid in the 16mm world going on up the back of the room. I'm, of course, joining up all these random dots with hindsight, but any understanding of the techniques and magic of moving pictures I might have now springs from these sources. When I was touring with Godspell around Queensland in 1973, a film club in Rockhampton screened Chaplin's The Gold Rush (1925). This 50-year-old film had people rocking with great waves of laughter. It was the first silent feature I'd ever seen and it was mind-blowing. The brilliant deadpan humour of two starving Yukon goldminers eating a boiled boot, surly Mack Swain providing a grim realist counterpart to Chaplin's simple gourmand. Charlie's poignant and seemingly impossible love for Georgia, often expressed in slapstick. The miner's hut perilously balanced on the edge of a cliff with a series of gags played like a comic fugue. But for all the expected humour and physical expertise, there were themes of personal loneliness, isolation, tough details of a remote makeshift community, and a haphazard sense of fortune.

During studies in Paris, I saw all the great comic features from the '20s - on screens, thanks to the Cinémathèque and specialty houses. When millionaire bridegroom Keaton escapes a horde of potential wives in Seven Chances (1925), the conventional mid-shots of the classic chase suddenly leap to an extreme wideshot as a few kicked stones trip over into huge boulders and, with the pursued Keaton diminutive, the action takes on the mythic but unsentimental dimensions of something worthy of Beckett. The visceral and aesthetic leap taken in one cut is phenomenal.

My passion and circumstantial contact with this period was always through the clowns. Indubitably, I would slowly appreciate the subtle artistry of the oily surfaces of water photographed so broodingly in F. W. Murnau's gothic Nosferatu (1922), or the intense super-real psychological compositions in Stroheim's Greed (1922). But as the syntax of cinema language reached such dizzying pictorial heights in the pre-verbal mid-'20s, I loved the fact that Keaton and his crew would play baseball while awaiting inspiration, and that Chaplin could shut down production for, unexpectedly, I would slowly appreciate the subtle artistry of the oily surfaces of water photographed so broodingly in F. W. Murnau's gothic Nosferatu (1922), or the intense super-real psychological compositions in Stroheim's Greed (1922). But as the syntax of cinema language reached such dizzying pictorial heights in the pre-verbal mid-'20s, I loved the fact that Keaton and his crew would play baseball while awaiting inspiration, and that Chaplin could shut down production for,

In some ways it seems disparaging to refer to any of these creations as 'silent' films because of their eloquence. No doubt the term resulted during the rapid takeover by the talkies which made these earlier, lush expressions appear to be faddishly minus something. The pantomimists and the visual artists agreed with D. W. Griffith who saw the almost vulgar pursuit of chat as completely alien to the form — the play of light and action on a surface.

When I started work professionally as an actor in the theatre, I first read a sort of cinematic bible and probably the most definitive work on silent films, The Parade's Gone By, by Kevin Brownlow. Almost single-handedly, well double-handedly with David Gill, he championed and celebrated this medium with archaeological scholarship. They have produced, for anyone who isn't stricken with the insidious blight of cultural amnesia, the most comprehensive and insightful analytical guide into this truly golden age. The silents reigned for more than 20 years, screens were barely a decade-and-a-half old. It was all rhythms and gags. With wild and eccentric performances. There were lots of Mack Sennett's aptly-nicknamed Keystone Cops from Keystone, packed with outrageous spend-up madness. Fortunately, this is the image most people seem to have of silent films in general. But we were able to see Chaplin fresh from vaudeville in his pre-tramp mode, Keaton when he was still a foil and support for Roscoe Arbuckle, and the endless breathtaking array of lesser-known team players: Al St John, who jumped with both legs played before ever setting off; Billy Bevan's unique, walrus-moustached cop; Ben Turpin's insane and hilarious cross-eyes. They all riffed and it was giddy viewing. Adrenalin and laughter from action and timing. Brilliant schtick with unrelenting invention. Mad Movies was only a beginning and an ideal visual companion piece to the streetsmart dialogue of the Bugs Bunny Show on, I think, Friday nights.

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SCOTT HICKS is the acclaimed director of Shine, whose eagerly-awaited next film is Snow Falling on Cedars.

It seems to me that much of mainstream Australian filmmaking has for too long been obsessed with technical perfection. The past couple of decades are littered with films of flawless focus, exposure, design and editing, mausoleums jammed with waxworks which lack the essentials of vigour and life. Perhaps its the dread legacy of the 1970s’ desire for respectability in our National Cinema, which stifled the early fumblings of the Bazzas, Alvins, et al, in favour of the ‘classier classics’ like The Getting of Wisdom (Bruce Beresford, 1977), Picnic at Hanging Rock (Peter Weir, 1975), The Tenant (Francis Ford Coppola, 1976), and The Fourth Protocol (Alan J. Pakula, 1981) which were, as it were, apologetically tagged.

It’s probably the documentary filmmaking, which I’ve maintained in parallel to my feature career so far, which taught me the strength of the happy accident, that unpredictable and unrepeatable combination of light and movement that can lend power to an otherwise insignificant moment. Because to me filmmaking is the effort to infuse every frame with energy, or, more accurately, emotion, and sometimes the pursuit of perfection for its own sake actually kills that very feeling.

Only great persuasion can convince some cameramen to get the camera off the dolly and into the hand. And few will pay heed when told that the extra take they are requesting for some minor technical improvement will not make it over the one you’ve just done where the performance sang loud. And at the other end of the process, it’s refreshing to work with editors who can creatively embrace the offs, flash-frames, whip pans and ‘off-air’ stolen moments of spontaneity, in recognition of their power and energy. Of course, there is nothing new in all of this. The Underground Cinema (is there still such an animal, or has it been subsumed into that ill-defined catch-all, “independent”?) long espoused these values, then unacceptable to the mainstream. However, since it is the fate of the avant garde to become avant garbage over time, the commercial world appropriated these symbols of the erstwhile amateur and harnessed them as effective selling tools.

Make no mistake, this fractured aesthetic is every bit as demanding as its goody two-shoes perfectionist non-identical twin. It requires judgement, daring and restraint, along with an understanding of rhythm and the emotional passage of the story, over and above the attention-deficit immediacy needs of most commercials. I find in setting up for a shot these days, it takes as long to work out ways to fuck it up a bit as it took to light it in the first place! Blur it, shake it, obscure it, mask the frame — anything which might help to infuse further life and layers to simulate life’s casual imperfections. Free it from some of the restraints and act as if you might never get another chance to catch it again.

This last dictum applies most importantly for me to performance, also. For all the needs of rehearsal and deliberation with actors, in the end I try to imagine the scenario I’ve created is, as in documentary, unrepeatable and beyond my control. Not, I admit, to the degree of Fassbinder’s “one take fetish” which Armin Mueller-Stahl told me about in Shine. He would shoot each set-up once only, infusing the situation with risk and creative danger for all. So developed our catchcry during shooting: “Fassbinder—let’s get it in one!” And, surprisingly often, we would be making process, it’s refreshing to work with editors who can creatively embrace the offs, flash-frames, whip pans and ‘off-air’ stolen moments of spontaneity, in recognition of their power and energy.

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I love Frank Zappa’s criteria when auditioning musicians. He took for granted their technical ability. He looked first for a sense of humour, then a willingness to improvise, to be inventive. The very act of improvization presumes a grasp of technique and a desire to press beyond its restrictive boundaries. Some of these elements can be extremely useful in the filmmaking process and the endless process of creating life on the marble slab of the set.

1 Picnic at Hanging Rock (Peter Weir, 1975), The Getting of Wisdom (Bruce Beresford, 1977), ‘Breaker’ Morant (Beresford, 1980) and My Brilliant Career (Gil Armstrong, 1979).
**RETRO-SPECTOR-ACTIVE**

When creating a national cinema’s cultural identity, there is a fine balance between moving forward and looking back.

**BARRY’S GIRL**

In an already-prolific career, Miranda Otto has danced often, sung C&W in Doing Time for Patsy Cline (Chris Kennedy, 1997), right, and finally played opposite her dad in Dead Letter Office (John Ruano, 1998).

**Welcome to Woop Woop**

This last is an important point because most of the anti-Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas reviews went on about it being “boring” to simply film stoned people. (Is this some PC ’90s guilt-trip that we mustn’t approve of characters whole-heartedly indulging in copious drug-taking?) Gilliam doesn’t just do that, but through the performances, cinematography and some special visual effects evokes many varied drug experiences.

**The Big Blues & Treasure**

I’m fascinated by the films, mostly with high-profile talents involved, which attract an escalating and often irrational campaign of negativity to a spectacular crash and burn at the box office. The process often starts with tales of “production difficulties”, budget blow-outs or some animosity arising between the makers and the media. If the finished product is a crowd-pleaser (Titanic), then all is forgiven and the critics, however grudgingly, come on board. If the film is instead disturbing or against the current zeitgeist upon its release (Heaven’s Gate), then the critics by and large will form a pack to savage and finish it off. Those films singled out from time to time for the full-scaled vitriol shower (Shutter, Revolution, Waterworld, to name a few more) are usually not as “bad” as the hype would have you imagine and, in fact, often much better than scores of other bland, mediocre or compromised films that don’t raise a fraction as much critical disdain and even go on to make huge amounts of money. No amount of lone voices or reappraisal after time will ever re-convince the general public that Heaven’s Gate is anything other than a “turkey”. Assassination is final and very much predetermined.

This year, the long-in-gestation film of Hunter S. Thompson’s Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas was premiered at Cannes and from this distance there seemed to be an immediate consensus that it was a disappointment: too long, miscast and a general misfire — a tone that was echoed in most of the USA reviews soon after. When the film reached Australia, there was more of this. Is it a film that just doesn’t play in the atmosphere of a press screening? Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas seemed to be attracting a quite strenuous level of attack and when reading the two reviewers in The Age, Adrian Martin and Jim Schembri, in rare accord in condemning the film almost identically as being unfunny, tedious, pointless, etc., I was hooked and knew I had to see it immediately.

