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BILL COLLINS queries the lack of film variety on the small screen.

MARTHA ANSARA farewells the late Joan Long.


BARRIE SMITH looks at CGI animation.

SEAN COUSINS reviews script-processing software.

Erskineville Kings
Reunited brothers rekindle their sibling rivalry. MARK SMITH talks to Alan White's about his directorial feature début.

In a Savage Land
Bill Bennet discusses anthropology, sexuality and filmmaking with ANDREW L. URBAN.

Another World
Emma-Kate Croghan captures Sydney's state of regeneration and anticipation in her new feature, Strange Planet. TIM HUNTER

Strange Fits of Passion
Melbourne filmmakers, Elise McCredie and Lucy Maclaren, chat with MARK SMITH about their all-consuming feature.

Duplicating Psycho
Remaking Psycho may be like reinventing the wheel. RICHARD FRANKLIN

Kubrick's final film Eyes Wide Shut promises to be controversial. Is it more of the same from the master of coming attractions? RICHARD COMBS

STARTS @ PALACE CINEMAS APRIL 29 (MELB/SYD); MAY 13 (ADELAIDE)
**AWARDS GET A NEW NAME**

Warner Roadshow has signed a sponsorship deal with the Pacific Film & Television Commission for the naming rights and provision of a $2,000 cash prize for the Queensland New Filmmakers Awards. They will now be known as the Warner Roadshow Queensland New Filmmakers Awards. Warner Roadshow has been a long-standing supporter of the Awards, which are open to senior secondary students, tertiary students and independent filmmakers under the age of 30, since their inception 13 years ago. Winners of this year’s Awards, including awards for directing, editing, sound, scriptwriting and acting, and the prestigious Kinetone Award, will be announced during a gala awards ceremony on 28 April, 1999.

**NEVISION’S TALENT SCHEME**

Nevision Films has set up a subsidy to assist in developing new and established Australian filmmaking talent. They are looking at becoming more involved in feature projects at script stage, reading scripts, meeting filmmakers and facilitating the developing of new ideas. For more information, contact Lizette Atkins or Frank Cox at Nevision in Melbourne on (03) 9646 5555, or Bruna Papandrea in Sydney, on 0474 432 436.

**GOLDEN CINÉMATÈQUE**

March 1999 marked the 50th anniversary of Melbourne Cinémathèque’s first film screenings as the Melbourne University Film Society (MUFs) in 1949. Celebrating that was, the screening of an ongoing retrospective, “Carlton and Other Suburbs”, which examines Cinémathèque’s involvement on local filmmaking over the past 40 years. Rarely-seen films and previously lost films such as Ballettle (Gil Brealey, 1952) and the tongue-in-cheek Prince Philip Newsreel Royal Rag (1954) are included in the programme. The retrospective, and other anniversary screenings, such as a Gil Brealey retrospective, an exhibition of MUFs memorabilia and an on-line oral history project, will continue throughout the year, and will be screening at Cinemedia at Treasury Place (formerly State Film Theatre).

**BABE, BOX OFFICE SUCCESS: THE SEQUEL**

Following in its predecessor’s footsteps, Babe: Pig in the City (George Miller) topped the box-office charts in 1998 as the highest-selling Australian film for the year, having earned $4.37m, and was still in release and performing well at the beginning of 1999.

Other top Australian earners for 1998 were Alex Proyas’ Dark City ($3.35m), Ana Kokkinos’ Head On ($1.79m), Gillian Armstrong’s Oscar and Lucinda ($1.77) and The Wiggles Movie, directed by Dean Covell ($1.55m). Overall, Australian films earned a collective $25.6m in 1998, down from $28.4m in 1997.

**ST KILDA’S FESTIVE FORECAST**

The 16th St Kilda Film Festival will run this year from May 25 to 30, and is, for the first time, under the directorial auspices of Melbourne film buff icon, Paul Harris, best known as a presenter for the long-running Film Buffs Forecast on 3RRR, and numerous columns and reviews in The Age. This year the Festival will run over six days, and will screen new Australian short films, a selection of short films fresh from Sundance, a market day, and a special archival event premiere screening of Bayside Reflections, a look at the history of Port Phillip Bay, with obvious special interest paid to St Kilda and Luna Park. All screenings will take place at the George Cinema in Fitzroy St, St Kilda.

**SMPTe THE BEST**

The Society of Motion Pictures and Television Engineers (SMPTe) is gearing up for its 1999 conference, being held this year from July 13 to 16 at the Sydney Exhibition and Convention Centre. This year it will examine the impact digital technology has had on the broadcast and film industry. With international guests, headed by keynote speaker, Dr Ian Childs, Head of Research and Development at the BBC in the United Kingdom, just about all aspects of the digital age and their ramifications will be explored. Industry professional panels will discuss the digital age and its application to the Sydney 2000 Olympics, and exhibitions of the latest television, radio and film technology will fill two halls of the Exhibition Centre. And just for a change of pace, this year’s SMPTe dinner will be held poolside at the Sydney International Aquatic Centre. For more information or registration, ring (61.2)9977 0888 or email: smpte99@bigpond.com

**PRODUCT HIGHLIGHTS**

- **THE LADIES’ ROOM**
  - Features of the new room include:
    - A new, larger mirror
    - A heated towel rail
    - New lighting fixtures
    - Improved access to amenities

- **THE GENTS’ ROOM**
  - Improvements include:
    - Enhanced soundproofing
    - New plumbing fixtures
    - Improved lighting
    - Additional seating

- **GENERAL UPGRADES**
  - New HD televisions
  - Updated sound system
  - Enhanced ventilation
  - Additional restrooms

**CONCLUSION**

The renovation of the cinema facilities has been a significant improvement in the overall experience for both patrons and staff. The new design elements have not only enhanced the aesthetic appeal but have also improved functionality and accessibility. The efforts made in this renovation project will certainly be appreciated by cinema-goers and contribute positively to the cinema’s reputation.
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LOLITA SHOCKS AGAIN!

Ever since Vladimir Nabokov’s novel Lolita appeared in 1955, it has been no stranger to controversy. Numerous bans and scandals followed the book wherever it went. When Stanley Kubrick directed its first screen adaptation in 1962, there were outrages, even though the girl’s age had been bumped up to 15. So it’s no surprise that Adrian Lyne’s new version has once again created noise.

Originally shot in 1996, with Jeremy Irons as Humbert Humbert and Dominique Swain (who was 14 at the time) as Dolores, Lolita had a great deal of trouble finding an American distributor, and finally had a one-week theatrical release, essentially to make it eligible for entry into the Academy Awards.

The film finally found its way onto Australian screens on 15 April of this year, after Beyond Film picked up the distribution rights, but not without some loud protest first. A collection of coalition MPs, including South Australian Liberal MP, Trish Draper, objected to the film’s release in Australia, and called the film “sick and bizarre”. And when the board of the Office of Film and Literature Classification gave the film an R18 rating, the outrages became louder, and Prime Minister, John Howard, joined in, promising to investigate the possibility of overruling the board and banning Lolita. This in turn created a flurry of comments and opinions from all and sundry, either supporting the politicians, or supporting the Board, and claiming that the Federal government had promised such actions to woo the vote of independent senator, Brian Harradine, an active anti-pornography advocate who holds the balance of power in the Senate, although such claims were refuted.

Other issues raised by all of this dialogue centre around Lolita’s singing out, as condoning paedophilia (when it’s not) when other films, such as Hurly Burly (Anthony Drazan, 1999) Happiness (Todd Solondz, 1999) or even Payback (Brian Helgeland, 1999) have as much, if not more, morally questionable content. At the end of the day though, all the brouhaha has drawn both attention and an audience to Lolita, where neither would have necessarily been guaranteed if it had just been slipped in unawares.

TOP TEN Historical truths we’d like to see stretched

Elizabeth (Shekhar Kapur, 1998) and Shakespeare in Love (John Madden, 1999) have set new standards for historically-based film: why not just suppose something happened and then make it fit into established fact. Just in those two films alone, suggestive history has moved in leaps and bounds, with the Virgin Queen painted in a not-so-virginal light, and Shakespeare’s famous Juliet actually starting life as Ethel, a pirate’s daughter, before transforming into a cross-dressing lady of noble birth. So here’s a list of suggestive history ideas that may make very entertaining films indeed.

1. The burning of Rome
   Maybe the fiery fate that befell ancient Rome was in fact a ruse created by Nero to allow his lover to escape the palace without Queen Poppia’s knowledge. And, so consumed with passion for this unknown lover was Nero, that he felt the whole city should experience the burning sensation that fired his loins. As for his fiddling, well, who’s to say that music was involved at all?

2. Marco Polo in China
   Why did Marco Polo stay so long in China, and at whose behest? Did the Kublai Khan keep him on for his backgammon skills, or did the Khan have a much darker secret? White slavery? Male harems? The possibilities are endless.

3. Christopher Columbus
   Now that all the 1492 films have been done, perhaps now we’ll get the real story: that Columbus was in fact a womanizing, drunken spendthrift, fleeing a host of spurned Italian and Spanish lovers and debt collectors – he just went a little further than most.

4. Dante and his vision of Hell
   Inferno is probably one of the most vividly-imagined landscapes in Western literature, but where exactly did he get this from? Was it religious fervour, a revelation? Or was Dante a drug-addicted scroff having a big lend of the church and society by tapping into their most vulnerable weakness: the guilt of sin?

5. Edward and Mrs Simpson
   Daring to be controversial comes the story of how ITV attempted to sabotage the BBC’s new Saturday teatime programme, Doctor Who – which is exactly what happened. News of the president’s assassination delayed Doctor Who’s premiere telecast, but ultimately to no avail. Perhaps a sequel could tell the story of how ITV actually did permanently damage Doctor Who in the late ’90s.

6. Kit Marlowe
   Shamelessly cashing in on Shakespeare in Love perhaps, but upsetting the canon nevertheless: playwright Christopher Marlowe was heterosexual! What does this mean for his play Edward II? Is it time for revisionist thinking to claim that there is no gay theme to this play, and dare we suggest that while Kit may have had male admirers, he spurned them all, which

is what Dr Faustus is actually about? Wild, but true.

7. JFK
   We can never have enough about this historical moment, but let’s just imagine that the FBI had nothing to do with it, and that it was in fact Marilyn Monroe’s publicist, working in cahoots with British television station ITV, who organized Kennedy’s assassination. It was Monroe’s publicist because, of course, he knew too much, and ITV, because it wanted to sabotage the BBC’s new Saturday teatime programme, Doctor Who – which is exactly what happened. News of the president’s assassination delayed Doctor Who’s premiere telecast, but ultimately to no avail. Perhaps a sequel could tell the story of how ITV actually did permanently damage Doctor Who in the late ’90s.

8. The Bloomsbury Set
   Virginia Woolf, Dora Carrington, Lytton Strachey, and the whole bohemian bunch of artists known as the Bloomsbury Set were, in fact, a literary myth, designed perhaps by them all to achieve publicity, even scandal, and we all know how well scandal sells.

9. Azaria
   We’ve all heard the stories, the theories, but this one debunks the lot. It was actually Meryl Streep who kidnapped Azaria, blessed with the desire to use her newly-polished Australian accent, and certain foreknowledge that she would indeed be asked to play Lindy Chamberlain in years to come.

10. Skase
    The truth is, he died before reaching Majorca; the figure that we’re seeing is a well-paid actor doubling for Skase and doing his own stunts in the pool and recent lung surgery scenes.

TRAINEEs IN FX

The New South Wales Film & Television Office has announced that two new trainees will be placed in Round 2 of the Digital Visual FX Traineeship Scheme. After four of the six Round 1 trainees have since been offered full-time work with their host companies, and the other two likely to snapped up at any
1st in non-linear in AUSTRALIA
The Australian Broadcasting Authority has released its new Australian content rules, much to the dismay of many industry organizations. The safety net for Australian content on television has been replaced with a New Zealand/Australian content quota, which has been ignored, along with a number of proposals that would have prevented the displacement of Australian drama through the dumping of cheap subsidized New Zealand programming.

SCREENWEST PARTNERS GRANADA

ScreenWest, WA's film and television funding and development agency, has formed a partnership with UK production company Granada Media. Granada and ScreenWest will contribute up to $6 million each to the project, named Granada West, over the next five years, and will increase income and production opportunities in Western Australia. Armiger, who replaces Jeremy Fabinyi after his resignation from the Board at the last board meeting. Armiger has previously been the president of the Australian Screen Composers Guild, and has worked as a record producer, songwriter, guitar player and composer.

APPOINTMENTS

Joining the Board of copyright society Screenrights is screen composer and musician Martin Jusko has most recently served as Vice President, and has seen the Mardi Gras Film Festival grow phenomenally – this year alone saw a 40% increase in ticket sales – to the point where it has become one of the largest and most comprehensive film festivals in the country.