Failure on a grand scale is just as interesting as success. The notion that Terry Gilliam, Johnny Depp, Benicio Del Toro and the whole production team had made a spectacular hash of the Thompson book was sad to contemplate but intriguing to discover why. I went anticipating that Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas might be one of those confoundingly unfunny comedies, a stinking cadaver of a film by a major director. Preston Sturges’ The French, They are a Funny Race (aka, Les Carnets du Major Thompson, 1956), Otto Preminger’s Skidoo (1968) and Steven Spielberg’s 1941 (1979) came to mind.

Within the first few minutes, I found myself pleasurably admiring the beautiful Panavision images of the Arizona desert and smiling at Depp’s deadpan monologue of Thompson’s prose. The smiles turned to chuckles as the drug-addled journos arrived in, and tried to make sense of, that most hallucinatory of American cities, Las Vegas. About 15 minutes in, I realized that most of my negative expectations had melted away and I was finding the film highly enjoyable and worth my time. For me, the film was funny, interestingly-constructed with jumps forward and backwards in time, and was making points about its period representing the “end of the ’60s” and attempting (more successfully than, say, Oliver Stone’s The Doors) to reproduce via cinema the experience of being under the influence of a number of different drugs. This last is an important point because most of the anti-Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas reviews went on about it being “boring” to simply film stoned people. (Is this some PC ’90s guilt-trip that we mustn’t approve of characters whole-heartedly indulging in copious drug-taking?) Gilliam doesn’t just do that, but through the performances, cinematography and some special visual effects evokes many varied drug experiences.

In my sheltered life, I’ve never come across anyone even thinking of using ether as a recreational life-enhancer, so the sight of a rubber-legged Johnny Depp making his way across a Las Vegas hotel foyer, explaining that ether keeps your mind lucid while your body has other ideas of co-ordination, is one of the damnedest things I’ve seen all year and one of the funniest. Finally, this seemed to me to be a film of some considerable vision and imagination, rare enough commodities in the ’90s, and hardly deserving the cascade of brickbats.

I know there are other people out there who enjoyed Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas as much as I did and I’m sure Martin and Schembri and the rest weren’t lying about their reactions to it — I’m sorry they didn’t “get it” and have a better time. But I’m more sorry for the many who in this busy age of capsule reviews and star ratings were probably put off seeing the film because of that mysteriously mushrooming “word” that it was “bad”. My point in this piece is in the space available to encourage everyone to go and see any film that attracts them in some way, no matter what the damned critics say! We should deplore the mean-spirited and pretentious writers (I’m not referring to the pair named above!) who seem compelled to dictate a “one size fits all” critical mentality as the arbiter of what everyone should choose to see. I’m not proposing a crankpot theory that it might follow that every nearly universally condemned film is great — look at this year’s Godzilla or Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil — but I do suggest a wariness on the part of the filmgoer about films repetitiously damned (or overpraised, but that’s another story). Meanwhile, I still haven’t seen Welcome to Woop Woop and The Avengers starts next week.
**The Films of Walerian Borowczyk** part 2

**Contes Immoraux** (1974)

Alternative title: Immoral Tales (UK), I Racconti Immorali di Borowczyk (Italy)


Cast: "La Marée": Lise Danvers [Julie], Fabrice Luchini [Boy]; "Thérèse Philosophè": Charlotte Alexandra [Thérèse]; "Erzsébet Báthory": Paloma Picasso [Erzsébet Báthory], Pascale Christophe [Istvan]; "Lucrezia Borgia": Florence Bellamy [Lucrezia Borgia], Jacopo Berini [Pope Alexandre IV], Lorenzo Berini [César Borgia]; plus, Nicole Karen, Robert Capia, Thomas Hnevca, Gerard Tcherka, Mathieu Rivollier, Philippe Desboeuf; [Marie Forsâ (Close-up Girl)].

**Prologue: "Una Collezione Particolare"**

Synopsis: A man whose face is never seen (reputedly Walerian Borowczyk) displays various erotic objects for the camera. These range from a mechanical silhouette of a congressing couple to a sculptured dildo, erotic drawings (including one by Rembrandt) and explicit photographs. The man places many objects on a stand, sometimes upside down or side-on, resulting in a quick correction; others are wound up or lifted to the eye.

Curiously, the man also acts as censor, putting a finger over the explicit bits of some photographs, which raises an interesting censorship dichotomy: sketches and paintings can be as explicit as photographs, but go unbowdlerized. Whimsicality is the overriding tone, especially the many cuts to a carved policeman with spyglass. Some may be offended, but there is no accounting for people's taste in pornography throughout the centuries. This is merely a brief record.

1. "La Marée" ("The Tide")

Julie, my cousin, was 16, I was 20, and that small age difference rendered her docile to my commands.7

Synopsis: With her mother gone for a day, Julie (Lise Danvers) is bustled down to a pebbly, cliff-bound beach by her cousin.8 (Fabrice Luchini).
the aid of a watch and a timetable of the tides, he orchestrates Julie so that his fellatiod orgasm coincides with the exact moment of the high tide. "Now you know the significance of the tides", he tells her.9

At first glance, La Marée appears to be another examination by Borowczyk of male manipulation, with woman as pawn/victim. But the tone of this sun-drenched episode is too light-hearted to make much of the comparison, the game-playing that of sexually-inquisitive teenagers.

The link between the ocean and sex, orgasm and tides, has been made many times before (the English language even highlights the connection through verbs such as "to come"). Many critics, though, felt Borowczyk had fallen prey to cliché. Meaghan Morris wrote in Cinema Papers: [Borowczyk] has drastically overdone the obviousness of his imagery, beginning with the tired equation of sexuality and the sea. However beautifully photographed, waves breaking during an erotic scene are still waves breaking once again in another erotic scene.10 However, Borowczyk is not contributing to the visual cliché of lovers frolicking in the shallows à la From Here to Eternity (1953); he is rescuing cinema from it. He boldly and specifically links sexual release with the ocean’s tides, which are ruled by the moon, a primary female life-force in all cultures.

Borowczyk draws other parallels as well. When Julie says she has met and kissed five boys over summer, her cousin asks, "Is that all?" “Yes.” "On the mouth?" “No, mother was always there.”

He then walks across the rocks to face Julie. Borowczyk cuts to a close-up of her mouth (surely the most exquisite rendering by an artist). "Intact", he says. (The camera then tilts up from Julie’s mouth to her eyes, as if peering into her soul. One may possess another’s body, but not necessarily the heart.)

The mouth is virginal in the sense of what the boy is intending; but the film is drawing an association between lips, as it were. People may shy from such a connection, but the impolite Martin Molloy radio show did not, speculating on what motivates so many women the world over to have collagen implants in their lips.11 The answer from guest writer-comedian Jane Kennedy was the same as surrealists have been suggesting through imagery for decades.

The links and parallels continue unabated. Certainly this film is atypical for Borowczyk in placing so much attention on word-play (perhaps indicative of André de Mendiargues’ story12). "The tide will cut us off", Julie exclaims, just as passion can isolate people from a worldly reality, which is why oppressors have so attempted to control/repress/manufacture desire (as de Sade tells us).13 "We have come too far to turn back", the boy continues; and so on.

All this analysis, however, diverts one from the essence of the film: its dazzling capture of the many subtle changes in light over the countryside and shore; the tones and textures of wet hair and skin; the silver-grey tincture of an approaching storm; bleached white cotton against smooth rocks. Never before has any film so poetically rendered the movements of the sea, or made apparent its melodies. There is a visual poetry, a gentleness, not always there in Borowczyk and an absence of impending physical violence. The boy’s game-playing may have one on edge at times (and more so, no doubt, than when the film was made), but otherwise there is an idyllicism at play. And Julie at no stage sees herself as victim. As she exci-
edly remarks after it is all over, “We still have time for some fun.”

In fact, Borowczyk amusingly contrasts the boy’s pretentious intellectual games (covering, of course, his sexual ineptness) and the uninhibitedness of Julie.

2. “Thérèse Philosophe”
10 July 1890. “The inhabitants of our region demand beatification of Thérèse H., the pious young girl violated shamelessly by a vagabond.” La Gazette du Dimanche.

Synopsis: An extremely pious Thérèse (Charlotte Alexandra) lingers in church after mass, listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit and delighting in the tactility of religious artefacts. At home, she is chastized as a liar and locked in a room for three days, her only sustenance a few cucumbers. Inspired by an erotic book, Thérèse H., the pious young girl viciously remarks after it is all over, “We still have time for some fun.”

In church, Thérèse hears in the Voice of God a sensual overtone: “I lead the human heart where it will. My child, great knowledge is not needed to please me. Merely love me. I hold the blessings of both soul and body: seek them from me.” The voice becomes even more sexually explicit while Thérèse is looking at the drawings in a pornographic book, Thérèse Philosophe avec l’Histoire de Madame Bois-Lautier, she has found inside a rotating wheel: “My pleasure is to be with you. I am here to comfort you, to bring you joy.” My unexpected visit is a blessing to you, though undeserved.

The naïve Thérèse takes the words literally and lies back on a bed, in an image that evokes spiritual submission as much as sexual anticipation. “My heart is ready, Lord”, she murmurs. But God does not appear, and in the Great Silence Thérèse makes do alone, the words of her Stations of the Cross (“Beware your failures in self-denial”) failing to stem the building desire.

Thérèse Philosophe is detail-obsessive, with quick glimpses of many varied and curious pieces, mostly Victorian: a wooden doll missing an arm, a black top hat, a porcelain bedpot, steel-rimmed glasses, which Thérèse places on a wood duck (that irresistible desire to humanize/tame Nature); a trunk filled with corsets, photographs and a dangling key.

The tension in Thérèse’s picking up and discarding of objects is palpable, her serene yearning for God’s presence intensifying into a noisy, onanistic burst of sexual ecstasy.

Being a good surrealist, Borowczyk imbues each object with iconographic significance. Tom Milne describes it as an “uncanny ability to invest his images with an alien quality that is partly entomological, partly ritual, and partly pure poetry.”

(One questions only the term “alien”, all the objects being very much the work of man.)

Unlike the glorious colour and light of the first episode, Thérèse Philosophe is oddly murky (as if shot on out-of-date Polish stock), but it is full of many clever visual jokes (the eyeless King Edward VI in the tapestry regaining his sight, for example) and the whimsical tone plays nicely in setting up the bleakness of the ending.

When first released, there was much speculation in the press over whether Thérèse employs zucchinis or cucumbers (Meaghan Morris opts for the latter). This flippancy was amusing but rather missed the point: that this is one of the few serious, non-sexist and “uncompromising scenes[s] of female masturbation” (as Kerri Sharp describes it) on film.

Instead of being represented as sexually passive, dependent on a male to excite and a penis to gratify, Borowczyk’s women are fully and independently sexed.

It is also clear from the plumpish girl in this episode, and innumerable naked bodies in other episodes and features, that Borowczyk does not prefer any one type of physical beauty. He is a true believer in Nature, delighting in all manner of shapes and sizes (female and male). His work is a strong and necessary rebuttal to the fashion/media conspiracies of today.

In these and many other significant ways, Borowczyk is a truly feminist director.

3. “Erzsébet Bâthory”
Synopsis: In 1610, village life is disrupted by Hungarian Comtesse Erzsébet Bâthory (Paloma Picasso), whose henchmen round up girls for the château. They are stripped and washed, under the watchful eye of Bâthory’s page, Istvan (Pascale Christophe), before being led to the Comtesse’s chamber. In an increasing frenzy, the girls rip at Bâthory’s lace dress and fight over her pearls, unaware that they are about to be mass-sacrificed and the Comtesse bathe in their blood. After sleeping with Istvan, who turns out to be a girl, the Comtesse is betrayed and arrested.
From the opening scene, Borowczyk contrasts tyrannical classist power with an idyllic natural order. In the village, women harvest cabbages and trample sauerkraut in wooden barrels, while cocks and hens find pleasure in the yard and lovers in a hayloft. (In a truly surreal moment, a young girl goes from watching the latter to milking a cow!)

The Comtesse and her small entourage arrive (horses baying when she passes a religious station and when she kisses her page). A henchman attempts to impose the Comtesse's will with a speech that could have been written by Deleuze and Guattari:

Happy are those who please the Comtesse. On Sunday, the Comtesse may permit those chosen to touch her wondrous pearl-encrusted gown. To touch it is to be granted eternal bliss. In the Comtesse's chamber, the touching of her gown becomes a freeing orgasm of desire (as can happen with other capitalist-marketed objects, be they rock bands or religious icons). The gown is ripped apart and the pearls scatter, to be picked up and devoured (literally) by the naked girls. The most extraordinary image is of a girl (Marie Forsa) hiding a pearl inside her vagina, a potent comment on society's manipulation of desire, with materialistic yearning replacing the more natural sexual. Not only is it easier to profit from the former, but manufactured desire distracts people from the terrors the all-powerful may wish to inflict on them. The girls are so obsessed with pearls and bits of lace, so misled into the need to fight one another, that they do not notice the unshielded sword.

It is also telling that the Comtesse allows the girls to believe they can keep the jewels, and thus gain social ascendancy through added wealth, in the very moment before their death. Rarely has a director so sickeningly made one feel the perversity of absolute power.

Báthory's bathing in blood will not be to everyone's taste — nor are any longer to Paloma Picasso, who reputedly sought to buy the film and withdraw it from circulation. Nothing more indicates a change in times than the once-fearless daughter of the great surrealist painter being terrified by the Pope.

The film actually suggests Istvan is using Báthory for her own ends. Just before they make love, Báthory slips another precious ring onto the page's hand. The hetero Istvan is doing the killing, and the loving, for financial reward. It is wise to try and simplify the sexual politics of a Borowczyk to the constraints of an 'ism'; his films are far too complex, challenging, profound.

4. "Lucrezia Borgia"

Synopsis: In 1498, Lucrezia Borgia (Florence Bellamy), accompanied by her husband, Giovanni Sforza, visits her father, Pope Alexandre IV (Jacopo Berini), and his son, Cardinal Cesare Borgia (Lorenzo Berini). The Pope declares Sforza to be impotent and he is whisked away to certain death. Excited by drawings of horses copulating, Lucrezia has sex with the Pope and her brother. From his pulpit, Dominican Hyeronimo Savonarola denounces the dissolute life of the ecclesiastical milieu. He is arrested and burnt at the stake. Lucrezia gives birth to a happy, smiling child, who is baptized in regal splendour by the Pope.

Lucrezia was the daughter of the Spanish Cardinal Rodrigo Borgia (later Pope Alexandre IV) and his mistress. She was married off three times for political reasons (the first at the age of 11). In 1502, when 21, she appeared with a three-year-old son. Clearly not the
result of marriage to an impotent man, the child was said to be the offspring of an incestuous all-night orgy at the Vatican. Borowczyk's film imagines that night:

I wanted this last story to have the amplitude of an opera scene. The Borgias' heroines to take whatever means necessary to stop being the pawn of men and determine her own destiny.26

The story also confirms Borowczyk's belief in Nature triumphant, unfettered by the arrogant decrees of man. The child does not understand society's taboos and is born a beautiful, happy child.

For many, this episode is the weakest. Tom Milne writes that the scenes of Dominican protest are "particularly ineffectual",27 and he is right; they provide no dramatic contrast to the Papal debauchery, and they fail to evoke the presence of, or a belief in, the Holy Spirit.

In terms of composition and montage, the episode is less striking than usual; the space enclosed by the white-walled set is strangely empty of resonance (as compared, say, with the small room of Thérèse Philosophe, where every molecule in the air seems imbued with dusky nuance).

Borowczyk also cuts away from male nudity in a way he has not done before. After Lucrezia has had sex with her father and brother, the camera pans up her naked body as she lies face-down between them. In the same continuous movement, it pans across to César, and down his body. But the shot abruptly cuts out at César's navel and recommences (after a very awkward cut, so unlike Borowczyk) on Alexandre IV's stomach, panning up to his face and then pulling back to include all three. One can't help feel it was all one seamless shot, but the genitals of the Pope were just too much for Borowczyk and/or the censors to cope with.

There are, however, several clever and imaginative moments, such as when Lucrezia shows her husband a statue ("My mother ... clothed, however"), only to have the statue later removed and she stand naked on its pedestal (like mother, like daughter).

The scene with Sforza refusing to accept biscuits offered to him by the Pope (each one broken into parts and fed off, repression, whereas Borowczyk is the champion of desire being lived out to its fullest, in the myriad ways devised by Nature.

An unnamed critic in Continental Film Review came close to it when he/she wrote:

Contes Immoraux.

One can feel a mile away.

The argument for erotic films is simply this: Eroticism and culture in Walt Disney's films, where both abound? Take any film of his you care to think of: for example, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. Why don't you look for eroticism there? There is always a boy and a girl in his films; there are even dogs that kiss each other and make vulgar suggestions – repressed desire you can feel a mile away.

Disgusting: desire that doesn't dare! I have never made films of that type.

I don't think my films are any more erotic than most other films. Except documentaries, perhaps; they are very rarely erotic.

One understands Borowczyk's passionate response, as his films clearly do not set out to be erotic in the usual sense. For one, his films nude bodies quite disinterestedly, recording them in all their variety, without fetishizing or idealizing them.

For another, much commercially-driven 'eroticism' comes out of, and feeds off, repression, whereas Borowczyk is the champion of desire being lived out to its fullest, in the myriad ways devised by Nature.

What is the difference between a home-made porn flick and film with erotic content by Borowczyk or Nagisa Oshima? It surely comes back to what critics see as the inappropriateness of a serious director dealing with sexual material. The ferocity of the complaints understandably led Borowczyk to become somewhat defensive, as witnessed when Sue Adler in Cinema Papers suggested to him that he made "erotic-cultural films". One can feel the director's temperature rise: 

Erotica what? Who used that term? I have never made films of that type.

Why don't you go looking for eroticism and culture in Walt Disney's films, where both abound? Take any film of his you care to think of: for example, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs.

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Dzieje Grzechu (1975)

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49

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Based on the novel by Stefana Zeromskiego, Roman Wilhelmi (Stanislaw Kozielski), Marek Walczewski ([Count Szczeric], Roman Wilhelmi [Stanislaw Kozielski]), Marek Walczewski ([Plaza-Spalwski]), Karolina Lubienska ([Ewa's Mother]), Zdzislaw Mozrowski ([Ewa’s Father]), Mieczyslaw Cyprian Bodzanta (Mieczyslaw Voit), Marek Bargielowski ([Horst]), Jolanta Szemberg ([Chief Clerk]).

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Nineteen seventy-five, critics grabbed hold of The Story of a Sin after the ‘problems’ of Contes Immoraux, lavishing it with praise and calling it a return to the peak of his earlier works. This viewer was of a strongly-different opinion then and would not have revisited the film had not this series of articles been undertaken. Twenty-three years on, inexplicably curtailed just as interest builds. For example, when Ewa returns home half-way through her tortuous ordeals, her mother screams, “Get out you slut.” The father fortuitously (or ludicrously, depending on one’s taste in Victorian melodrama) arrives home. He threatens to kill his wife (a chilling heroines/herosine) and ushers Ewa into his study. But Borowczyk cuts to a new scene (of Ewa as a cashier some time later) in a seizure of dramaturgical coitus interruptus.

Few would disagree that the story is an absurdist parade of increasingly-degrading situations, Ewa’s descent plotted by someone excited by the kinds of perversities that can befall a woman. One suspects, though, this bent is more the novelist’s than the director’s (though this bent is more the novelist’s than the director’s (though, this bent is more the novelist’s than the director’s (though, this bent is more the novelist’s than the director’s (though, this bent is more the novelist’s than the director’s (though, this bent is more the novelist’s than the director’s (though, this bent is more the novelist’s than the director’s). Borowczyk’s Lulu has the same disturbing quality.

Zeromskiego ([Zeromski, as Most English critics name him]) wrote at a time when socially-minded writers believed that the more cruelty they could visit upon their heroines/herosines, the more powerfully they could argue for social justice. Thomas Hardy’s Tess of the D’Urbervilles: The Story of a Pure Woman is a classic case.