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You know how much reading means in your life when you speak with someone who is not a reader. This is a thought from C.S. Lewis and I couldn't agree more! Let's apply the same thought to movies and movie-lovers. You realize how much movies mean to you when you speak with someone who isn’t particularly interested in movies, whose movie experiences are confined for the most part to what is new, not necessarily the best, usually the best-known and most-aggressively promoted.

In a recent article in *Sight and Sound* (October 1998), Camille Paglia made some interesting comments about her recent book for the BFI Film Classics series. Her contribution is a stimulating study of Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds* (1963). I was particularly taken with this paragraph:

> In my film criticism I take the position of the fan. I look at film from the point of view of appreciation. I believe it’s the critic’s function to open the work further to the audience, not to demean the work, to attack it, to find all the racism, sexism or homophobia in it.

The position of the fan? I imagine that refers to the audience or readers with their sometimes unspoken questions. Why should I see this film? Will I enjoy it? What makes it so special, so interesting, so attractive, so important? What has the movie got for me? What can I expect? Is there something I should know about the film or its subject matter or its production which may make it more enjoyable, more stimulating?

As a person who has been presenting films on television and in cinemas as well as writing about them and being a researcher — for more than 30 years — these are some of the questions which I have addressed.

I fancy myself as a movie explorer as well as a researcher with access quite often to information not readily available. I am stirred by a frequent notion: There is probably something else if you can find it.

Quite recently I learned that Martin Scorsese’s wonderful film of Edith Wharton’s *The Age of Innocence* (1993) was not the first adaptation of that novel. A friend in Los Angeles sent me a tape of an earlier version, produced by Pandro S. Berman at RKO Radio in 1934. The director was Philip Moeller. It was the first film he directed, the second was *Break of Hearts* (1935), also at RKO, with Katharine Hepburn and Charles Boyer. Philip Moeller was a playwright and producer as well as one of the founders and a director of the Theatre Guild. The leading players in *The Age of Innocence* (1934) are Irene Dunne, John Boles, Lionel Atwill, Julie Haydon, Laura Hope Crews and Helen Westley (also a founder of the Theatre Guild).

As you may well think, this is a fascinating film even if it not as “important” as the admirable Martin Scorsese film. I was excited to see it. Yet, some movie lovers — or supposed movie lovers — don’t care. It’s foolishly, I thought both would have been interested and I was surprised by their lack of interest. Why do so many individuals resist seeing recommended films? Why do they not take reasonable advice? Why?

I have such a problem with some friends and others. They always seem to want something other than the movie you recommend or would like to share with them. They do not know as much about the movies as I do. They probably do not read much about them. They only know what they see on television or read about in newspapers. They do not read film magazines, not even the truly commercial, promotional magazines you can purchase at cinemas.

I do believe that most people’s interests in movies are reliant on critics’ opinions, publicity and promotion. They are not movie explorers. The movies they love are the movies they know. They do not love movies. There is a difference. I know a lady who has built up a collection of movies on videotape — but she only collects movies she has seen before. She tends to see only movies she has previously viewed.

Some of us are forever seeking new experiences. For instance, do you...
You can forget about commercial television. They don’t cater for movie-lovers anymore; they used to when the television set was virtually a movie museum. Commercial television is a selling business more than it is an entertainment business.

miniature: Two Seconds (1932) with Edward G. Robinson, Preston Foster and Vivienne Osborne and Heat Lightning (1934), from a play by Leon Adams and George Abbott, a possible inspiration from Robert E. Sherwood’s The Petrified Forest (1936), with Aline MacMahon, Ann Dvorak, Preston Foster.

Edgar Selwyn’s Men Must Fight (1933), a futuristic drama from a play by Reginald Lawrence and S. K. Lauren, climaxed by an air-raid over New York in 1940, featuring Diana Wynyard, Lewis Stone and Phillip Holmes (Killed in World War II as is his character in the film).

Edward Sedgwick’s Free And Easy (1930), Buster Keaton’s first talkie, also a satirical musical set in the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer studio in Culver City, with Anita Page, Robert Montgomery, Trixie Friganza, and appearances by Fred Niblo, Cecil B. de Mille, Karl Dane, William Haines and Phillip Holmes (Killed in World War II as his character in the film).

Peter Godfrey’s Hotel Berlin (1945), a potent allegorical tale from a novel by Vicki Baum (author of Grand Hotel), set in a hotel in Berlin early in 1945, featuring Raymond Massey, Andrea King, Faye Emerson, Kurt Kreuger, Helmut Dantine, Peter Lorre and an exciting cast delivering mean, moody and magnificent melodramatics.

Gregory Ratoff and Otto Brower’s Sins of Man (1936), an unforgettable drama from Joseph Roth’s novel Job, featuring Jean Hersholt, Allen Jenkins and, in his movie début, Don Ameche in a dual rôle.

Samuel Fuller’s astonishing Pickup On South Street (1953), with Jean Peters, Richard Widmark, Thelma Ritter and Richard Kiley.

Charles Vidor’s underrated The Loves of Carmen (1948), with Rita Hayworth, Glenn Ford and Victor Jory, as well as his The Desperadoes (1943), Columbia Pictures’ first Technicolor film with Randolph Scott, Glenn Ford, Claire Trevor and Evelyn Keyes. And Ladies in Retirement (1941), from the once-famous play by Reginald Denham and Edward Percy, stunningly shot by George Barnes, with music by Ernst Toch, featuring Idra Lupino, Louis Hayward, Isobel Elsom, Elsa Lanchester, Evelyn Keyes and Edith Barrett.

The last five are vintage movies which I have managed to acquire for presentation on my FX Movies Channel on Foxtel. They are the tips of the movie iceberg. There are more, many more, to come — and if movie lovers are keen to explore the wonders of movies, the more fascinating are the movies I can obtain.

There are so many interesting movies — and so many of them could disappear forever if we don’t do something about it! Let us give thanks to Ted Turner for making so much of the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Warner Bros. and RKO Radio Pictures available for cable television and retrospective screenings. And now I want more from the Twentieth Century-Fox library and the those of other studios. Don’t you?
Joan Long, AM
1925–1999

by Martha Ansara

As a figure within the Australian film industry, Joan Long inhabited two worlds. An eminent film producer and writer, she was widely recognized for her many accomplishments and her years of illustrious service to the industry. But Joan was also—uniquely for a filmmaker of her stature and generation—a woman. And as a woman, who never forgot the struggles and the pleasures of being at once a professional filmmaker and female, she was very much part of another sphere which meant a great deal to her and where she was particularly cherished. The striking combination of feminism and femininity which Joan revealed to other women within this second world was wonderfully evoked at her funeral by her friend and colleague, Jenny Boddington.

Jenny has kindly agreed to Cinema Papers presenting these more personal memories. But for those who need to be reminded of Joan Long’s more traditional biography, she was born Joan Dorothy Boundy in rural Victoria, one of five children, to a Methodist minister and his wife. An Honours graduate in History from Melbourne University, she joined the film unit of the Department of Information (DOI) now Film Australia, just after World War II. Beginning as a secretary, she determined to have a more active production role. From this base, Joan participated in the emerging film culture that gave birth to the Sydney Film Festival, began her writing career and was eventually allowed to direct.

With Joan’s marriage to the journalist and writer Martin Long came the obligations of motherhood: two stepsons, a daughter and a son. However, as soon as she could, Joan returned to work at the DOI, by then known as the Commonwealth Film Unit. Her family obligations kept her close to home and she concentrated on scriptwriting. Then, as her children grew older, she began to participate in a variety of ways in activities that culminated in what became known as the Australian Film Renaissance of the early 1970s.

In a period in which Australian filmmakers were searching for local origins, Joan worked with Alan Anderson on The Pictures That Moved (1969), one of the first histories of early Australian cinema. This was followed by a sequel, The Passionate Industry (1972), which she directed herself. With her husband, she turned her research into a book The Pictures That Moved: A Picture History Of the Australian Cinema, 1896–1929 (1982). Her scripts for Anthony Buckley’s Sand, Snow and Savages (1973), and the award-winning Paddington Lace (1970), directed by Chris McCulloch, led to wide recognition of her abilities and to her greater prominence in industry bodies and campaigns.

Joan’s idealism infused all that she did. Amongst the organizations to which she donated her time and wise counsel were the Australian Writers Guild (President 1972–73), the Australian Film Council (1970–73) and the Committee of the Screen Production Association, having been a founding member of its predecessor, the Independent Feature Film Producer’s Association. She also served on the Interim Council of Australian Film Commission, and the Council of the Australian Film and Television School. Her abiding interest in film history and film culture motivated her thirty years of recording film oral history and her involvement with the Sydney Film Festival, where she served at times on the Publicity Committee & History Committee. She was part of the Film Pioneers Oral History project of the early 1980s, the Filmmakers Oral History Group from 1993 until the present time and she wrote historical articles on women filmmakers for Cinema Papers.

As a researcher, Joan had direct knowledge of the way in which our historically important films and documents have disappeared and campaigned vigorously for a National Film & Sound Archive, serving as Chair on its first Interim Council, and producing the impressive policy document Time on Our Hands, which gave a comprehensive analysis of the task ahead. The political campaigns which she participated in are too numerous to mention, although she was particularly proud of having been one of the few women to give evidence at the 1972 Tariff Board Inquiry into the industry.

One of Joan’s most important work associations was with that other indefatigable film campaigner, Anthony Buckley. After working with him on Caddie (1976), for which she wrote the script, Joan made the decision to become the producer of her next script, The Picture Show Man (1977), a fictionalized venture into Australian film history. She then co-produced Puberty Blues (1981) with scriptwriter Margaret Kelly and produced Silver City (1984), written and directed by Sophia Turkiewicz. In 1989, she produced David Williamson’s Emerald City (1989), based on David Williamson’s play. On these films Joan was an active and creative producer, working closely with screenwriters, negotiating deals and supervising production.

At the time of her death, Joan was collaborating again with Anthony Buckley to raise production finance for her new script about the McDonagh Sisters, who made successful Australian features in the 1920s and were a great inspiration for Joan. Her portrait of director Paulette McDonagh reflected not only a personal and political understanding of his-
tory but a life-long dream of seeing the potential of women filmmakers realized within a viable Australian film industry. The success of her daughter, the talented writer Alexandra (Alexi) Long, was cause for particular pride and satisfaction. Joan was actively supportive of many other women filmmakers and was, in turn, supported both personally and professionally by her long friendship with film researcher and historian Judy Adamson.

Boddington's portrait of Joan Long expresses very well the interplay of society, work, marriage, motherhood and female friendships that, in fact, characterized the lives of the women who appeared in Joan’s own films.

**Joan Long’s Funeral**

It is exactly ten weeks since Joan went into intensive care. The cliché describes it well: she put up a gallant fight — as indeed she would — she was always dauntless, positive, brave.

I met Joan fifty-two years ago in 1947. I was a gormless girl of twenty-four with a husband and a three-year-old child, desperately seeking a job at the DOI film unit — no qualifications. There was this gorgeous redhead sitting at a typewriter outside Stanley Haws’ office in King Street, where the film unit was housed until the Burwood School of Arts was made ready. She was twenty-one, a history graduate from Melbourne and she, too, was mad keen to work in films in the newly set up government film unit. She had superb white teeth and a shapely mouth, turquoise eyes and a flaming mass of red hair. She was stunning.

She was always casting around in her mind for better possibilities [\[

Eventually I too got a job at the film unit, by then located at Burwood. In those days, women were only employed as Assistants (F) — standing for female — and were restricted to the cutting room, not allowed on location. I think we got four pounds a week, or maybe five, but the male production assistants — with career paths stretching ahead, while we had none — got seven pounds ten.

Early in 1950, Joan was staying at my house and Martin Long, whom she would shortly marry, was visiting, when my marriage came to a very dramatic end. In the event, I fled with my son to Melbourne, leaving Joan to cover my trail. She always referred to it as The Long Night!

It broke my heart to return to Melbourne, but it was necessary for my son, who needed my extended family. Without Joan’s fascinating letters always offering support, gossip and loving friendship, I don’t know how I’d have survived the next six years.

I got a dreadful job, on a pittance, making 16mm films for the Postmaster-General’s head office, but at least it gave me the odd trip to Sydney. In a letter from Joan of eleven closely-typed pages, in 1955, she rages at length on my entrapment in Melbourne with my Mickey Mouse job. She also wished for me an rages at length on my entrapment in Melbourne with films for the Postmaster-General’s head office, but at least it gave me the odd trip to Sydney. In a letter from Joan of eleven closely-typed pages, in 1955, she rages at length on my entrapment in Melbourne with films for the Postmaster-General’s head office, but at least it gave me the odd trip to Sydney.