However, by the time Borowczyk made his film, feminism had already achieved much and the escalating misery technique had become seriously outdated. Borowczyk makes no attempt to grapple with the issue and appears, most of the time, to just go through the motions, utilizing the rushed, picareseque style of so many television mini-series. Tom Milne takes a differing view: Respecting the incredible welter of incident to which Zeromski subjects his heroine, so faithfully that its absurdity is magnified tenfold by the confines of a film script, Borowczyk has in fact reduced its contrivances to such extremes of artificiality that melodrama becomes mélodrame, an operatic extravaganza in which one plainly pure soprano is heard pitting itself against the basso profundos of totem and taboo.

Viewed today, The Story of a Sin connects in no obviously meaningful way with the issues of now. It looks even more an object of a forgotten patriarchy to an emerging female power. That is not what the feminists of the 1960s and ’70s prophesized but it is exactly what Borowczyk predicted with the Erzsebet Bathory story in Contes Immoraux. Why, then, his bizarre retreat to viewing woman as powerless pawn of man but one year later?

True, Ewa’s amour fou for Lukasz Niepolomski, common to all eras, and the desire of men to wish to save (and control) women has waned little. One of the most powerful moments in The Story of a Sin is when Lukasz offers Ewa’s gaolers his entire fortune to free her, as if men keep seeing wealth as power, and an aid and a weapon where women are concerned. But they are right to do so, a rapidly-increasing number of late-’90s women placing a man’s bread-winning ability as their number one factor in choosing a mate (love, as with Queen Elizabeth, being placed well down the list).

Also intriguing is Borowczyk’s interest in a character with so little strength. Most women would sympathize with the abandoned Ewa and her unwanted child, but not when she lures Szczeric to his death. Why does she not flee? She is a murderer by choice, despite the film’s heavy-handed attempts to convince one otherwise.

On top of that, the film is stylistically ordinary. Apart from Borowczyk’s trademark hand-held shots, and the often brilliant use of sound and music (especially when he layers two passages from Mendelssohn-Bartholdy’s Violin Concerto in E minor, it seems as if sacrificing idiocynastic style was the price to pay for getting this convoluted narrative on screen. Some key moments are even played in listless waltz, with little narrative or filmic interest. This is especially true of the scene of Ewa and Lukasz in the snow, where the dialogue carries all the weight and the image none. Lukasz begins: “Diderot says, ‘Happiness and decency exist only in such countries where the law recognizes instincts.’ He’s right. In Japan, girls have baths in front of men.”

“That’s in Japan.”

“Japan’s a great society. Could a girl here have a bath with men watching? Shame’s only an invention like clothes.”

“A girl’s blush is an invention, too, now?”

“I’ll give you proof. In the Ilse des Pins, missionaries ordered girls to wear loin cloths. But they kept taking them off. Animals, too…”

“We’re not animals. Nice example from the Ilse des Pins!”

Synopsis: In turn-of-the-century Warsaw, Ewa Pabralynska (Grazyna Dlugolecka) lives with her parents and two lodgers, one Lukasz Niepolomski (Jerzy Zelnik), an anthropology student. Lukasz and Ewa fall in love via tender letters. Failing to obtain a divorce from his estranged wife, Lukasz suddenly departs. Learning he has been shot, Ewa rushes home half-way through her tortuous ordeals, her mother screams, “Get out you slut.” The father fortuitously (or ludicrously, depending on one’s taste in Victorian melodrama) arrives home. He threatens to kill his wife (a chilling heroine) and ushers Ewa into his study. But Borowczyk cuts to a new scene (of Ewa as a cashier some time later) in a seizure of dramaturgical coitus interruptus.

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In the canon of great Borowczyk, one can cite *The Story of a Sin* only the scene of the baby’s birth and death, as horrifying and disturbing a four minutes of cinema as has ever been achieved. *The Story of a Sin* is more likely to be remembered as a film which introduces or extends *Les Héroïnes du Mal*, etc. It’s rare moment of happiness, the film is didactic in one manner of another. What interests me is, for example, the history of morals. One can vulgarize the knowledge of certain historical periods that is really a bit marginal. What really matters is whether or not it is a question of melodrama!

If I made this film after a long absence, it is because, as I said at Cannes, I wanted to finally make a film for the Polish public which wouldn’t know any of the films which I made in France. That appeared to me to be a slightly absurd situation and regrettable.1

Apart from the glorious, colour-rich scene in a park, where children play and Lukasz and Ewa share a rare moment of happiness, the film is that murky brown so beloved of Polish directors (Wajda, Zanussi, et al). Only the memorial flashes of quirky montage, some playful moments with theatre of the absurd (the Roman prison where everyone screams out instructions to others: pure Godard) and the surrealist imagery (Ewa’s dream, with its layering of Magritte-like men and pistols, and the little girl laughing when Ewa faints at work) hint at the director of *Gotto, l’île d’amour and Contes Immoraux*.

That said, the film remains high on the list of most who admire only early Borowczyk, and the director himself seems not unpleased with his work (as revealed in his interview with Max Tessier for *Ecran*): "Zeromskiego turned the courtyard balcony into a meaningful description of Man. The characters of the novel and their fates are so true that, like itself, they have struck roots in the minds of several generations of Polish readers. *The Story of a Sin*... was a long time ago, and still today, considered to be a ‘minor’ work of Zeromskiego, and many have criticized your choice to make it in Poland."

This question of knowing if it was or wasn’t “the worst book of Zeromskiego” is complex. People generally cite two or three contemporary critics of the author who were very bourgeois and reactionary, and for whom, from the moment of the publication of this novel in installments in a magazine, the alarm bells went off.

People said this book wouldn’t interest the readers, but that is wrong. Still today in Poland one reads him and one even cries. It depends really on the manner in which one reads. As for myself, I have no wish to bore the viewer in outlining the social theories of Zeromskiego, whose “progressivism” is, in any case, very clear, but I preferred to look into the hidden contents of the novel. There are critics who demand the contents of film be didactic, etc. That doesn’t really bother me, but I preferred to practise in a different way. Every good film is didactic in one manner of another. 2

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1 4  Tom Milne opts for the old woman being Thérèse’s aunt (op. cit., p. 123); others have suggested she is a grandmother. The film gives no clue.

15 Georges Bataille, in particular, has written extensively on this topic.

16 Tom Milne, op. cit., p. 121.

17 This may sound as a swipe at the Poles, but it isn’t. Anyone who saw as many Central European films as this writer did during the 1970s (courtesy of the great Erwin Rado’s Melbourne Film Festival) would know that Central European filmmaking of that period had a desaturated look, rather brown and sepia-like.

18 Meaghan Morris, op. cit., p. 55.


20 This a powerful surrealist effect used by Borowczyk in several of his films

21 This is the second most prominent credit on the film.

22 *Monthly Film Bulletin, Borowczyk: Cinéaste Onirique*, et al, give the boy’s name as André. But there is nothing written or spoken in the film to support that. Perhaps André is the boy’s name in the short story.


24 Most books cite 14 minutes, but the version on the Italian tape is only 8.

25 Carlos Clarens, op. cit., p. 46.

26 This is the title on the Italian video.

27 "Julie, ma cousine, avait seize ans, j’en avais vingt, et cette petite différence d’âge la rendait docile à mes commandements."
all thoughts you might have had about stock film in the past.
Brad Hayward talks to Paul Kalina about the making of his début feature, Occasional Coarse Language, a romantic comedy based on the trials of 22-year-old Min Rogers (Sara Browne).

**How long was the film in planning and production?**

The only way you can make something for such a little amount of money is if it happens fast. The things that don’t cost money come out of a script: charm and wit and spontaneity. The whole idea was to not spend too much time stuffi ng around, trying to capture some energy, keeping the ball rolling. The whole thing was really put together on the momentum theory: that if you can get the ball rolling and to a certain speed, you can’t stop it.

I wrote the script in three days. We spent about five weeks on pre-production, including the casting and putting the crew together, and shot it in 17 days. The editing was probably the longest process, about three months all up.

**Did you apply to have this or another film funded?**

At the time, the FTO [NSW Film & Television Office] was running the Young Filmmakers’ Fund, and the AFC had the New Screenwriter’s Scheme. I applied for both, but didn’t make either. I was able to put together about $20,000.

Trish Piper, the co-producer, literally put $100,000 on her Diner’s Club, she sold off some bits and pieces and came up with the other $20,000.

Even $40,000 wasn’t enough to do the whole film, and that’s where the still montages, the Web pages and the David Letterman footage came from. We had to find practical, creative solutions to get the film to a length where it worked as a feature, and these were very inexpensive to do. The stills sequences we shot on a 35mm camera; they literally cost $200 each. We scanned them into the editing suite. We shot on film, but our aim was to get a rough-cut at least on Betacam. We were able to do that for not a lot of money.

**Did you originate on 16mm?**

Super 16.

**Why after being rejected, did you push on with the filming?**

I thought that if the experts are putting these romantic comedies together, with these budgets, stars and all the right ingredients, and people still aren’t going to see them, then they don’t really know how to make a commercial film. It’s a numbers game and, with all the best intentions in the world, it still doesn’t come off.

That meant we were in with a chance, and that’s all we ever had. That’s why we kept going, and I literally had to put the blinkers on. Despite the rejections, the “no’s”, the “you’re crazy” from so many people, what kept it going was the good-will from everyone around us and the enthusiasm the script generated. Everyone I gave the script to, except the official bodies, thought it was fantastic and that we should do it. We literally put the blinkers on and kept going.

**Were you inspired by the success of a film like Love and Other Catastrophes [Emma-Kate Crogan, 1996]?**

My model was The Brothers Mullen [Edward Burns, 1995].

I used to think, “My God, how do you become a film director?” I thought I could never, ever aspire to it, but I just had to take a more pragmatic approach to it and think, “You become one by doing it.”

I guess a lot of no-budget films end up expensive home-movies. There’s about six shooting around Sydney at the moment and I’m sure it’s the same in Melbourne. Very few make it to the big screen. We tried to do is not make it two people in two rooms talking. We tried to give it as much production value as we could in order to maximize our chances of getting distribution. We did that by making Sydney feel like a character in the film, giving it some exterior locations, trying to open it up a bit, keeping it bright and colourful and fun and energetic, as well as having a bit of heart that an audience can latch on to.