In the same letter of 1955 where she divagated on my future, she reverted to the absorbing topic of clothes and looks:

My dear I am now 31! It appals me. As for your saying I have no worries about looking old, lines are appearing on my face at a giddy rate […] I rushed off and bought the new Elizabeth Arden cream hoping to stave off the ravages of time, and I’m trying to cultivate a pleasant, charming expression, because I keep telling myself that the time is not far off when that will be all I have left.

In 1957 she was pregnant. In June she wrote:

I have just read Grantly Dick Read’s *Childbirth Without Fear* and it is the only thing which has succeeded in inspiring me with fear so far. Actually, I have some serious criticism of the infinences he draws from what I think is insufficient scientific data.

In September:

I wish you could come and stay for a while. Don’t think the baby makes any difference it won’t be occupying your bed – this little “it”, of course, was Alexandra. At this stage we compared notes on the irritation our mothers caused us. And Tim, Joan’s second baby, was born.

In September 1962 she wrote:

You will be staggered to hear that I did a script for the DOI. The film was about Tuberculosis for the Department of Health. They didn’t have any case histories so it’s much duller than your cancer film […] I sent Tim to kindergarten which he loved. I got a wonderful girl to come in the mornings, so that gave me three hours. Then I did more work at night, if I wasn’t too exhausted. The Department seemed genuinely impressed with it. It could be very nice on the whole, made the way I imagined, but some clot will get hold of it I suppose.

By her characteristic phrase, “some clot”, I knew exactly what she meant. She continued:

How I appreciated your paragraph about motherhood […] No longer are they babies, but devils with independent minds which they pit everlastingly against your tiredness and weak points. That’s my Alexi!

In April 1967 she was offered a casual writing job at the film unit:

Oozing charm he buttered me up – I was thorough, reliable, always did a good job, etc., etc., but they felt the job was too much for one person (I quite agree from the ad) and they felt that no one applicant had all they wanted, so they wanted to appeal to two. He explained in the trickiest way why I wasn’t being offered the staff job – I was too stunned to take him up on it […] He said the “young man” they were appointing was “brilliant and volatile” and had a “minimal knowledge of films”, but was full of “creativity” (Implication – I’m not!).

I suppose it was too much to hope that a committee of men would appoint a woman, and a married one at that, to a staff job. Which incidentally is better paid than a director. (Although women still only get 85% of the male rate) I said to Martin before the interview, “May the best man get the job”, but I’ll be annoyed if some smooth talking Englishman gets it – it’s time Australia stood on her own two feet […] The first week nearly killed me. The 1964 Holdien – culmination of expensive driving lessons – arrived on Sunday. I started work on Monday. The housekeeper arrived on Monday night. My period arrived on Monday morning, two weeks early! […] I have so much to tell you […] I do enjoy going to work so much more than staying at home. But I’m on a really foul job now – a re-write of somebody else’s cliché-ridden commentary.

In October that year, Joan began work on the early history of Australian film script, which was a major turning point, and more than anything else probably led to the public career that she carved for herself. She would become an influential Australian film identity.

In 1970, my husband and cameraman-partner died and I moved my three young children to Sydney, almost impulsively. I was batting about like an idiot and Joan’s well considered advice was mostly ignored. After a time, she arranged a wonderful temporary job for me doing research for her history film at the Mitchell Library. When it was finished, I moved back to Melbourne. Crazy, but no criticism from Joan.

Her forbearance and support were phenomenal.

The trouble was she thought I could do better than I thought I could. Quite fortuitously, after many months of doing this and that, I got a job as the first curator of photography at the Melbourne gallery, which kept me occupied for the next fifteen years, just when Joan was doing her important and public work in feature films. We still saw each other from time to time and I stayed with her in Sydney, but there were no long letters. Occasional postcards when either of us were overseas was about all.

Our children grew up as children do and I felt the tug of Sydney, my favourite city, again. We slid into the comfort of our long friendship as if it were a favourite cashmere cardigan. We exchanged books, went to films and exhibitions, subscribed to the Belvoir, exchanged symptoms of ageing and went for walks. Although clothes were no longer a subject for discourse, we were never short of subjects to air.

I remember one night, in the 1960s I think, when she took her seat at the Drysdale’s’ dining table up at Bouddi, and Tass announced in loud appreciative tones, “Joan you’re a ball of fire.” And so she was. Another time he said, “She’s amazing. You think she’s a real North Shore woman – until she opens her mouth by God – and then she nearly floors you with her acuteness and her subtlety.”

I have no doubt that her upbringing in Victoria, in a Methodist minister’s family of five children, with not a great deal of money, imbued in her a spirit of obligation, of service, and of giving herself to the community. And giving also, from a capacious spirit, to family and friends, as she did in rich measure all her life.

It is tragic that we must come together here to say goodbye to our very dear friend, too soon, far too soon...
Erskineville Kings is an emotive and evocative first feature that imparts the story of two brothers: Barky (Marty Denniss) and Wace (Hugh Jackman). Barky, who left home two years earlier to escape their drunken and abusive father, has returned, somewhat reluctantly, for his funeral. Reunited, the brothers become aware of the anger and resentment that has built between them. The resultant conflict is played out amidst pool-tables, beer and mates at Kings Hotel, located in the decayed, post-industrial landscape of Erskineville. Director Alan White has constructed a film that is uniquely Australian, distinctly human, and intensely emotional. He took time-out in Los Angeles to talk with Mark Smith in Melbourne.

**You come from a background in commercials.**

Yeah, in 1985 I started directing commercials and music videos. The long and the short of it is, that by around 1992, I started to work a lot in the States. The production company I was working through — I'd shown the script to them — were interested in putting up the money for it, given that I move to Los Angeles and work for them. So I figured that was a good idea.

The only other thing that I did of interest, while making commercials, was put my creative energies into playing in bands, which I did up till 1991, when I decided, "Well if I'm going to get a film made, I'd better give the music away." That's how it evolved and how I ended up over here. It was kind of following my nose.

I'd been offered a couple of more action-based studio scripts here, which wasn't what I wanted to do, but there were simply more opportunities for a commercial director here.

**Considering the move, why make such a distinctly Australian film?**

Because I really didn't want to move to make a film. I would have preferred to have stayed in Australia, but it was difficult for a commercial director to be taken seriously. I was moving purely because it was a way I could get the money for the film. I still wanted, and still do want, to tell Australian stories.

The other thing is that living over here people find out you're Australian and they make Crocodile Dundee (Peter Faiman, 1986) jokes, The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert (Stephan Elliott, 1994) jokes or Shine (Scott Hicks, 1996) jokes. You begin to realize that our whole culture is defined by movies these days.

I think we went through that period where most films had really broad caricatures of Australians. So after endless "shrimp on the barbie" jokes, I just wanted to make an Australian film with Australian characters that I knew in it. It's beginning to change anyway; people are a lot more interested in contemporary Australian films that seek to tell the truth about life.

Living over here gives you a heightened sense of what Australia is and what it means to you. You get terribly homesick living here, so as much as anything the desire to go back and make a film was purely the desire to go back. And I'm hoping that by making Erskineville, people will see me as more than just a commercial director.

**How does the budget for Erskineville Kings, compare to budgets of the commercials you used to make?**

The only comparison I could make is I made some Super 8 commercials for Homer Hudson Ice-cream on "spec" in my backyard. They launched my career in Australian advertising circles. It was like that, and like playing in bands where you'd be doing graveyard
 shifts in studios to record something, it was really going back to those things.

It's basically a half a million dollar film, so it was drawing on every little favour I could draw on. I built up a whole lot of relationships with a bunch of people who were really, really good to me.

A lot of the cost in commercials is because you have a stack of people behind you, essentially having directorial power, so it's a much longer process. Having said that, it was really good training for me. It made it a lot easier to make the film because I knew what I needed. Sure it would have been great to have more money. Well, I don't know, because I wanted to make a film, in budget terms, true to how big the sense of money you throw at it, given the potential audience.

I realize that people expect different kinds of Australian films, the kind they want to go and see in the cinema. Erskineville Kings isn't The Castle (Rob Sitch, 1997), so you have to be realistic about how much money you throw at it, given the potential audience.

**How did you become involved with the project and who wrote the script?**

A lot of the actors actually went to acting school, the Western Australia Academy of Performing Arts, together. I met Marin Mimica, who plays the stoner role, over the years, people that I'd really admired. I felt that if I could get the right ensemble, without making obvious choices, it would be better for the film. It ended up a good thing because almost everyone, bar Aaron Blaby, knew of each other, socialized together and what not.

Hugh was living in Melbourne when I got him to audition for it, and he was just so much better than everyone else. It was a mixture of admiration for people's acting ability, plus a network of common-thinking people who really wanted to make a film together.

Hugh was living in Erskineville Kings - I'm not The Castle (Rob Sitch, 1997) - again films that showed a bit of what everyone else. It was a mixture of admiration for people's acting ability, plus a network of common-thinking people who really wanted to make a film together.

It's curious though, because when I said Hugh Jackman was in the film, at first people would say: "Isn't he the song and dance guy?" And I would say: "You know what, he's an actor." It was funny for me because I was trying to detach the two things. He's really one of these guys who has the ability to play in different genres.

**What directors have influenced yourself and the film?**

It's topical over here at the moment, but I've always been a huge fan of Elia Kazan and his approach to acting, that whole group theatre thing he started up. I can see that in the way the guys approached this film. There was that sense of a bunch of people coming together, of trying to do something that's a bit more real and less theatrical or over-the-top. The weird thing was that strange parallel between what those guys were doing in New York and what we were doing. It sounds like a pompous parallel, but I think it was something that certainly inspired me. While we were making the film, I was reading Kazan's autobiography at night. I don't know why, it's just one of those things. On the Waterfront (1954) has got to be one of my favourite films.

I like the idea that films can convey a reality, and that the lives of ordinary people can be interesting to watch and maybe learn from. That style of cinema, Ordinary People (Robert Redford, 1980), Mike Leigh's Secrets and Lies (1996), were films that influenced me. On a stranger level, I suppose Woody Allen's Manhattan (1979), and Sidney Lumet's 12 Angry Men (1957) were films that I had running through my head while making the film.

Certainly in terms of Australian films that have had an effect on me, I guess it was Sunday Too Far Away (Ken Hannam, 1975), The Year My Voice Broke (John Duigan, 1987) — again films that showed a bit of what I understand to be a reality.

I know that all films have a stylistic imprint, they're heightened realities, but I like where they start. When you ask yourself, "How would this be if it was for real?", that seems a good starting point. Films that run that gamut have always had an influence on me. Ultimately, it becomes a thing of making a film that you and your friends would like to see. You're hoping that everyone else will want to see it. But it's good to try and change things a little, run against what's commonly seen or played out.

**Is that part of the reason you used the Erskineville location?**

Well originally it was because we would go to Newtown to develop the script and, walking through it, we felt that it was such a great part of Sydney. They grew up in Western Australia, so it was really me taking my favourite part of Sydney and making it the place that this guy comes back to. It appealed to me as
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a landscape against which this story is set. It's like the Yuppies tried to fix Newtown and Erskineville up, but it never worked. So it's always retained its slightly bohemian character.

My mum also spent a lot of time there, she moved from Canberra to Newtown, when she was younger, so that whole area appeals to me. I like the idea that it has a history and it can be incredibly colourful. It felt like the right place to set this. I wanted to see Sydney, not as a postcard, but as what I find interesting in it. And it seemed to reflect exactly what I wanted on that level.

There are no trees in the whole film. There's this kind of strange Australian inner-urban thing. Victorian buildings that owe more to Britain than they do to anywhere else. They're painted these wild colours and you have that sense of the hot Australian sun. I wanted to capture that particular Australian character.

The other great Australian flavour is the mateship. The mateship in the film comforts the characters, but it's also restricting; there's a real sense of the pecking order. Was that something that you deliberately tried to capture? Absolutely. Hopefully it's clear, but what I was trying to do is show how the younger guy and his group of friends have a slightly different protocol than the older guys. With Wace and Coppa [Andrew Wholley], and Trunny [Aaron Blabey], even though Wace is going out Absolutely. Hopefully it's clear, but what I was trying to thing that you deliberately tried to capture?

It was distinguishing between them. The only female you see with the older guys is the woman who crashes the car. With the younger guys, there's three girls living in the house. I didn't want to be too obvious about it, but I was saying, "Well maybe these younger guys are more comfortable when including women into their circle."

With the older guys there's still a distance. Wace talks about his girl; she's left him, then he talks about his girlfriend not understanding him. There's a parallel with his relationship with her and how he sees what happened with his mother, whereas Barky has chosen a girl who is Indian, an outsider within an older Australian society.

Again, I didn't want to make any grandiose statements on that level, I just wanted it to be there. Barky appears more comfortable with the woman who crashes the car. I was trying to seed this generational difference, that mateship within a younger generation can include a more feminine element.

**You also wrote some of the music in the film?** Yeah, at last I could put some of my band-years to good use. In the same way that I have a fondness for Newtown and how you don't commonly see Sydney depicted like that, there's all this music that's been around me, as a part of the Sydney music scene, that I wanted to hear in it.

I wouldn't have used my songs, but it became a cheaper way of getting the sound-track together. I did have other songs in there— which I couldn't afford— so I thought let's try some of mine. When I put them in they worked thematically with the scenes, otherwise I wouldn't have used them.

I felt they were still a part of that Sydney, Trade Union Club, inner-city music scene that seemed to thrive in the early '80s. I wasn't trying to make it a period film or capture that period, I just feel that music is still relevant to that area. I guess I put in a lot of songs I liked.

**Well it's your film, you can have whatever songs you like.**

Yeah, that's basically what it gets down to, I wanted to give it that flavour. I didn't want it to feel too poppy. In a lot of ways, Died Pretty defines those kinds of spaces for me. I tried all sorts of songs and some things just didn't sit. The ones that are there, I put them in and they just sat so perfectly and undercut the scores.

I didn't want to put too much score in the film. I guess I find that a little overt. I think our ears have become accustomed to scores in films, but they're so unreal and so manipulative. I really only wanted to put score in when Barky is by himself. It was a gamble, because, although scores are manipulative, they can draw people in as well.

**The music works well with the pace of the film. It is very languid; it doesn't rush, it evolves almost naturally.**

Right. The idea was to accumulate knowledge so that you're slowly drawn into this event, in the same way as it would evolve in real life, I mean things aren't immediately laid out to you.

It's curious how it evolved into doing the flashback. I'd had some time away from the film and people had said: "We're not sure why that young guy [Barky] is so taciturn."

So I felt that maybe I've got to define it. It still philosophically works for me. Bucky goes to the apartment and he goes to sleep, so it worked. It definitely doesn't feel like a stylistic imposition, and it feeds you a little bit more information. It becomes a point-of-view dream in which we see the father out of control and the young Wace powerless to do anything about it.

Once I put it in there, I thought: "Wow, this works." At the end, when Wace starts his monologue, you really start thinking of that earlier event and all the pieces come together. It did help speed up the front, inform the audience as to why this guy is the enigma he is, and help them to understand Wace.

The stories that interest me invariably contain people from dysfunctional families. It's like it's true of everyone. I was talking to my mates the other day, I just got married, I'm thinking about having a kid and my mate says, "Why? Why are you going to have a kid? Look at our families, think of any of our friends who have normal families." But I think they're good stories, I think they're stories that people will watch. Certainly Secrets and Lies brought that home to me, that was a lot of inspiration in making this film.

**Well, they're human stories aren't they?**

Yeah, yeah and that's what I like. I mean I'm biased; I love going to the movies and empathizing with those kind of stories. Because often you just feel like you're the only bastard in the world who's like that. Then you find out that everyone else is just as fucked up.

[Laughs long and hard]
At the tail end of production, in damp Adelaide, a weary Bill Bennett spoke to Andrew L. Urban about his latest feature film and the difficulties of shooting on location...

In a Savage Land

Aairport security with its buzzing arch beeping at a metal pocket pen is the closest we usually come to a world that is ‘other’ or ‘alien’ to us in safe, cosmopolitan Australia. A fleeting moment that, too. The flight from Sydney to Adelaide is routine, and it’s only when we transfer to the production van and finally arrive at the end of a long drive as darkness settles and the rain turns itself on that we realize how cosseted we live.

In outer Adelaide, puddles challenge our city shoes and fences break our cross garden walk as we try to get inside the house that has been rented for a few crucial scenes in the making of Bill Bennett’s latest and most ambitious feature film, In A Savage Land. The old family home has become a factory where Bennett is manufacturing something tangible out of a vision outlined in a script. The elements must have a sense of irony, playing this melancholy night as a motif for the much grittier, much earthier setting of this film, most of which is shot in a remote and physically harsh New Guinea island - inaccessible to us mere observers. Adelaide rain and muddy puddles seem insignificant.

Bennett is on a serious adventure, on more levels than one. Not only is he attempting to make a grand (epic?) romance in a remote, hopefully exotic (savage?) location - he is leaping from Iowan and mid-budget filmmaking to high-budget, high-risk, high-tension filmmaking. The film questions what is primitive - what is civilized. What happens when an old-fashioned Western marriage intersects with the matriarchal culture of New Guinea.

“It feels like having skated over a huge lake of thin ice - and that’s just the physical side of having done it”, he says, as we sit in one of the rooms of this large family home, isolated in a giant drawing room, the crew (and the mountain of decisions) shut out for a short while. “I’ve never been more scared making a film”, he says in his tonally unemotional manner of speaking. But behind the flat matter-of-factness, Bennett hides a real insecurity, like all artists, one that needs to be defied, to be stared down. It’s the tail end of the shoot, most of it completed on the Trobriand Islands of New Guinea, the creative forces needing to be kept afloat as exhaustion meets incessant demand. Bennett - and all of them - are in their own savage land, new terrain full of unpredictable danger and unknowable outcomes.

Set in the late 1930s, In A Savage Land is the story of a newly-married anthropologist husband and wife team Phillip (Martin Donovan) and Evelyn (Maya Stange) who travel to an island group in New Guinea to study the sexual mores of a group of villagers. Their relationship begins to break down when the woman realizes her husband is wrongly interpreting the research to further his own academic ambitions. She enlists the help of a pearl trader, Mick (Rufus Sewell), to travel to another island where she intends to research a village of headhunters, and begins to fall in love with him. By the time she returns to her husband, war has broken out in the Pacific and the Japanese are poised to invade their island.
Does this sound like a film Bill Bennett would make, he of Mortgage (1989), Backlash (1986), Spider & Rose, (1994) Kiss or Kill (1997)?

He stares a moment.

Thematically it is actually similar to my other films [...] three people in an alien landscape, and the central character is a woman. And it deals with sexual and gender politics and male/female power. It's different in scale, scope and period, of course [...] period was difficult to get my head round.

The period is a consequence of the story. Bennett had always been fascinated by the Trobriand Islands, ever since the age of 8, when he found old photos taken by his war photographer father.

What at first looked like a sexual paradise turned out to be something even more complicated.

So the idea of a love story set against this complex social structure evolved - and having the central characters as anthropologists would enable us to step into the culture and examine it.

As before, his wife Jennifer worked with Bennett on the script but this time her credit is up front and bold. They also share producing credits, in what is an appropriate affirmation of Jennifer's significance in the filmmaking partnership.

In the end, it is a romance - if it's possible to reduce it to one single word. But it deals with complex things [...] and I suppose it's not a traditional romance; the characters are all flawed.

Bennett is anxious to communicate, but fatigue, enormous fatigue, is draining him. The New Guinea shoot was hell. It was chosen for its authenticity, for its untouched wilderness and its savagery.

Bennett wonders aloud:

In the end, it is a romance - if it's possible to reduce it to one single word. But it deals with complex things [...] and I suppose it's not a traditional romance; the characters are all flawed.

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Creatively, as a director, seeing these actors step into the skins of the characters and lift these people off the page has been most satisfying. It could have been naf[...] with lesser actors. I believe if you aspire to anything out of the ordinary, there is a risk of failure. So it's yet to be seen if it's successful. These doubts are always swirling, and Bennett
Psycho (the re-make) is a good film. But mainly because it is a faithful copy of a great film. Whether it should have been made this way (or at all), is another matter. As is the tricky question of whether copying is a legitimate undertaking, artistic or otherwise.

The following is not a review, but rather a reflection, by the person who did the next closest thing, by making the sequel Psycho II. First however, I would like to tell the story of a film I didn’t make.

Early in 1998 I met Producer Mace Neufeld at Paramount Studios. He was planning a re-make of Seconds (John Frankenheimer, 1966) and offered me the script to read. I commented I thought it superior to the original in that it had a good second act and an up ending. He told me Frankenheimer had turned down the re-make of the original. A couple of months later, Gus Van Sant abandoned the project to make Psycho for Universal (an amusing paradox, since the original Psycho was made under Hitchcock’s contract for Paramount and later acquired by Universal).

How close a copy is it? It is almost shot for shot, which does not in itself bother me. If you set out to re-make a Hitchcock film (and many have been - such as his own re-make of The Man Who Knew Too Much (1934 and 1956) – it makes some sense to use his mise-en-scène which was, after all, his greatest talent. But this approach does not necessarily serve a new cast, screen ratio and colour.

It is said the cast and crew watched a DVD of the original on set while shooting, to duplicate not only the camera set-ups, but the pace and perfor-
nances. Thankfully, the performers made the parts their own (they are different people, after all), but in so doing created one of the first problems.

For example, Norman’s monologue immediately prior to the ‘madhouse’ speech is shot per the original in a three-quarter side profile. Which Hitchcock would not have done, had he known how Vince Vaughn was going to play the scene. Understandably, since everyone knows the pay-off, Vaughn makes more of the self-revelatory material than did Tony Perkins. There are tears in Vaughn’s eyes, but it is not possible to see them, because the camera is at the wrong angle – Hitchcock’s, for a different performance.

The frame ratio is, for me, a bigger problem. Because they were undoubtedly viewing the DVD on a television monitor, they were looking at 1.33 framing, but shooting 1.85. Hitchcock, who had shot his prior two pictures in the 1.85 Vistavision process, chose not to do so with Psycho. However, nowadays the standard so-called ‘wide screen’ (achieved by masking in the projector) renders this a faithful copy of Psycho as it would be screened in a cinema now, but not as it was then. The tops and bottoms of frames are not pleasing – in certain instances, close-ups are uncomfortably close (Anne Heche’s mouth almost disappears in one early shot) and wide shots are often neither fish nor fowl (one group shot at the Sheriff’s home has masses of headroom, but chops the cast off at the knees – a framing which would have been unacceptable to Hitchcock).

The colour decision was probably not a creative one. Hitchcock had filmed his pictures on either side of Psycho in Technicolor and chose specifically to shoot Psycho in black and white, largely because he believed the blood in the shower would cause censorship problems (more on this in a moment). Hitchcock was right. The corpse and especially the cleaning-up of the bathroom are much harder to take in the new version. But, as I say, the decision was probably not a creative one. I, too, had a gun held to my head because the television potential of a black-and-white film is not as great, and perhaps my capitulation influenced the decision here.

I did not set out to list the differences between the films, but since it is the next question everyone asks me (after the good/bad one I have answered already), here is a short sample.

A truly fascinating moment occurs in the original. As Marion (Janet Leigh) drives through the rain, we hear the voice of the rich Texan from whom she’s stolen the $40,000 (now $400,000), saying he will get back every cent of it from her “soft flesh”. At this moment, Hitchcock had Janet smile. Only Hitchcock, with his fundamentalist Jesuit upbringing, could have so indicted Marion (Eve as the instigator of “original sin”), but a fascinating moment nonetheless, which does not occur in the re-make. However, for reasons that escape me, Heche relishes Marion’s decision to steal the money in the scene where she packs her bags – which Janet Leigh does not.

I, too, had a gun held to my head because the television potential of a black-and-white film is not as great, and perhaps my capitulation influenced the decision here.

In my favourite scene in the original, the parlour scene prior to the murder, Perkins stutters on the word “falsity” which, at least at the time, was perilously close to a sexual reference to Marion’s (and Leigh’s) ample bust and what used to be called “falsies”. (Norman stutters several times over such references). In spite of, or perhaps because of, Heche’s smaller breasts (which we see briefly
ANOTHER WORLD

with Emma-Kate Croghan

Director Emma-Kate Croghan made something of a name for herself three years ago at Cannes with her first feature film, *Love and Other Catastrophes*. Now she’s finished her second, *Strange Planet*, a film about a year in the life of six single people in their mid-twenties. She’s feeling very confident about it, her career path, and herself as a person, and she talks with Tim Hunter.
CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT Strange Planet; WHAT IT'S ABOUT, AND WHERE YOU'RE GOING WITH IT?

It's about six young people whose lives cross. Looking at the film, now that it's nearly finished, it's about a period in people's lives that [pauses to reflect] it's hard for me because the subject matter feels quite immediate. It's not looking back at something and being nostalgic; it's a very immediate experience.

Because the characters are in their mid-twenties, and you're 26, 27?