**Did you make the film with an audience in mind?**

To get a distributor to look at a film, that’s all they want to know. It doesn’t happen all that often that an Australian film is made for a younger female audience. A distributor could instantly see that it can market the film to that audience and that, I guess, is what was attractive about it.

That wasn’t a conscious decision when I wrote it, but it was afterwards. That’s why it’s reliant on music and spontaneity. I guess a lot of films are made without an audience in mind, or you don’t quite know where the audience is.

I’ve encountered quite a lot of resistance from people saying, “Why did you make a commercial film?” as a criticism. Well, the aim of the game is to have people see your film.

**At what stage did Roadshow take on the film?**

We went backwards and forwards to the funding bodies quite a few times. We shot the film blind — we couldn’t afford rushes or anything — so, when our $40,000 ran out, what we had was a box of processed negative. That’s all. I literally tramped around to every post house in town with my box of neg. Lemac in Sydney, which we hired the gear off, kindly offered to telecine the
We had six Betacams and we got to negative on the proviso that, if we got first time.

I thought, "No one will give us an editing suite for a couple of months to cut it, so why don't we try to grab a few days somewhere and we'll do a trailer." So, once again, I knocked on doors. Spectrum Films kindly gave us four days on Lightworks. I didn't have an editor, but eventually found my way to Simon Martin, who was just finishing Lightworks.

We cut a two-minute trailer out of a film that wasn't even edited, which was quite strange, and went back to the funding bodies again, but didn't have any luck. Feeling quite dejected, I thought, "No one will give us an editor, that's fine, but if you do have a feminine side or something.

It's a 94-minute film with 33 songs. We had to go back and recut the film with the music we could afford. We had to replace every song except one, and that was quite scary because we literally had to reinvent the film and keep the essence of what Roadshow liked about it. We had to edit the film twice.

WAS IT DIFFICULT FOR YOU TO WRITE A FILM FROM A WOMAN'S PERSPECTIVE?

I find writing dialogue easy. It's pretty thin on plot, it's a dialogue-driven film, and I guess the bit of plot pulls out of the dialogue. But I literally had nothing to do with it. I sat down and had no idea what I was going to write. That opening monologue came and it literally just sprang from there. The tag of the preceding scene would lead to the next one. I don't know, I guess I must have a feminine side or something.

Ally McBeal accused of being anorexic. This hypocrisy about, on one hand, getting rid of the weight and, on the other, this is how you've got to look, is just rammed down women's throats continuously. It must be so hard when you get to 17 or 18 and having this thrust down your throat. What I like about Min is she's not beautiful, she's lovely in her own way, she's got a bit of weight on her. She's kind of the way most of us are.

CORRECT SHAGGER.

Nick Bishop who played him is the most experienced actor, a NIDA graduate. I had a great scene where he was doing a Zen headstand and there's a little conversation between him and Min with the camera upside down. I wanted to get him in a little bit more. I like the way he subtly gets up Min's goat and then she lets fly at the end. She can't take it and he has no idea.

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CAN YOU TALK ABOUT YOUR OWN BACKGROUND? YOU HAD NO FORMAL FILM TRAINING, DID YOU?

I guess I'm totally outside of the system. The AFTRS [Australian Film Television & Radio School] isn't too far from where I live. I couldn't afford to go there because I have a couple of kids and that wasn't an option. But I saw the library and I thought, "This is tremendous, this great reference library about every film you'd ever want to see." I just started hanging out there. So, while all the students were being students, I'd be in the library and I'd watch films by blocks of directors, and then read the biography of that director. Basically, I just worked my way from A to Z, everything from Antonioni to you name it. It was a crash course in film history.

I still had that feeling that you couldn't just be a director. But when reading about people like Buñuel and Truffaut, I started to see that they had doubts about themselves and that really they weren't that different to me. It gave me a bit of strength to, well, why not have a go?

I read as much technically as I could, so it was literally an intensive crash course in filmmaking and filmmakers.

I'd always loved movies, but it had never occurred to me that you could just go out and make a film until I read this article by Phillip Adams. I don't always agree with what he says but I love the larkiness in it. It was a fantastic article about getting off your arse and having a go, that Australian trait of having a shot in the face of adversity. I felt really inspired by it, and that was a turning point for me.

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Jeffrey Katzenberg, formerly at Disney, is a partner with Steven Spielberg and David Geffen at Dreamworks SKG, the major new studio with the 1998 hits, Saving Private Ryan (Steven Spielberg), Deep Impact (Mimi Leder) and Antz (Eric Darnell and Tim Johnson).

Dreamworks' big Christmas-New Year hope is The Prince of Egypt (Brenda Chapman, Steve Hickner and Simon Wells), an animated musical about Moses (voiced by Val Kilmer) and his adoptive brother, Rameses (Ralph Fiennes). Bringing astonishing new techniques to the screen, The Prince of Egypt is also one of the rare animated features aimed at a wide audience demographic, where adults will hopefully be as enchanted as children.

When asked at the Australian press conference where the idea had come from, Katzenberg replied:

About 3000 years ago in ancient Egypt! [Laughter.]

The genesis of the project actually started before Steven Spielberg, David Geffen and myself actually undertook the task of building the first studio in 65 years. We were talking about what we all would like to achieve. [...] I explained how I thought there was a great new frontier for animation which was basically to take the technique of animation and start to use it to tell something other than cartoon fairytales made for little children, toddlers.

We kicked around a number of ideas. Steven Spielberg said, "Why don't you do the Ten Commandments?" Like most great ideas, you don't have to hear it twice to know that's it. So, before we actually even started Dreamworks as a company, we had agreed that [...] it would be our first movie. Four years later, here we are. When asked if his Jewish heritage had influenced the choice of story, Katzenberg answered:

Our heritage is something we all carry with us and something I have a sense of pride about. But the story was picked because it genuinely is a great story. [...] The fact that it has great values and meaning to many people on this planet is a wonderful added benefit, but it is not the reason that we set out to tell the story. [...] I hope we have made a movie that audiences will connect with on many different levels. If there are values of faith in this film for people to take away from it, then that's a great accomplishment. But it's not why the film exists. People will be able to come in and simply get transported back thousands of years in time to enjoy one of the most remarkable stories that has been passed down for dozens of generations.

With its audacious new techniques, an impressionistic visual palette and a stirring recreation of an ancient time, Katzenberg certainly sees The Prince of Egypt as a new dawn in feature animation, as he explains to SCOTT MURRAY.

In 1984, when I arrived at Disney, I had no connection to animation. I didn't study it, I wasn't an aficionado of it, I barely remembered seeing it as a kid. At Disney, somebody said, "So, you do movies and television ... and, by the way, over there is animation. Figure it out; it's a problem."

As with any job I've ever been given in my life, I threw myself into it. That began the journey of re-discovering Walt Disney's formula, Walt's path, his genius. All we did at Disney was go back to the master and retrace his steps; we didn't invent anything. I fell in love with animation and it became a genuine passion for me, but it was only a part-time job. I had to go off and build this huge film and television studio. So, when I left and we had this idea of starting a studio, my hope, my dream, was that I would actually be able to do this thing that I had fallen in love with full-time, not part-time.

When did you develop the vision to take animation beyond fairytales for children and make films directed more at adults?

That came part and parcel with leaving. When I was at Disney, I loved the cartoons and the fairytales, the traditions and heritage. I embraced them and flourished. It's not like it was an issue for me; it's not as though I found it limiting or frustrating. I enjoyed it very much and I think there is still huge territories to pursue in that genre ... for them [laughs].

At Dreamworks, I wanted to move on to a new continent. Every step had to be a first step, every place a new challenge and experience. I felt we should be pioneers who took the technique of animation and redeveloped it, finding a style, a look and a whole set of tools that would be unique to us. We took the best of traditional animation — the acting that's done by our animators, which I think is world-class — and re-defined the way actors lend their voices to a movie. The realism that we went for in the acting, as well as in the visuals, had to be consistent.
The Queen (Helen Mirren) and her baby, Rameses.

Our active characters and put them into three-dimensional environments we built. Our camera can go where our directors and lay-out artists want it to go, which has a profound impact — on the look of the movie. You actually feel as if you're on the inside of the environments, as opposed to just observing them which, in the past, is all that you could do in animation.

The biggest leap of all, though, was to pick a story. To me, you could not have a greater swing of the pendulum than between a fairytale at one end and the story of the Ten Commandments on the other.

It's so hard to articulate to people what is so new about this film. If I had to sit here today and explain what people are gonna see in the cinema, I would fail ... profoundly.

I actually had this problem once before, on a project we did together called Who Framed Roger Rabbit [Robert Zemeckis, 1988]. We couldn't explain to anybody what we were doing then, either. But the audiences discovered it, and my hope is that, when we do something that's really different, unique and original, the audience will find it. That's the one reason why I'm able to...
sleep at night these days. For a hundred years, movie audiences have always found it. There are so few examples of it not being the case, that they were in fact the flukes. We could be a fluke, but I hope we’re not.

**The Prince of Egypt** has an adult tone in the performance and dialogue. It is a shock not to hear actors putting on squirrel-type voices, appropriate though that may be for children’s films.

It has that in common with **Antz**.

**Which is at yet another end of the spectrum that you described.**

Yes, and I hope it will be the true of our next movie, **El Dorado**. It is about two rogue stowaways on Cortez’ ship as he sails to the new world. They jump ship and arrive in this Shangri-la, the mythical city of El Dorado, the city of gold. I hope that we will be successful in embracing a very rebellious tone.

**Given the long-held notion of animation as being for children, do you think there will be a resistance from adults to visiting The Prince of Egypt?**

Oh, sure. It’s 70 years of animation being one-way. You’re asking, “Can the world take the 70-year tradition and perception of animation equaling cartoons, fairytales, happy meals, school box, lunch-boxes [laughs] and, in one snap of a finger, say, ‘No, it’s completely different from that. That’s not what it is.’?” I think that’s a very hard thing to do. It’s a real challenge. And therein lies both the excitement of it and the risk.