Yes, and with the other film [Love and Other Catastrophes 1996] although I don't want to get into comparisons — we were looking back at something, and having quite a bit of nostalgia for it. The thing that we're looking at here is people in their mid-to-late twenties. The girls are in their mid-twenties, and the guys are a little bit older, and for everyone I've spoken to, that has been a very odd time in their lives.

You have to decide what you're doing, and people make big life changes, or are making career decisions, and it's actually pretty messy. Strange Planet is about that complicated period. The subject matter is quite immediate; the actors in the film are the same age as well. They were all going through that stuff; so there is something about it that's quite raw in that sense. Not that the film's raw at all — it's actually very polished — but there's a messiness to the emotions in it.

It's actually quite nice, because I don't think we draw any kind of conclusion, except that it's okay, and life goes on. You don't have to go out and conquer your lives and do this or do that. It'll all be okay. Don't panic about it so much; whatever you do, it'll probably be okay. And if it's not, that's okay too.

There's also a lot of the stuff in the film about what we believe about our lives. Do we make things happen? How much is destiny, how much do we have absolutely no control over, and what do we force to happen? And I think the conclusion that we draw is: fuck knows. Sometimes it's a bit of both. Sometimes you've got no control over anything, things happen, but you have the choice about how you deal with it. You can't force it.

There's one guy in the film who thinks he has a really happy marriage, but his wife leaves him, and he thinks, "Everything I based my life on was an illusion and a delusion". It's true actually, but then what do you do? How do you keep on living and be constructive?

It's strange, because it's a comedy; I think it's funny, people seem to think it's funny; but there's a slightly darker edge to it.

The other thing we set out to do in the film, and we've managed to achieve — a lot of people have commented on this — is that we moved from Melbourne to Sydney to make the film. We wanted to make a film in a city that's reflective of what the characters are going through. Sydney's under construction at the moment for the year 2000 Olympics, it's so messy, and we really wanted to capture the feeling — because with the other film we really captured some sort of feeling about Melbourne, a very autumnal feel, you know, all the really nice cafes.

All around the world I get people standing up and going, "Oh my God, I've been trying to explain Melbourne to my friends here, and I'm just going to take them to see the film." We wanted to do that in a way for Sydney, but also get the big city feel to it, and the messiness, the construction and the jet-age. I think we managed to do that with a lot of time lapse, and the city builds up on you. It's nice to feel that you set out to do something, and to find that you've realized it.
It's interesting that you say it has a dark edge to it, because just even reading the synopsis and getting an understanding of *Strange Planet* from that, it seems to be more weighty.

It is; I see it, and I think "How grown up!" But by the same token — I haven't seen *Head On* (Ana Kokkinos, 1998) or *Praise* (John Curran, 1999) — but it's not dark in the way those films are dark. It's dark in the way a Massive Attack song is dark. Does that make sense?

That's quite effective imagery.

As opposed to the way the Violent Femmes are dark. It's not down, dirty and raw. You also mentioned before that you didn't want to get into comparisons with *Love and Other Catastrophes*, but I suppose it's inevitable, and the word I've heard around town is that this is *Love and Other Catastrophes* in Sydney, but it doesn't sound like it [...] 

No. I wonder if they've seen it. It seems a little bit easy, I think. That's the thing that's going to be difficult; it's going to be too easy for people to compare them. What I see mainly is the differences, and it's hard to be that distant from your own work, but I've actually had a few other people, whose opinion I respect, say that it is a much more mature film. It's pretty much reflective; we write together. When it's about a different time; it doesn't have that nostalgia. Without giving it away, all the characters do find partners at the end of the film, but I don't think you really know if it's going to work for them. But it's still positive in the end; no one dies or anything.

You co-wrote this script with producer-partner Stavros Katsanzidis, and you work well, and closely together. How does your working relationship happen? What's the nature of your creative relationship with Katsanzidis?

It's quite interesting that people also have an obsession with where exactly an idea comes from; what part of your life. Every character you write is something I've always wanted to do. In some ways, Stavros has more real life to draw from, whereas I've spent so much of my life sitting in a theatre; that I have so much film knowledge. So sometimes that's the difference, but mainly it's the similarities, and that makes it harder to define our creative relationship.

It's another one of those questions, like saying "If you liked *Love and Other Catastrophes*, you'll love *Strange Planet*." It's that need that people seem to have to pigeonhole things, and give everything a name, and wanting to know the details; and it's not always like that.

It's quite interesting that people also have an obsession with where exactly an idea comes from; what part of your life. Every character you write is you, in a sense, but people are always looking for the character that is you, full stop. It's a bit more messy, it's a bit more nebulous than that.

Are you in a mad, flat-spin panic to finish the film?

Yes and no, but because of the stage that the film is at. We personally can't do anything; the labs have enough free time. It's another one of those questions, like saying "If you liked *Love and Other Catastrophes*, you'll love *Strange Planet*." It's that need that people seem to have to pigeonhole things, and give everything a name, and wanting to know the details; and it's not always like that.

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So it's actually feeling good at the moment, because I'm coming out of that 'working 24 hours a day' state.

*Strange Planet* has a very uplifting ending, but it's not as easy to eat. It's a good meal, but it's not a sorbet ice cream, which I think *love and Other Catastrophes* was — not that that's necessarily a bad thing — but you're going to have work a little bit harder; everything's not tied up. We keep saying the ending is a happy ending, but it's not a happy-ever-after ending. You know they're going to go on from this point and it's not all going to be perfect, it'll be hard, but they've got better skills to deal with it. They'll just find another set of problems.

Isn't that what life is all about in a lot of ways?

Yes. The film is designed to be circular, and the ending could be the beginning, and the beginning could be an ending. Not everything is tied up for the audience. But that's good, because you should be going away and thinking about it later on. Thinking about those people, and have the mood permeating you in some way.

Without giving it away, all the characters do find partners at the end of the film, but I don't think you really know if it's going to work for them. But it's still positive in the end; no one dies or anything.

Would it be more fitting to say that you and Katsanzidis share a similar vision and work towards that same vision?

I think the reason that we are able to work together is because we have a similar outlook on life. We have a similar understanding of, and interest in what it is that makes us human; what is it to be living now. We're both very interested in modern stories, we're not interested in period stories. We have similar preoccupations, we like the same things, and we like the same things in films that we watch. We can go and see a movie separately and then come back, and we'll have much the same thoughts about it.

Stavros has come through a different tradition, from something where it took him a while to come to film; whereas it's something I've always wanted to do. In some ways, Stavros has more real life to draw from, whereas I've spent so much of my life sitting in a theatre; that I have so much film knowledge. So sometimes that's the difference, but mainly it's the similarities, and that makes it harder to define our creative relationship.

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ARE YOU FEELING CONFIDENT ABOUT STRANGE PLANET'S PERFORMANCE AT CANNES?

It's interesting, because I like the film, and I'm very proud of it. We made a very low-budget first film; and then we were given money, and you can see it. We made a better film, and the money went on the screen, so I'm very proud of it. But by the same token, if you take anything to the film festival at Cannes, you're petrified.

You give two years of your life to the thing, and then you have to go here and there, especially in a marketplace where there is so much product, and so many people vying for attention. I think it makes it harder to go back when we had such an extraordinary experience last time, but that can never be repeated.

SO HAVE YOU FELT PRESSURED BY THE 'SECOND FILM SYNDROME'?

Personally, no, because as soon as I finished the first one, people were going, "Now make a second one". There's all that pressure, but I have felt and main-

ained all along, that all I have to do is make the film I want to make. After that initial hot flush of media and critical attention — your film lasts a lot longer than that — you just have to be proud of your work.

As long as you don't buy into all that attention, and don't make decisions out of fear, or make them because you believe it's the right thing to do, then you'll be all right.

I haven't felt any pressure during the making of the film. I haven't felt like "Oh my God, if I don't make a good film, everyone's going to think it's a fluke." Whatever people say before they have seen the film will not diminish what I think about it.

By the same token, I worry about people comparing my films. But that's a more distant thing, like not worrying about my ego personally; it's more worrying about the film as if it were a different entity.

This film — that is a film in its own right, and has its own strengths, and weaknesses — will not, because it is a second film, be treated with the same respect as if it were a third or fourth film. And I think that's sad, and it's sad for the work of other people in the film. For instance, the production designer is a woman called Annie Beauchamp, her work is amazing in it. Some of the actors are new to the screen, first-timers, and I'm very concerned that they will not be treated in the same way because the film will carry all this baggage. My baggage. I feel sad for them, and sad for the film, if that happens.

SPEAKING OF CASTING, YOU HAVE AN INTERESTING MIX OF OLD AND NEW NAMES LIKE TOM LONG AND FELIX WILLIAMSON RING BELLS.

Tom Long is playing Ewan, and the only thing you'll probably know him from is SeaChange; he plays the young clerk in that. He's also had minor roles in other films. He was also in Two Hands (Gregor Jordan, 1999), in a completely different rôle.

Felix has done a lot of theatre, and yes, he is the son of David Williamson. He's also done quite a bit of television. He's most well-known for his gay hair-
dresser in a Clairol ad, but he's playing a different part, although he's got a comic character. It's interesting, he's actually quite suave, but in the film he plays a real dag.

Naomi Watts, who plays Alice, has just started filming the pilot for a new series in L.A., so that's exciting. With Claudia [Karavan], we'd pretty much written the part for her, so I don't know what we would have done if she'd said she couldn't do it; and we just wanted Alice [Garner] to be around. We thought it was good for her to play something that was very different from her. A lot of the time, she's a good actor, but she'll play versions of the same character. So this is something completely different for her.

AND AARON JEFFREY'S RÔLE IS PRETTY DIFFERENT TO HIS LAST RÔLE IN THE INTERVIEW [CRAIG MONAHAN, 1998].

Absolutely, it's quite interesting, because he's very softly spoken in this film. He plays the jilted husband, and often because of his size, he plays aggressive Australian characters. But in Strange Planet he's playing a Jewish guy who's very well put together, and quite softly spoken. He worked very hard, because the character was very different for him.

WHAT NEWS IS THERE ON THE HOLLYWOOD FRONT, BECAUSE THERE IS A "RUMOURED" PROJECT IN DEVELOPMENT?

It's based on a book by Philip K. Dick called The Scanner Darkly, which is not very sci-fi. It's more autobiographical on his part. It's about drugs, and it's a bit darker.

Ken [Sallows, editor] finds it funny that I should make two romantic comedies here, and then, when I go to do the American film, it's this dark sci-fi thing. But we're still only in development. The writer that I employ-ed is very busy at the moment, but he's just started on a second draft, and I'll probably move to the United States in May — just before or after Cannes — and get it moving along a bit. I've always wanted to make a film there.

I have another project that I would like to write, that I'll film back here in Australia. That's how I'm planning I would do things; get the American Film, and then come back home.

People seem to be able to do that more now, to be able to commute between Australia and the

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Sight Unseen
An Account
Wide Shut
Richard Combs
During February, principal photography was completed on *Eyes Wide Shut*, Stanley Kubrick’s film based on a novella by Arthur Schnitzler, *Traumnovelle (Dream Story)*, starring husband and wife Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman. Filming had begun in November 1996, making this “the longest continuous shoot in motion-picture history”, according to John Baxter’s *Kubrick* biography. In September and October, no longer one of “Kubrick’s Captives”, as a newspaper story about *Eyes Wide Shut* was called, Kidman appeared on stage in an updated version of a much more scandalous Schnitzler work, the play with which he ushered in the twentieth century, *Reigen* or *La Ronde*. The new version was called *The Blue Room* and was an immediate sell-out success, mainly because all five female rôles were played by a variously — and for some reviewers, overwhelmingly — undressed Kidman.

Was one Schnitzler suggested by the other? Playwright David Hare wrote *The Blue Room* at the suggestion of theatre director Sam Mendes, who had the idea of a new *La Ronde*, with its cross-sectioned take on sexual mores, for a new century. Reports don’t connect it with the Kubrick film. Even so, with Kidman, dubbed “theatrical Viagra” by one reviewer, taking *The Blue Room* to Broadway, executives at Warner Bros. must be thinking of the connection and what an ideal time it would be to release *Eyes Wide Shut*.

But here, of course, we move into a different time entirely: Kubrick time. The article on “Kubrick’s Captives” had mentioned a possible release date of 18 December 1998. Conjecture now is that it will be some time in 1999, and some even say that this will be a new Schnitzler for a new millennium.

The critic Andrew Sarris was beginning to look askance at these methods as far back as 1963:

> His [Kubrick’s] métier is projects rather than films, publicité rather than cinema. He may wind up as the director of the best coming attractions in the industry.

Five years later, Sarris noted that Kubrick’s filmography had only increased by two: *Dr Strange-love* or: *How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love The Bomb* (1964) and *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968). Thirty years further on, his filmography has only increased by four, with a fifth waiting in the wings. Sarris, one might say, was prescient.
about Kubrick's career with an exactness worthy of HAL 9000.

Conversely, one might say that Kubrick has taken Sarris' job and turned it into an art form. His "cinema of coming attractions", defined not just by its time-consuming methods but by the extreme secrecy that surrounds it, is epic in the attention it commands before a frame of film is seen. Statements about the film, whether issuing from its two megastars or anonymous press releases, repeat a mantra of it being a story about sexual obsession and jealousy (or "jealous and sexual obsession"). The press, meanwhile, clocks the number of shooting (mainly reshooting) days and the actors who have come and gone from the production (Harvey Keitel, Jennifer Jason Leigh).

Most curious of all was a news item on television, the medium to which everything is accessible. This included a visit to the set - a contemporary New York neighbourhood, complete with yellow cabs, built at a British studio. But all the programme offered was a distant view, from what looked like a cover of trees, as though it were scouting an enemy camp. For hotter gossip there's the Internet, with websites buzzing about Cruise and Kidman's scenes of full-frontal nudity or more ambivalent scenes which are dreams in fact or metaphor. What they all reveal is that behind the partner each has chosen stands a legion of possible partners; and behind those putative liaisons, in turn, stands the partner each has chosen.

This might be a challenge to bourgeois morality, to the social pretences of fidelity and monogamy. But it could also be read as a defence of them, as a drama about the necessity of those pretences, or as something more clinical in the study of desire and its intersection with personal identity and public morality.

Social conventions are a way to rationalize and cope with a world of desire which acknowledges none of these limits. But, at the same time, we really because, as a cold and objective observer of human behaviour, we is the world of desire which acknowledges none of these limits. But, at the same time, we are also pre-eminently a 'performed' story. Masquerade is the theme, and it's played out on the stage. Our bodies are not just costumes but costumes that are never off the point.

If Kubrick's is a cinema of coming attractions, then perhaps criticism can take it on in these future tense terms. The most obvious place to start is with Schnitzler's La Ronde and Traumnovelle. This was written in 1926, five years before Schnitzler's death, and could be seen as a complementary end-piece to La Ronde (as that play has generally been called since Max Ophuls' film version of 1930). From opposite perspectives - external and internal, as it were - they both deal with the psychology of serial sexual behaviour.

In La Ronde, ten characters play a kind of sexual musical chairs in ten self-contained plays. Character A mates with character B who moves on to character C, and so on, until the music stops with character A again. Schnitzler wrote these scenes in 1900, and published them privately in 1903, not intending that they should be performed in public. When the play was staged in 1921, in Vienna and Berlin, it provoked a furore: battles inside the theatre, demonstrations with antisemitic temper outside, and the Berlin cast hauling up in an obscenity trial. Schnitzler withdrew the play and declared that it should not be performed again in his lifetime.

Could Traumnovelle have provoked a similar outrage? It could, in that it shows how a sexual underlines bourgeois decorum, in fact all public and private morality. But here there are only two characters - a doctor, Fridolin, and his wife, Albertina - and they are not shown moving at random across all social strata, in a restless sexual rummage. Here the rummaging goes on internally. There are teasing discussions between husband and wife about their past lives and fantasies, real social occasions for flirtation (a masquerade ball), and more ambivalent scenes which are dreams in fact or metaphor. What they all reveal is that behind the partner each has chosen stands a legion of possible partners; and behind those putative liaisons, in turn, stands the partner each has chosen.

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Denmark, and then Fridolin is called out to attend to a dying patient.

This begins a night of serious partying and shape-shifting. The patient, a privy councillor, is already dead; his daughter, who seems rather fevered to Fridolin — perhaps she has tuberculosis? — abruptly breaks out with a declaration of love for him. He escapes into the street and meets a young prostitute, Mizzi (what else, as she says, would she be called?). He dallies with her, after a fashion ("he wooed her like a sweetheart, like a beloved woman") before wandering off to a local dive. There he runs into a disreputable friend from his medical student days, now an itinerant entertainer, a piano-player for hire — "the vaudeville company he had been with had suddenly gone to pieces" — who invites Fridolin to a secret and rather frightening-sounding extravaganza, the evening's grand ceremonial.

This is a masked ball held just outside town — it's always the same party, but always at a different house — reached by means of "a mourning-coach" with a sepulchral driver. Think of Jonathan Harker ascending to Castle Dracula — the mood and shape-shifting of horror fiction begins to grip here. Fridolin has hastily outfitted himself with a monk's costume, and finds everyone at the party dressed as monks and nuns. That is, until the runs slip away to make a dramatic reappearance without any costume at all — save for their masks. The monks, who have now become "cavaliers in white, yellow, blue and red", rush towards them.

But Fridolin is cheated of this free ticket to an orgy. The celebrants sense that he is not one of them, and he is threatened with dire consequences. Then the most beautiful woman present, who seems particularly attracted to Fridolin, offers to atone for his crime. Fridolin is driven out, still not sure if the woman's sacrifice means he's been especially favoured or just made the victim of an elaborate charade. He's sure, though, what her 'sacrifice' will entail, before he hears her cry out, "Here I am, take me — all of you."

He returns to Albertina in the early hours of the morning and finds her just coming out of a real dream. She recounts this in elaborate detail, some of it picking up on his recent experiences — monks and soldiers, even Danish and Polish accents, circulate freely. Its narrative, though, involves Fridolin being offered royal honour by a mysterious woman, and when he refuses being humiliated: naked (his final costume), he is whipped and then led to crucifixion.

To Fridolin, this dream tale has the force of a real betrayal, and he takes it as a licence to play out all the desires he rehearsed the night before. He retraces his steps to the councillor's daughter, to Mizzi and the mysterious house, but all to no avail. At the end of another night, he is back in his hospital, in the morgue, with the body of an unknown woman, a suicide, whom he can't positively identify as the masked woman ("he now shuddered to realize that his wife had constantly been in his mind's eye as the woman he was seeking"). But whoever she is, the body on the slab "could only be to him the pale corpse of the preceding night doomed to irrevocable decay".

How have these scenes been translated into Eyes Wide Shut? We know where they've been translated, from a list of locations in John Baxter's biography:

Kubrick took over the Rothschilds' giant country house Mentmore for some scenes, and hired an entire floor of London's Lanesborough Hotel for a week, including its $6,000-a-night Royal Suite. Retracing his 2001 steps, Kubrick began shooting at the mansion of Luton Hoo, which had been the site for an unused portion of the earlier film.

All of which suggests — yellow cabs notwithstanding — that this updating is rather remote and self-enclosed. In an interior geography film, the present-day furniture must seem as arbitrarily imposed on the characters as the changing-room décor at the end of 2001. Kubrick's abstracting, generalizing tendency — that universal pendulum swing through all his films — gives them not so much a near-future as an eon-long history look.

That is, history with most of its characteristic features blanded out to allow for elegantly-spare symphonies of light and colour and the sense that we've passed this way before. Or, rather, that we're always passing this way, either evolving to the stars (2001) or de-evolving to the chimpanzee-typing games of The Shining (1980).

The Shining throws up some interesting comparisons with Eyes Wide Shut, though in terms of finally assessing the new film, close comparisons should be resisted. The Shining is another contemporary story, whose horror elements are less a generic given than a way of visualizing characters' inner wishes — for each other's destruction, mainly, in another tale of jealousy and obsession. It's not sexual this time because it's about a father's jealousy of his son's greater ability to 'see', which stems from his own limited powers in limitless circumstances. Some of these associations, with real Kubrick-lighting effects, have already been written for him by Schnitzler, as in this odd tableau where Fridolin goes to the costumer's shop:

A blinding light was diffused over the entire passage down to the end where a table, covered with plates, glasses and bottles, could be seen. Two men, dressed in the red robes of vehmic judges, sprang up from two chairs beside the table and a graceful little girl disappeared at the same moment. But the ghosts of The Shining and the ghosts of Eyes Wide Shut are a different matter altogether. Mad Jack in the former is history's repeating mechanism, a handy playground for the Overlook Hotel's bad memories. The Shining is a horror film with a cosmic sense of humour. But in Eyes Wide Shut, the ghosts are the sport that people make of each other, they are the spectral partners they are searching for — ideal versions, or recreations of unconscious primal versions — through the partners they have. In a film with only three principal players, they are the imaginary ronde, the population that Schnitzler revealed with the medical man's eye for the near cross-section.
So limited a scale, so precisely psychological a subject matter, may seem a surprise from a director known for taking bigger slices of history. But behaviour is the key to everything in Kubrick, behaviour repeating itself until it constitutes the shape of history. Is Barry Lyndon a stately tour through the eighteenth century, or the most ambiguous subjective odyssey of identity formation? It is a film with one principal player who contains history's multitudes. The approach Kubrick took from the very beginning has been described by his one-time producer, James B. Harris: "He would constantly emphasize the way people behaved. He advised me to read Freud's Introduction To Psychoanalysis and also Stanislavsky's works [...]"

Freud's account of dreams predicts the chaos unleashed in Traumnovelle, from Fridolin's adventure ("the ego, freed from all ethical bonds, also finds itself at one with all the demands of sexual desire") to Albertina's own dream, which Fridolin finds so shocking:

Wishes for revenge and death directed against those who are nearest and dearest in waking life, against the dreamer's parents, brothers and sisters, husband or wife, and his own children are nothing unusual. A contemporary Freudian psychoanalyst, Darian Leader, has written about how love for a partner is always directed at someone beyond the partner, someone who must remain ideal or spectral: "To find a continuous love, a love that won't let you down, one has to go beyond the human register" (Why do women write more letters than they post?) He describes the case history of a woman who combined the two, making her real-life lover also a spectral 'other' by creating anxiety about his supposed disappearances and then hunting for him in the local morgues.

This returns us to Traumnovelle, and to that persistent mirroring structure in Kubrick which either has plots busily duplicating themselves (The Killing, 1956) or characters pursuing their shadow selves in a riot of personality that is also an image for the limits or personality. So Peter Sellers ricochets through both Lolita (1962) and Dr Strangeglove. Humbert Humbert and Quilty conduct their own ronde, and friend and foe are played by the same actors in Kubrick's first film, Fear And Desire (1953). These are chase scenarios, played out in the external world, and follow an ideal form by circling back to their beginning. Eyes Wide Shut is a pursuit through dream and fantasy, desire ricochets ("freed from all ethical bonds") between those doubled loves – ideal, spectral, "beyond the human register" – back to the love that made the chase necessary.

Schnitzler is the film's starting point, and this is also true in a nearly doubled sense. His Reigen was largely rescued from the limbo of scandal when Max Ophüls turned it into La Ronde. And Ophüls is the filmmaker most often cited by Kubrick as his major influence, who has bequeathed him both that fin-de-siècle, end-of-the-Hapsburgs mood – sardonic and detached about human affairs – and an elegantly, endlessly-rolling camera to trace the circular course of characters' destiny. And how elegant of fate to loop Kubrick's loop with a new stage production of La Ronde, with the star of Eyes Wide Shut.

For his The Blue Room, David Hare took a more optimistic, modern slant on what is assumed to be Schnitzler's cynical, disenchanted view of love and desire:

Our sexual pasts are full of ghastly mismatches: making love to the wrong person for the wrong reason. But that is how you learn, through sexuality. Schnitzler may well be an acute commentator on sexual morés, particularly on the deceit and hypocrisy of those Viennese gentleman who could pose as pillars of society while setting themselves up with a little something from the limitless world of desire. But if there's something deeper than cynicism at work here, it is a melancholy about what this circular pursuit, the rummaging through spectral partners and serial liaisons, says about the solidity, the reality, of the pursuer.

It's revealing that the sequence of exploitative men in La Ronde ends with a wistful aristocrat, whose flaw is not hypocrisy but that he "thinks too much". This has bred ennui and purposelessness, a feeling that "all the things people talk about most don't exist", and that if desire is limitless, choice is pointless: "There is always someone around who likes you." How like Redmond Barry – pretend aristocrat, as a pretender in most things – who pursues all his desires so ruthlessly yet retires to the end Ryan O'Neal's unfixed, faraway, mooncalf gaze.

That melancholy has deepened in Eyes Wide Shut, even though there is no period witfulness here, only a harder, modern edge to the pursuit of desire, an aggressive assertion of the right to explore fantasies, and an easy acceptance of the relativity and contingency of all things, especially human relationships. But Kubrick's abstracting tendencies, his futuristic streamlining of any décor, and his way of digging into performances, going for extreme ecstasies or terrors with no social context at all, lifts his subjects as cleanly out of the present as out of any time, past or future. We are left in that realm where all our ghosts and doubles ricochet around, clambering for recognition.