I only can say that, having done it – because it’s too late now to reconsider – it has genuinely been a privilege to make this movie. This is one of those times, whatever the film’s fate is, I feel we did our best.

**Do you believe the possibilities for telling stories through animation are more limitless than through live-action? After all, the techniques in Antz and The Prince of Egypt are light-years apart.**

I guess I would say “No”, in that I believe there are as many styles of live-action movie-making as there are styles of animation. But I would agree with you on the differences. If you took all animated movies ever made in the history of mankind and added them together, it would not represent 20 percent of the output of live-action movies in one year in Hollywood. Live-action has been exploring thousands of different kinds of stories for decades and decades. Animation hasn’t even begun.

**Is there a chance that the percentage of a very nice movie, but they did head right into, “Let’s have a fairytale with all the [merchandising stuff],” and I don’t know whether they’re going to continue to pursue that or not.

Today, there are basically four companies making animated movies. You’re going to be hard pressed to find more than five or six movies a year coming out. It is a pretty daunting thing to do. It took us four years to get these two out.

**But Dreamworks is already a major studio and that has changed a situation Disney has for so long dominated.**

I don’t look to Disney as our competitor. It’s not a David and Goliath story as much as people would like to pigeonhole it as being. It would be true if we were pursuing their business, but we’re not.

Disney is going to continue doing what they do brilliantly. They did it for fifty or sixty years before I went there and in the five years since I left.

We’re going off into such completely different territory that to compare the two would be like comparing There’s Something about Mary [Peter and Bobby Farrelly] and Saving Private Ryan. Yes, they were two phenomenally successful movies, both exceeded people’s expectations, both came out within two weeks of one another, but I don’t think anybody imagined that they took away from one another. They existed out there, and I guess in a pure, pure sense they were competitors with one another, but not really.

**Not competition, so much as the animation passion-pool being greatly increased. The money and desire for making serious animated features has dramatically altered. It’s a potential new dawn for a whole new area of cinema.**

[Katzenberg pauses, then taps his hand on a wooden sidetable.] Knock wood. Knock wood. Let’s hope you’re right.

**Antz is a positive start.**

We had fun making it, a ball. Working with those actors was great. Eric Darnell and Tim Johnson, the directors, did a stunning job. They are as gifted as any people I’ve worked with. How’s that, out of the box? Boom!

And look at the people on Prince of Egypt. Brenda Chapman is the first woman director in [feature] animation. I’ve worked with Brenda for over ten years. She gave The Lion King [Roger Allers and Rob Minkoff, 1994] its heart. She gave this movie its heart. If you find anything tender and emotional in this movie, it is probably because so many brilliant women worked on it. The two producers [Sandra Rabins, Penney Fleming-Cox] were women, as was one of the directors and one of the co-heads of story [Lorna Cook], and one of the three designers [Kathy Altieri]. In other words, so many women were in places of major decision-making. They’re the ones, I think, who put the heart into it, whereas Simon Wells [co-director] is a brilliant visualist, storyteller and dramatist. He did a fantastic job directing Val Kilmer, as did Brenda with Ralph Fiennes. Steve Hickner [co-director] made the movie get to life with all his big ideas. It was a wonderful combination of talents.

**Is animation a more organically collaborative process than live-action?**

Without a question; not even close. There’s nothing else in the world that I’ve discovered that begins to touch that.

The only thing genuinely unfortunate about this film would be if it were seen as a singular enterprise, because, all over it as I am, and I’m sure you’ll hear or have heard some stories, I am just a participant. Yes, I am a driver, every day giving people the strength to take risks and have the courage of their convictions and their insane ideas. If Steven makes a movie, it’s a Steven movie. I can’t say that that’s the case here. It would be unfair.

**Is that another reason you love animation?**

To me, that’s the fun. When I lived in New York city, I would sometimes go down in the dead of winter to the Caribbean. Suddenly the plane door opens and you walk out into the Caribbean air, where the scent completely envelops every pore of your body. There is something about it so enrapturing and enveloping.

I feel that every day when I drive in the gates of Dreamworks. I feel like I’m on a tropical oasis.

You are now a partner of a major studio, rather than someone managing one. Do you feel in any way liberated?

It just may be the nature of who I am, and I know I’m partners with Steven Spielberg and David Geffen, but I really feel as if I work for them. They don’t make me feel that way, but I make myself feel that way. They are my mentors. They are smarter, more successful, more talented and definitely richer [laughs]. They’re incredible guys to work for.

**At the press conference, and today, you mention Spielberg with awe in your voice.**

Well, he is a genius! I actually do believe that if we can ever return from some other place and look back a thousand years from now, he’s Shakespeare. Do you know what I’m saying? He’s in just some other place. In history, from time to time – Beethoven, Monet – there are people who come along who are just off the charts. Now I’m not sure anybody knew it at the moment that they were there, or maybe they had some sense of it. I actually imagine that’s who Steven is. Every day is a new revelation. If there’s anybody who wants to question whether or not that’s possible, I would say, “Pretty much every week something else comes along that confirms that likely it’s the case. More so it’s likely than it’s not [laughs].” For me to have someone that incredible as a partner … I just pinch myself. And, believe me, I’m not shy about wanting to utilize this genius in any way I can to help me be better.

At the press conference, a spokesman said, “Dreamworks decided not to do any consumer products. There are no Red Sea shower curtains, no fast-food tie-ins or Mose burgers. They felt it would just not be appropriate.”
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Assistance is available to support projects related to screen culture activity in Australia which are not in receipt of regular funding from the AFC and fulfill the aims of the ICD program. Funding is for one-off project activity only.
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CAMERAQUIP
The Finest Motion Picture Rental Equipment
In the second part of his review of the mammoth Rank retrospective, BARRIE PATTISON looks at the work of now-forgotten British filmmakers.

One of the most interesting aspects of the collection is to see how many star performers, later appearing in American films, figure here, among them Muriel Angelus, lead of Preston Sturges' first movie; Brian Aherne; Claude Rains; and two Richard the Lionhearts, the admirable Henry Wilcoxon from De Mille's The Crusades (1935) and Ian Hunter from the Errol Flynn The Adventures of Robin Hood (Michael Curtiz, 1938).

Lilli Palmer grows from bit player (remember Peter Lorre flicking ice-cream into her cleavage in Alfred Hitchcock's 1936 Secret Agent?), through femme fatale in Rosmer's 1936 kids adventure in the Rockies, The Great Barrier (aka Silent Barriers, 1937) and Albert de Courville's Crackerjack (1937), her ingenues in Maurice Elvey films, to her touching refugee registering against the serious competition in The Rake's Progress (aka Notorious Gentleman, Sidney Gilliat) in 1945.

Britain was a staging point for many European filmmakers whose work shows up in the collection: Mendes and Viertel. Italian Carmine Gallone made the musical My Heart is Calling (1935) with Polish couple Jan Kiepura and Marta Eggerth. The celebrated German director Karl Grune did Pagliacci (aka A Clown Must Laugh, 1936) with Richard Tauber. Czech Karel Lamac filmed They Met in the Dark with James Mason in 1943. Hollywood directors included Raoul Walsh, whose O.H.M.S. (aka You're in the Army Now, 1936) is a brisk, simple-minded adventure with John Mills and Wallace Ford as a gangster hiding as a member of a Canadian (!) military family joining the regiment and battling the straw hat lot on China Station. Rex Ingram's Marseilles-based Baroud (aka Love in Morocco, 1933) is more exotic and less disciplined.
Hill and Forde

Sinclair Hill was once a force in the British cinema. He handles Jessie Matthews in the 1931 *The Man from Toronto* but his *Britannia of Billingsgate* from 1933 is more interesting. The plot drags when dad Gordon Harker accidentally gets market-café wife Violet Lorraine movie stardom while son John Mills enters the Speedway races but we do get a detailed look at filmmaking of the period, a comic foreign director, a British Acoustic soundtrack projected on screen next to the one by one ten image, rushes and the Hammersmith Gaumont premiere.

Walter Forde also undertook prestige movies like the 1934 Oscar Ashe musical, *Chu Chin Chow*, with Fritz Kortner and Emlyn Williams along. 

Saville

Victor Saville rose as the most ambitious contender, someone able to transport his skills to Hollywood, like his contemporaries Robert Stevenson (*Mary Poppins*, 1964) or Tim Whelan (*Rage at Dawn*, 1955). Saville would go on to make his best film, *South Riding* (1938), for Korda and produce the Robert Donat *Goodbye Mr. Chips* (*Sam Wood*, 1939) and the Mickey Spillane series of which *Kiss Me Deadly* is known, but here we also find his operetta *Princess Charming* which should have been one of the collection's highlights.

Evelyn Laye riposte, "I congratulate you."

Elvey

Maurice Elvey particularly, veteran of 200 productions, has remained a shadowy figure till now, though his claim to have made the first film to treat World War I appears correct, and his record includes Berlin and Hollywood stints and work continuing into the '50s. The Pordenone retrospective, which included his *The Life Story of David Lloyd George* (1918) and the best version of *Hindle Wakes* (1918), was a revelation.

Back at the London School of Film Technique when Elvey taught us, he passed for an amiable old-stager. We wondered about all his then-inaccessible titles. I thought myself very enterprising to hustle up one old D.L.N. standard copy of his Conrad Veidt film, the 1933 sound *Wandering Jew*, for him to comment. How much more interesting dealing with him would have been if we could have had our hands on these.

Now we can watch the scene Elvey described, of Jan Kiepura doing the British Cinema's first number to playback in his *My Song for You* in 1934, Harker and Loraine in music hall in 1934's *You Belong to Me*, for him to comment. How much more interesting dealing with him would have been if we could have had our hands on these.

Even less accessible have been the Aldwych farces, written for the stage by Ben Travers and filmed by star and director Tom Walls, heading up a stock company including silly-ass Ralph Lynn with his monocle ("That young man with the glass eye"), bumbling Robertson Hare, who suggested he could have been funnier than the top bananas, and the charming, middle-aged Yvonne Arnaud.

These are a particularly intriguing study for movie enthusiasts, all but filmed on stage, well into the team's association with the talkies, in 1934's *A Cup of Kindness* and the celebrated *The Cuckoo in the Nest* (1933), which still plays better than the 1950s re-make. We can watch Walls' limited command of film form develop from shots of the cast standing in a line in the studio, delivering Travers' unfunny dialogue: arresting the ruffian for shooting at him, cop Walls is told, "I only acted in self defence," and comes back, "You're a rotten bad actor." They progress through the Limehouse mystery of *Stormy Weather* (1935), and particularly in *Foreign Affairs* (1935) Walls can seen on a steep learning curve.

This latter is a prototype of *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* (*Frank Oz*, 1988), with Walls and Lynn, operating as a team quite winningly for once, a pair of swindlers on the Riviera who are got off, in the French courts, when the appealing Dianna Churchill presents them as gallant British gentlemen overcoming a Germanic plot.

The group broke up soon after this, the old-fashioned nature of their material already apparent, but it is a curious, consistent body of work of a kind rarely found.

The group broke up soon after this, the old-fashioned nature of their material already apparent, but it is a curious, consistent body of work of a kind rarely found.

Tom Walls' films fringe on the most rewarding of these, what you might think of as the Film Fun school of production. It is significant that to find a reference for this most characteristic school of British filmmaking, you have to turn, not to *Sight and Sound or Time Out*, but to a threeppenny comic which shared their naïve clergymen, stripped-shirted burglars, uniformed maids, tubby school boys and top-hatted dandies.

Pinero

The model in the early years of sound was the Arthur Wing Pinero play, *The Magistrate*, where the wosser official has to conceal his own low-life activities. Unofficial versions are dotted through the collection. Leslie Henson did it twice, in Victor Saville's 1931
The Sport of Kings and again in Graham Cutts and Austin Melford’s Oh Daddy (1935), with a script credit to Michael Powell. It was filmed in 1934 as Those Were the Days by the admirable Will Hay, many of whose films are in the collection and could have stood the successful matinee treatment the commercial channels give Abbott and Costello.

The play was presented as late as the '70s in London’s West End with Alistair Sim.

**HULBERT AND COURTNEIDGE**

The style is shown better in the musicals. Heat Wave is one, but as good are the films of Jessie Matthews and Jack Hulbert.

Hulbert is not remembered even as well as Hay, but he proves the most endearing of the comics, playing much the same characters as Tom Walls – heroes of empire, reporters, men about town – but without the bombast.

There was always an element of self-mockery about Hulbert’s characters. In Forde’s 1934 Bulldog Jack, our hero is rung in to replace Athol Bengal’s Captain Drummond, injured in a battle with Ralph Richardson’s woolly-wigged master criminal, his success relying on the deception. In Tim Whelan’s 1934 The Camels Are Coming which Hulbert, as he often did, also co-wrote; he’s the Squadron Leader whose reception in Egypt is a surprise. (“He was only expecting flowers if he didn’t get there.”) This one starts with a bogus Gaumont British news seven o’clock newsreel. (“If that’s what you look like when you’re worried, I wouldn’t do it,” Hulbert tells him). The ending shifts into passable treadmill slapstick.

Forde’s 1932 Jack’s the Boy (aka Night & Day) has his family consider Hulbert to be a waster, not knowing he’s secretly joined the police as a constable, leading to traffic chaos routines and a lively climax shot on location in Mme Tussauds.

Better again is Love on Wheels, directed by Victor Saville from a script by Robert Stevenson in 1932, with Hulbert doing a Dagwood Bumstead run for the morning bus with its singing passengers and conductor Gordon Harker urging him to come on for swanky Lenora Corbett. The location here is Liberty’s Oxford Street store where manager Edmund Gwenn has him fired, but after the “Luncheon to Munch On” number he does a live legs window display for the Jewish, small-shop owner across the road, diverting the attention of the crowds – rhythmic edits all over the place, an acrobatic Swiss face slap number and a Bill Sykes social club where the rough-housing passes for Apache dancing.

Pick of the batch is the 1933 Falling for You directed by Robert Stevenson and Hulbert. The stars are likeable, the numbers lively, and the staging convincing, offering a chase in the Alps without process photography. There are surprises, like Hulbert doing an unexpectedly skillful skates dance.

Hulbert is partnered in this with his real-life wife, Cicely Courtneidge - a competing reporters plot. Both were talented entertainers. Neither was young and glamorous when these films were made but we can’t help noticing that Jack was paired with attractive young co-stars while Courtneidge was given the likes of Edward Everett Horton as consort. Courtneidge also made agreeable comedies on her own. Maurice Elvey’s 1933 Soldiers of the King burlesques the conventions of “Brown on Resolution” with Courtneidge as two generations of a musical family, a coffee-stand crowd sheltering on a wet New Year’s Eve that forms a Conga line that brings amiable drunks back to the family party, and the two Courtneidges doing “Something About a Soldier” and “Soldiers of the King”. Tim Whelan’s 1933 Aunt Sally has the star passing herself off as a French cabaret star for impresario Sam Hardy, with bogus Berkeley numbers. Charles Reiner’s Everybody Dance of 1936 has her impersonating a pillar of rural virtue between nightclub numbers.

Most curious of the batch is Victor Saville’s 1935 Me and Marlborough, which is a (quite passable) composite of costume adventure (“They’ll know better than to send British troops to fight in Flanders again”) and musical, with Courtneidge in drag pursuing her enlivened husband to the frontline and springing Duke Tom Walls from treacherous French captivity.

**Matthews**

More appealing was Jessie Matthews, her elfin charms jarring with her Knightsbridge accent. The earlier films shown are stiff, Albert de Courville’s 1932 There Goes the Bride, where Owen Nares appoints himself her protector against a presumed arrest, or Sinclair Hill’s The Man from Toronto of the same year, barely a musical with one dance number. Plot has Ian Hunter trying to avoid an arranged marriage, with heiress Matthews, but falling for maid Matthews in disguise.

Matthews hits her stride in a sustained collaboration with Victor Saville. The Good Companions (1932) gives her a spot in the all-star cast opposite Edmund Gwenn, Mary Glynn, Percy Parsons, Max Miller and a nervous, lip-rouged John Gielgud. It is one of the most ambitious of these with the J. B. Priestley best-seller as basis and a climax where it looks as if Matthews’ bid for stardom will be destroyed when the theatre goes up in another spectacular fire raising, only to have triumph snatched from disaster.

Friday the Thirteenth (Saville, 1933) repeats the all-star format with multi-stories connected by a bus accident. It introduced Ralph Richardson.

Evergreen (Saville, a year later, is the first Saville with a familiar Rodgers and Hart score and a plot prefiguring Fedora. Over-produced and wading into an ersatz Metropolis (Fritz Lang, 1926) ballet finale, this one tries too hard, an error corrected in the last of the Saville-Matthews collaborations.

First a Girl (Saville, 1935) is the middle version of the “Victor and Victoria” story and easily the best. This one has Matthews among the midinettes twisting their butts in time with the fashion parade music at Maritza Hunt’s showing. Matthews decides to be a show girl and puts on the outfit belonging to titled Anna Lee, in an unbecoming Marcelle perm, but Matthews gets bounced from the choir where her real-life husband, Sonnie Hale, is auditioning for Hamlet. In the rain, he gets a cold and her borrowed dress is soaked, so he iron it while his voice...
There are remarkably few stand-out items in this collection.

**Hurst**

Add in Brian Desmond Hurst's 1935 *On the Night of the Fire* where Ralph Richardson is a side-street tuppenny barber who, on impulse, steals money he sees through an open window, only to find that wife Diana Wynyard is in debt for £70 to the smarmy local Manchester store man, startlingly well played by Henry Oscar. (“That's a lot of money for a woman of her class.”) Henry gets his and the net closes round Ralph. The surprise is that he becomes a doomed Jannings type and the street traders, rather than express class solidarity, form a muttering, cloth-cap lynching mob. The film pre-figures the destructive-impulse USA noir films, like Andre de Toth's 1948 *Pitfall* and particularly Anthony Mann's 1950 *Side Street*, strikingly.

The mix of actuality (pre-bombing Newcastle?) and studio street settings is striking, and it is fascinating to watch the talented leads struggle with working-class parts for which they are totally miscast. Miklos Rozsa's rather than express class solidarity, form a muttering, cloth-cap lynching mob. The film pre-figures the destructive-impulse USA noir films, like Andre de Toth's 1948 *Pitfall* and particularly Anthony Mann's 1950 *Side Street*, strikingly.

**Stevenson**

Also, let us not overlook the 1936 *King Solomon's Mines*, directed by Robert Stevenson with extensive location footage by Geoffrey Barstas, who split the credit on *Tell England* (aka *Battle of Gallipoli*, 1931) with Asquith. The Rider Haggard standard gets its best outing with Paul Robeson top-billed as the mysterious tribesman, towering over cast, his songs reasonably motivated and himself badly presented only in the action footage where a college athlete background should have served him well. Also in the ubiquitous Anna Lee's expedition, we find romantic interest John Loder, the ever-splendid Roland Young and pipe-chewing Cedric Hardwicke ("Quartermain – best hunter in Africa"). Back in the '50s, when Lindsay Anderson made a splash by putting the boot into British cinema, one of his complaints was that it lacked positive figures until Henry V surfaced. In fact, these films are packed up with idealized heroes of Empire, Walter Huston in Victel's 1936 *Rhodes of Africa*, Leslie Banks as Sandy the strong, Sandy the brave ("haters of lies"). The fact that such films were ignored must have contributed to subsequent British film, including those of Anderson, having total lack of connection to this strong movie tradition.

*King Solomon's Mines* has the conviction of people for whom these adventures were a living and embraced tradition. We become involved as Hardwicke-Quartermain abandons his stand that, "There's nothing across the river but devils", swayed to plucky Irish-blood Anna's belief that the treasure map will lead to her missing dad and that Robeson will guide them there ("You don't get a snake on your stomach for nothing"). The jungle battle just gets by, but the climax in the volcano is terrific, showcasing Junge at his best. If this film had been in colour it would have rivalled the Zoltan Korda *Four Feathers* (1939). It is more than sad that it was denied the generations of 14-year-olds for whom it would have been one of their great experiences of cinema, till it becomes a cinephile relic which has lost relevance to the age group it once effectively targeted. These films are the exceptions.