A complicating factor in Eyes Wide Shut is the script by Frederic Raphael, a novelist and screenwriter whose own fiction has dipped into La Ronde/Traumnovelle territory. The trouble is Raphael's usual mode is satire or brittle social comedy, which slips so easily into the cynicism of which Schnitzler and Kubrick have been accused. Interestingly, Kubrick first announced in 1971 that Traumnovelle would be his next project, and in...
the same year Raphael published a novel, Who Were You With Last Night?, that seemed at least to have been influenced by the Schnitzler. The resemblance was close enough to create some confusion about whether Eyes Wide Shut was actually based on the Raphael novel.

Who Were You With Last Night? is an odd amalgam of Schnitzler themes with characters from the disgruntled realism school of British fiction. Its hero is an ex-sailor who stumbles into domesticity when he gets his girlfriend pregnant on their first date, and stumbles into a career as a salesman of out-of-town business developments. But the book is a running monologue in which he fantasizes about regaining freedom by blowing up his nearest and dearest, and reminisces about encounters in Amsterdam's red-light district. Interspersed with this are glimpses – cinematic flash-forwards – of a culminating session of office sex interrupted and given a sadistic turn by a man with a gun.

It's an everyday testament to the violence and unpredictability of desire, with a drab, lived-in, Home Counties ambience and a hero pushing his way up from under, like Barry Lyndon, to become an almost-yuppie. It duly taps into Schnitzler's underlying pessimism about the human insubstantiality that goes with the randomness of attachments: "People are like these solid objects that aren't really solid at all, that have all this emptiness in them." And mutability leads to thoughts about parallel lives, shadow existences: There's no evidence there aren't several more of us, each one of us, somewhere, and every time we come to a crossroads, make a decision, maybe one of us goes one way and one the other.

The hero speculates on these matters in a rather grim, clenched-jaw way, which Raphael works into a fictional playfulness – and, most strikingly, a cinematic modishness. The book's appearance must have coincided with the release of Performance (Donald Cammell and Nicolas Roeg, 1970) and Who Were You With Last Night? is that film's out-of-town cousin – shape-shifting, role-playing and perverse sexuality without benefit of drugs, rock stars or gangsters (except for the Graham Greene-ish man in a mac who turns up at the end to put the hero and his lover through some unexpected hoops). In both, the flash-forwards, the cut-up editing style, emphasize an intermingling of identity and haphazard shifting of sexuality that becomes a new '70s mode while remaining as old as Schnitzler. It is carried on by Bad Timing: A Sensual Obsession (Nicolas Roeg, 1980), with a psychoanalyst-hero and visual reminders, via Gustav Klimt, of that end-of-the-Hapsburgs seed bed.

Eyes Wide Shut is the latest film in the genre, a little late in arriving but then that – like the appearance of The Shining seven years after The Exorcist (William Friedkin, 1973) – is part of Kubrick's Olympian delivery system. It works because modishness, any time-coding at all, is excluded from the product. Eyes Wide Shut may delve into the limitless world of desire, the unboundedness of personality, but it doesn't suggest an infinity of choices through an infinity of editing. Kubrick's narrative style is traditional to the point of stately; he is neither particularly interested in nor adept at narrative, despite what is often assumed about the honing of his technique in low-budget thrillers. He takes infinite pains, and almost infinite time, to establish his space – which may be, as here, just a few rooms. But this then becomes the extent of the known universe, and the terror his characters face – which shifts the ground a little under Schnitzler – is dealing with their own limits within this limitlessness.

Actually, the modish version of Eyes Wide Shut already exists. It is the film Two for the Road (1967), directed by Stanley Donen and written by Frederic Raphael. Schnitzler is at work here, and the themes Raphael would explore in both Who Were You With Last Night? and the Kubrick film, though in a rather in-between state. Tenuous and irritating in itself, Two for the Road is a fascinating crossover point between swinging '60s cinema – a would-be knowing piece about the pitfalls of marriage – and the coming '70s genre about interweaving lives and desires.

The film intercuts various trips to France taken by Albert Finney and Audrey Hepburn at different stages of their relationship – with their older, estranged selves occasionally passing their younger, bubbly selves on the road. Their marital tiffs – which are supposed to explain their deep disillusion – are trivial. But one can hear Raphael working towards Schnitzler mode when she accuses him, as he presses her to make love, "It wouldn't matter who I was, would it?", or when he accuses her, after she returns from a brief liaison, "Are you sure you remember which one I am?" There's even a visual effects gag, with Finney's car suddenly becoming two as he ponderers pursuit of a blonde, which literally plays out the 'multiple selves at the crossroads' idea in Who Were You With Last Night? In many ways, Raphael's Eyes Wide Shut imagines what would happen if his Two for the Road couple put up at the Overlook Hotel, then find they were confined there with their variously travelling selves.

So what exactly is Eyes Wide Shut? Speculating about the many sex scenes involving its two stars, David Thomson in The Independent newspaper is predicting an acting revelation: her [Kidman's] performance [...] may take us, her and cinema sexuality, to new, inner depths. Don't be surprised if what you see is enough to make you forget the hype about the 'ideal' box-office couple, and wake up to two astonishing actors.

All well and good in theory, but in practice Cruise and Kidman will not impose themselves in this way. They will recede in the spaces of this story – duplicating themselves, re-imaging each other, as they go – as surely as did the astronauts in 2001 or Barry Lyndon within his own history. The pained, placeless visage of Ryan O'Neal haunted every scene of the latter film, but it did nothing for the actor's career. Sex may similarly be all over Eyes Wide Shut, but could the result be cinematic Viagra? Not really.

Nor is this contradiction new to Eyes Wide Shut, although it may be Kubrick's first attempt to approach those inner depths, his first film in a nearly fifty-year career that really deals with sexual intimacy.

Another of Andrew Sarris' complaints, as the filmmaker headed into the stratosphere of ever-forthcoming attractions, was "his increasing reluctance to express an apparently perverse personality". Yet that contradiction has been the real perversity, the contradiction between the intellectual remoteness and coldness associated with Kubrick and the quite intimate situations, the personal and domestic realities, the behavioural details in which all his films are rooted.

Perhaps it's less a contradiction than a matter of complementary processes, cycles, in the affairs of men. The outer process, the grand design, the historical and cosmic plot, is the one Kubrick is known for...
Strange Fits of Passion depicts the sexual rites of passage of "She," an intelligent, but confused, young woman. Wrapped in scarf and overcoat to ward off a wintry Melbourne, "She" cocoons herself against emotional entanglement by swathing her heart in rhetoric supplied by ever-present volumes of poetry, feminism and Freud. Strange Fits of Passion is a feature début by two women who have been otherwise involved in the film industry. Writer/director Elise McCredie and producer Lucy Maclaren enlighten Mark Smith.
How long have you been involved in the film industry?

E M: I graduated, as an actor, from VCA at end of 1992 and worked as an actor for about four years. I did a lot of television, a couple of long running series (The Damnation of Harvey McQ, G.P., State Coroner), and then, in actually writing and directing, not very long at all.

I wrote the Strange Fits of Passion script about three years ago, but I was kind of acting all through that time and doing rewrites, etcetera. The only other thing I've written is an episode of Raw FM, for the ABC, and this is the first thing I've directed. So, I've been involved for about seven years professionally, but largely as an actor, and in the last couple of years as a writer and director.

Was it difficult making that transition from actor to writer and director?

E M: The writing one was really gradual, because I'd be dumb-struck with the script, and it was over three years, so that transition wasn't too hard. I think, as an actor I have a good ear for dialogue. I read so many scripts and often rewrite them. You need to alter television dialogue to make it sound more natural. I believe I've got a good ear, so it's just how dialogue sounds. That kind of writing was quite easy.

The structure of the film, to make it analogy-driven story-wise, was much harder. I had a script editor who worked largely with that; I felt a lot more confident writing themes. It was much harder for me to actually get them into a coherent film, with a beginning, a middle and an end. That was the part that I needed help with.

The direction side was a bit more of a sudden leap. I did go to film school (New York Film Academy) for a month in New York in 1997, but that was quite quick and I was pretty much learning on the run.

You say that you rewrote the script. Did the story evolve much during that or did it stay much the same as the original?

E M: Just before we started shooting I re-read the very first draft and the emphasis was the same, but it had changed quite a lot structurally. The things that I'm strong at, the characters and the dialogue, were pretty much consistent.

What was the inspiration for the film?

E M: I wanted to write a twisted coming-of-age film for a girl. I thought I'd never really seen that. I'm sure they're there, but I just felt that I'd never seen the confusion and anxiety, the angst. "Often girls' sexuality at a young age is portrayed as being all together, and there are a lot of movies about boys' coming-of-age. I thought I'd like to express the confusion of being young and confused – of having your brain tell you one thing, your heart and emotions tell you another, of not quite knowing how to place yourself in the world. Build a picture of a young girl who has a sharp intellect, but that then stifles her from behaving emotionally or being able to really connect with people."

I thought that was an interesting dilemma for a young woman at the end of the millennium. That sounds a bit wanky, but it came from that desire. The look of the film reminded me of Love and Other Catastrophes (Emma-Kate Crogan 1996), which made me think that Australian films in the 1970s seemed preoccupied with sex, in the 1980s they were period pieces and now a lot of Australian films are about the quirky relationship. Would you agree?

L M: Well, I think that the similarity between this and Love and Other Catastrophes is due mainly, or becomes more obvious, because of the age of the characters. But, Love and Other Catastrophes, I think, is really an ensemble piece about a whole group of people, and how they interact is the most important thing.

Whereas this is really about one person and how the other characters interact and inform her journey. I know what you mean, but I think that's kind of a world-wide thing. If you look at a lot of American independent movies, a lot of them are around those kinds of themes. My guess is, it's probably because they're cheap to make.

E M: I think more young people are making films than they were in the 1980s and I guess they write about what they know, which is relationships, confusion and sexuality. That's something that seems to come up a lot, now that the age group of filmmakers has lowered. It seems like there's a lot of filmmakers in their twenties and thirties now, where in the 1980s I can remember thinking it was men in their fifties that made them. Maybe that's the shift.

L M: It's also to do with, I think, the idea that films have become more genuinely contemporary and, therefore, when I say cheap, it's an area that people have access to. You can't go out and shoot a low-budget period film because you need an enormous crew and it's just not possible."
film, it’s a contradiction in terms, but you can make something like this; it’s achievable. Also the amount of money that you can get nowadays, in real terms it’s going down and down.

**E M:** For me, when I wrote it I wanted to write a film that spoke to me and to my generation, my peer group. I wrote this before Love and Other Catastrophes, and when that came out I thought that it was doing the same thing, but I’d never seen another Australian film do it before. It was directly appealing to my age group, in a way that wasn’t a working-class stereotype; it was more a middle-class film, it wasn’t period.

**IS THE FILM MAKING A STATEMENT ON POLITICAL CORRECTNESS AND THE POST-MODERN VIEW OF SOCIETY?**

**E M:** Well, not really. I mean I’m a bit of a fan of postmodernism, but I think it’s completely fallible as well. I think that we love to have theories and labels on everything these days and it can just become incredibly confusing if you’re young and you’re not discovering anything for yourself because it’s already theorized for you.


**L M:** “She”, the main character, had to have a whole series of bad experiences and, ergo, the men in it have to be pretty sad.

**E M:** I don’t know that the women in it are much better really. “She” is totally confused, Jaya sleeps with everybody, Judy is this desperate woman that only wants to have a baby. So the women are pretty poor. There’s not any female character in there that you kind of go: “Oh yeah, you’ve got it together”. I’m more interested in characters that are inept; they, to me, are more the people who are struggling in the world.

**“SHE” USES FEMINISM AS A WEAPON TO KEEP PEOPLE AWAY FROM HER.**

**E M:** Yeah, she does a bit, it’s a protective thing. A lot of what she says is true, but it serves to distance people from her and also to justify her own inadequacies. I think as she keeps saying: “If she can get a fuck, that means she’s alright.” So there’s a bit of that in there. If she can theorize about the rest of the world, she’ll be alright, she can still claim moral superiority.

**AND WHY IS MICHELLE NOONAN’S CHARACTER CALLED “SHE”?**

**E M:** It started off as an identity thing, in that, “She” doesn’t really know her identity and that she is kind of lost. The theory came out later. The first words I wrote of the film were “She stands in the street looking up the road”, or something like that. She stayed as “She” because I never got around to naming her and then I sort of liked it. At the end “She” does have a name.

**IS THAT ON THE ANSWERING MACHINE?**

**E M:** Yeah, it’s symbolic that “She” doesn’t have a clue who she is, doesn’t really have an identity and that only by the end she does.