**Still More**

The library also contains one silent film, Hitchcock's *The Lodger* (1926), in a passable tinted and scored copy, and two documentaries. John Betts' *R.A.F.* is a routine recruiting film with nervous service types performing their daily round. However, *Wings Over Everest* is more intriguing, with an impressive sequence of preparations for the roof of the world flight outclassing the actual event, nicely sent up by the stiff upper lip delivery of the real aviators. Footage appears to have been
used in *The Camels Are Coming* and the techniques of the busy Gaumont Instructional unit get possibly their most ambitious outing.

The library has Australian connections. Matheson Lang, Will Mahoney and Clifford Mollison toured here and radio figures Athol Fleming and Glenis Lorrimer show up along with ‘50s Rank leading man Michael Craig. However, certainly 500 randomly-chosen French, German or USA movies would have been more rewarding viewing (Italian? Spanish?). The ABC’s self-assessment as the defender of our British heritage figures. One can only wonder about the chain of circumstances that led to them putting to air Leslie Hiscott’s atrocious 1931 *Night in Montmartre*, with the sound of the studio floor creaking as the camera dollies, or Hugh Williams and the Knights-bridge-accented Parisians actually delivering dialogue as rie as, “I want to take you away from all this.”

The best action cycle, the Ripping Yarns of Empire films, were done better in Hollywood: *Lives of a Bengal Lancer* (Henny Hayaway, 1935), *The Charge of the Light Brigade* (Michael Curtiz, 1936), *Gunga Din* (George Stevens, 1939) and the rest. Where are the equivalent of the vivid stories of blue-collar life that Cagney and Loretta Young notioned up, or the ethical dilemmas of Fredric March?

In Stevenson’s 1938 *Owd Bob*, Will Fyffe is only tempted to daugh­ter Margaret Lockwood’s wedding by free liquor. Tom Walls deals with foreign royalty and rivals alike by kicking them in the pants, after telling them to hop it. He skirts, tugs women 30 years younger than him, but cuts up when wife Arnaud has her own toy boy. Gordon Harker pushes a fat woman out of a phone booth and gives her the finger in *Brit­annia of Billinge Gate* or is first glimpsed in *The Phantom Light* (Michael Powell, 1935) spitting out of an open window. Anthony Bushell must be the cinema’s soppiest juve­nile. We feel like cheering when Matheson Lang flings him off the Channel Ferry. These are presented as the audience involvement figures in their films.

Even in their day, who thought these characters would compete with Edward G. Robinson and Marie Dressler, Raimu and Hans Albers? Of course, even a sample of this size can be misleading. The contem­porary British Instructional Pictures register as having a different (more austere) house style. The Yard from which John Longden operates in Hitchcock’s *Blackmail* (1929) is clearly the one found in Thomas Bentley’s 1933 *Scotland Yard Mys­tery*.

Other libraries hold Asquith’s sensi­tive 1932 *Dance Pretty Lady*, or Arthur Woods’ gritty 1938 *They Drive By Night* to suggest different preoccupations in British film. Sev­eral titles that might have been expected to appear are absent, pre­sumably because the originals have gone missing.

No matter what reservations we may have about the first cycle of British talkies, things get worse when we hit the war years and after. The British unions turn away the interna­tion­al element which brought waste and abuses to many productions but also a lifting of craft standards. Cos­mopolitan designers like Andrew Andrieu, Erno Metzner, Vincent Korda, Alex Vetchnski and Alfred Junge had created a look even to much parochial British film, which was lost in the gloomy realistic clut­ter of the ‘40s. John Bryan on the Lean-Dickens films or contributing elegant studio Spanish to Arthur Crabtree’s awful 1946 *Caravan* alone continues, outlining even the sur­vivors of the original tradition.

Compare similar scenes from the decades, the race meets in *The Sport of Kings* (Victor Saville, 1931) or *Wild Boy* (Albert de Courville, 1934) are so much more adventurously­ staged and involving than the ones in Crabtree’s 1947 *The Calendar* (one of the ex-cameraman’s better efforts), or Ian Dalrymple and Peter Proud’s 1948 *Esther Waters*.

Of course, because there was no body of established, published opinion to repeat, once again virtually no critical activity has followed the broadcasts here. Most local writers ignored the films. The television movie critic of *The Sydney Morning Herald*, in his familiar style, made up his own comic synopses for them. The academics have yet to be heard from.

No one seems to be nettle-grasp­ing on how bad many are: Leslie Arlin’s turgid *Vanity Fair* rip-off, *The Man in Grey* (1943) or David McDonald’s 1947 studio-regional *The Brothers*.

There were more non-starter lead­ing men. Eric Portman or Cecil Parker got by as character actors, but top of the bill? English films did throw up players of the strength of Laughton and Robert Donat again – Stewart Granger, Alec Guinness, James Mason, and the rest – but their triumphs would be in Hollywood productions. Ann Todd gives it a try in Robert Compton Bennett’s much-cens­ored 1947 *Daybreak*, coming on sweat-soaked, but who really thought matronly Margaret Lockwood and Patricia Roc were sex symbols?

These ‘40s English films set about improving our character with feeble moralities like David McDonald’s 1948 *Good Time Girl*. The Boultings’ 1948 *Fame is the Spar* was taken as serious political comment. The message content of such films – include others like Compton Ben­nett’s *The Years Between* (1947) or the Boultings’ *The Guinea Pig* (aka The Outsider, 1949) had British crit­ics proclaim the intellectual and artistic superiority of the product, at what was to prove a low ebb.

Sorting through this collection, one can, however, find a small num­ber of films from the ‘40s which do document changing values in an interesting way. Thorold Dickinson was the pillar of the specialist film movement in Britain and his early films, like the 1939 *The Arsenal Sta­tion Mystery* with Leslie Banks, were often taken more seriously than they merited. 1952’s *Men of Two Worlds* (aka Kinseng, Man of Africa), however, sends African Albert Hall composer Robert Adams back to Tanganyika where Eric Port­man, with solar topi and fly whisk, plans to clear the jungle to get rid of Tsese fly and comes into conflict with authoress Catharine Nes­bitt, who is on about the black soul. Orlando Martins as a villainous witch-doctor registers. Stiff and studio­filmed, outside of some impressive bridge-building scenes, this one does query precepts for­merly accepted and gets by as drama. Technicolor, rare in the collection, is a plus.

*Mr. Perrin and Mr. Trail*, directed by Lawrence Huntington in 1948, foreshadows the *Browning Version* (Anthony Asquith, 1931) with fussy schoolmaster Marius Goring, in character make-up, over-shadowed by war hero David Farrar, who plans to cure a boy’s yellow streak by putting him in the rugger team. The school where Edward Chapman explains, “Everyone here is a fail­ure”, and the depiction of Farrar as flaw­ed but aware, are unexpected, with Finlay Currie, giving a fatuous speech at prize day ignoring the drama we’ve watched, a surprise conclusion. Its atmospheric, deep­focus filming is also better than we would expect here.

Most unpredictable of all is Elvey’s 1943 *The Lamp Still Burns* with the dread Roxandums Johns so impressed with war-time nurses that she aban­dons her architecture job and signs on. She finds herself subject to archaic disciplines designed for 17-year-olds (“You’re not allowed to address med­ical staff direct and with your cuffs on”). sympathy at first goes to her, but swings to matron Catharine Nes­bitt, aware that the pressures of the blitz will change her profession per­manently but also conscious of the strengths of the disciplines she prac­tises. This is something which Elvey, possibly alone, could grasp and he­dramatizes it with skill uncharacteris­tic of what was being done around him. They even come at Johns giving up magnate Stewart Granger for her brilliant career. The stark, rectangu­lar, black-and-white world of Queen Eleanor’s hospital is recognizable from Elvey’s ‘30s films and here more involving than in many of its other manifestations.

A pattern which would persist for another two decades is visible here, a handful of films where subject and talent fuse to produce something more involving than the stuffy for­mula product done around it. British film would never find the voice that would sustain the half-century cycles of other national cinemas and carry it past the point where it would shrink to made-for-television think­pieces. The English popular the­atrical feature was slowly dying, even in its most widely­observed years.

A piece of this length can only consider a fraction of the material put to air. I’ve deliberately ignored later, better-known titles but there are fig­ures and films mentioned here or omitted altogether which could stand serious consideration. Whatever their faults (and some of these films may deserve their trip to limbo), con­fronting them in this quantity is certainly the most substantial and intriguing opportunity for historical film study Australian television has presented us in decades.
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A panel of 11 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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**SPOTLIGHT: Revisionist History**

Indeed the historical accuracy of Shekhar Kapur's film, *Elizabeth*, is a fluid notion, and one that the director himself openly encouraged. Certainly it plays havoc with the 'established' fact that Elizabeth I (played magnificently by Cate Blanchett) was a virgin throughout her life, by having her involved in a loving tryst with Sir Robert Dudley (Joseph Fiennes). It also compresses some of the more important events in Elizabeth's reign into a seemingly short time-frame.

Not that it's deliberately flouting known fact; it's just ambiguous about when these events actually occurred. *Elizabeth* posits the idea that the Virgin Queen was a construct devised by Elizabeth as a substitute for the Catholic Madonna, an image that the people of England could look up to.

But missing were some pertinent facts. For example, it wasn't at all clear that the French Mary of Guise (Fanny Ardant) is, in fact, Mary Queen of Scots' mother, a fact that makes sense of the former's presence in Scotland. And other facts, such as the Henry VIII's six wives and his subsequent offspring's connections, were glossed over. Nevertheless, *Elizabeth* is still a magnificent film.

Steven Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan* also has a revisionist tone. Some of the soldiers' dialogue is too contemporary for WWII vocabulary, and scenes of American soldiers heartlessly gunning down surrendering German soldiers is a different picture to many other war films, where the Americans are the saviours, ultimately right and blameless, and the enemy immoral demons. TH
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