**WHEN DID YOU BECOME INVOLVED WITH THE SCRIPT, LUCY?**

**L M:** I actually came into the process very late in the piece. I think it was about a month before they started pre-production.

Tim White, the executive producer, rang and asked me to be involved. But, I had read the script before and had been involved when I was working at Film Victoria.

**DID YOUR FORMER POSITION AS SCRIPT DEVELOPMENT MANAGER WITH FILM VICTORIA IMPACT ON YOUR APPROACH TO PRODUCING THIS FILM?**

**L M:** Probably not, because I wasn’t really that involved with the scriptwriting process. I wasn’t around when they were doing the real solid work of developing the script.

I was actually Project Manager at Film Victoria as well, which is production investment. And having that background is really helpful in putting together and working out how deals are going to work for a project. Because you see so many deals go through at Film Victoria, you get an idea of what people will agree to and what they will never agree to, so it really makes it much easier to do the negotiations for investors. The contracting was quite a long torturous process on this one.

**WHO WOULD YOU SAY THE AUDIENCE IS FOR THE FILM?**

**L M:** Well, it’s certainly interesting how people have responded to it. We actually put out a survey from the first couple of screenings and got people to fill in what did they like, what didn’t they like and so on and so forth. Somebody wrote in it, “Anyone who’s ever been a young woman and says they don’t relate to this film is lying.”

We do find that anyone who actually still remembers that ghastly feeling, where you just don’t know how to do it, you don’t know how to get it right, constantly feeling that you’re totally inadequate in this weird thing called “relationships”. They’re the people that respond to it very strongly, and that has actually crossed a very broad audience. We’ve had men in their forties and fifties saying that they absolutely loved it. But I think that the main demographic is women from about sixteen upwards. Sixteen to thirty-five, forty-ish.

**YOU MADE NUMEROUS SHORT FILMS AND FILM CLIPS IN THE PAST, HOW DOES THE
It seems like there's a lot of filmmakers in their twenties and thirties now, where in the 1980s I can remember thinking it was men in their fifties that made them.
Paperback Hero
PC: Paperback Films Pty Ltd.
Cast: Hugh Jackman, Claudia Karvan, Angie Milliken, Jeanie Drynan, Andrew S. Gilbert.
Synopsis: Jack, an outback road-train truckie, moonlights as a romance novelist. When his book becomes a best-seller, he must do some fast-talking to convince his long-time friend, Ruby, to be the writer.

Redball
Synopsis: A dark, contemporary police thriller about a few weeks in the lives of some used-up Melbourne detectives. Constructed as a series of snapshots of the Homicide, CIB, Vice and Drug squads, Redball is a gritty and hard-hitting.

Siam Sunset
Synopsis: Perry's perfect life creating colours for an English paint company becomes a world of pain after the tragically bizarre death of his wife. When he wins a bus trip across Central Australia, it is an odyssey in search of an elusive colour - 'Siam Sunset' - and some relief from the natural disasters that mysteriously pursue him.

Spank
Cast: Robert Mammone, Vince Poletto, Mario Gamma, Frank Mussolino, Victoria Dixon-Whittle, Lucía Mastrontone, Marco Venturini.
Synopsis: Paulie returns from Italy to find his old mates, Nick and Vinny, planning to set up a café in the city's premier café strip. Vinny's girlfriend, Tina, bankrolls their plans, but they can't find a building. Enter local rich kid Rocky Pisoni, temporarily in charge of his Pa's building development company. Rocky takes over the project with disastrous consequences.

Strange Planet
Synopsis: Strange Planet is an upbeat, warm-hearted comedy about life on earth and traces a year in the lives of six people.
Erskinville Kings
D: Alan White. Ps: Annette Simons, Julio Caro. SWs: Alan White,
Cast: Marty Denniss, Hugh Jackman, Leah Vandenberg, Joel Edgerton,
Aaron Blabey, Andrew Wholley.
Synopsis: A gritty drama about the tough-love reconciliation
between two brothers after the death of their father.

Feeling Sexy
Synopsis: Vicky is a married mother of two, but
she is still restless for more – more life, more love,
more everything! How can she have her cake and
eat it too?

Fresh Air
Cast: Nadine Garner, Marin Mimica, Bridie Carter.
Synopsis: Seven typically funny/sad days in the lives
of three aspiring artists – a filmmaker, a painter and a
musician – who are almost 30 and live, work and rock
under the flightpath in the multicultural inner-western
suburbs of Sydney.

Occasional Course
PC: Emcee Films. AD: The Globe Film Co.
CD: Emily Seresin. E: Alexandre de Franceschi. SD: Phil Tipene.
Cast: Peter Fenton, Sacha Horler, Joel Edgerton, Yvette Duncan, Ray Bull,
Marta Dusseldorp, Gregory “Tex” Perkins.
Synopsis: Gordon, a 25 year old unemployed chain-smoking asthmatic,
meets Cynthia, who has her own addictions; and for an explosive
moment of warmth and madness, laughter and terror, Scrabble and sex,
it seems they might even save each other.

Passion
D: Peter Duncan. P: Matt Carroll. SWs: Don Watson, Peter Goldsworthy,
Rob George.
Cast: Richard Roxburgh, Barbara Hershey, Emily Woof, Claudia Karvan,
Simon Burke.
Synopsis: Passion is the story of acclaimed
pianist, composer and eccentric Percy Grainger,
and the intense relationship
ship with his mother,
Rose, which dominated
his life. The film charts
Percy’s rise from child prodigy
to the toast of Edwardian London,
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Boarding-house blues

Mark Smith checks in and finds Gordon’s chest isn’t the only thing creaking in Praise

Robin O’Hood

John Boorman’s modern tale of an Irish criminal who becomes a folk hero. Tim Hunter looks at The General.

Film

REDBALL

Production Company: Grey Walker Films.
Australian Distributor: Palace Films.
International Sales: Scarsdale Asia Pacific.
Writer/Director: Jon Hewitt
Producers: Meredith King, Phillip Parslow.
Executive Producer: Jon Hewitt.
Associate Producer: Damion Schary.

Production Designer: Yvonne Schade.
Director of Photography: Mark Pugh
Editor: Alan Wiedroty.
Composer: Neil McGrath.
Sound Design: Dick Reilly.

Cast: Belinda McClory (Detective Jane “JJ” Wilson), John Brumpton (Detective Robert “Robbie” Walsh), Frank Maddock (Senior Detective Chris Hill), Peter Docker (Detective James “Lance” Fry), Antrea Davis (Detective Tom “Tom” Johnston), Neil Pigott (Detective David “Bingo” White), Damien Richardson (Detective Richard “Fat” D’Andrea), James Young (Detective Max “Maurice” Malleson), Paulene Terry-Heitz (Dee Rose Edwards), Robert Morgan (Senior Detective Mike Brown), Dave Wicks, Ray Monney

By the mid ‘80s access to video equipment began to fall into the hands of filmmakers and all sorts of wannabes. With Super 8 gradually disappearing and the price of 16mm rapidly rising it was perhaps inevitable that video would become the medium of choice for the emerging – i.e., budget-challenged – filmmaker with commercial aspirations. So, too, was the inevitability of the shot-on-video feature. Understandably, with all its technical limitations, the initial reality was less than aesthetically pleasing and even harder to see on anything other than a TV screen.

The first efforts were typically horror and crime items. The former mainly care for developments in the world of make-up effects and the – wrongheaded – perception of an easily-pleased, rabid audience ready and waiting to pay bucks to view anything marked ‘horror’. The latter because, “Hey, has there ever been a time when crime hasn’t been on the agenda of mass human interest?” With no theatrical support and marketed to a developing but still discerning video market, the first wave simply sank without trace. In Australia, the energetic and highly entertaining teen crime flick Marauders (Mark Savage, 1986) never made it further than a positive David Stratton Variety review. Houseboat Horror (Kendal Flanagan, Dillie Martin, 1988), the other great shot-in-Melbourne effort of the 1980s, now only seems to exist in the routines of comedians who want to use it as a fail-safe laugh-inducing

Irishman abroad

Jameson’s stars as an Irishman on the run in an Australian road-movie. Christopher Matthews enjoys the drive.

in review

HOMI-SCHLOCK • KITSCH-ITCH • MICK-FLICK

Detective Jane “JJ” Wilson (Belinda McClory) and Detective Robert “Robbie” Walsh (John Brumpton). Redball (Jon Hewitt, 1999).
adjunct to John Lamond jokes. However, it can be presently found on video shop shelves having been recently re-released and its maker is no stranger to the benefits of good promotion.

With a solid background in film exhibition and distribution that had him toiling for — and loving — both arthouse and outhouse products, the writer-director and co-executive producer of Redball, Jon Hewitt, in partnership with fellow ly young writer-director Richard Wolstencroft (Pearls Before Swine, 1996), ground out Bloodlust in 1999. Despite it being overly ambitious and often far exceeding its own somewhat limited abilities, Bloodlust still delivers more than a modicum of the exploitation goods. A not-quite-epic tale involving a bi-sexual trio of vampires without fangs, dumb-ass gangsters, guns and religious bigots, its ambitions are under-utilized Australian talent, and is none of these. Don’t let the corporate logos attached to it fool you as Redball is the work of a visionary whose hand is evident in every area of the filmmaking process from the raw and at times hilarious dialogue to the design of the CD soundtrack cover (the best presentation of an Australian soundtrack on CD to date). Just as a Royal Commission can demand your attention, Redball requires your presence in a cinema, right now.

MICHAEL HELMS

THE GENERAL


Family Problems

The General (IM Entertainment, 1997) — western or gangster film? — is just over an affordable $2000 so expect more) and in the wake of, Robert Rodriguez’s El Mariachi (1992) there’s been a certain amount of no budget features given the big corporate make over — Sydney’s answer to Love and Other Catastrophes (Emma-Kate Croghan, 1996), Occasional Coarse Language (Brad Hayard, 1998), is the most recent example. Redball, however, is none of these. Don’t let the corporate logos attached to it fool you as Redball is the work of a visionary whose hand is evident in every area of the filmmaking process from the raw and at times hilarious dialogue to the design of the CD soundtrack cover (the best presentation of an Australian soundtrack on CD to date). Just as a Royal Commission can demand your attention, Redball requires your presence in a cinema, right now.
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true that the police may have been collaborating with them in this case. The inspector refuses to answer, but looks in grim satisfaction at the body as it is wheeled off to a waiting ambulance.

Who the murdered man was, why he was shot, how he came to live where he did, and why it was thought the police, especially the featured inspector, and the IRA were involved in the shooting, are what this film is all about, told, obviously, in flashback. And to start the story, the film retraces the General's life back to his childhood in Dublin.

As a boy, Martin Cahill (Eamonn Owens) lived in the high-rise slum district of Hollyfield. Fatherless and pretty much destitute, Martin and his brothers resorted to stealing food, so his family could survive, until he was caught and sent to a correctional school.

Abuse from both priests and the police didn't deter young Cahill, and, as he grows up, thwarting becomes his chosen profession.

As the adult seen in the film's prologue, and married to his childhood sweetheart Frances (Maria Doyle Kennedy), Cahill delights in night-time burglaries, but spends more than the occasional stint in jail. And it's after being released from one such sojourn, when Cahill returns home to find his high-rise home neighbours being evicted, making way for the wreckers, and a new housing development, that the story picks its pace up.

One of the police officers over-seeing the eviction is the inspector seen during the prologue and, as Cahill digs his feet in and refuses to leave first his Hollyfield flat, and then the resultant demolition site, it becomes Kenny's personal mission to bring Cahill down. Needless to say, it becomes Cahill's mission to avoid being nicked, and humiliating the police, especially Kenny, in the process.

The General is based on a contemporary true story, but Boorman almost transforms Cahill into a living legend, a modern-day hero, and, therefore, the story seems to take on mythical, almost epic - in the true sense - proportions. Cahill is very much the likeable larrikin; cheeky, witty, resourceful, bucking the system - indeed, mocking the system by rendering it ineffectual - and making his own rules of life up as he goes along. In this way, he is presented in a favourable light, justifying in many ways his criminal activities as a sort of latter-day Robin Hood ethic.

The police, in particular, are presented as mean, simple-minded buffoons, while Cahill's friends and associates are his merry men, albeit with some fairly unsavoury pastimes of their own. Frances, Cahill's wife, her sister Tina (Angelina Ball) and their collective children are presented as meek but loyal, always ready to stand by, and benefit from, their men.

It all smacks of being too simplistic and, despite being shot in black and white, it is too rose-coloured. Yes, there are times where Cahill's dark side is revealed, particularly while torturing one of his own men by nailing him crucifix-style to a pool table, but, for the most part, it's his amusing anti-establishment attitudes and actions that are most sharply in focus.

Without wanting to become involved in arguments about Irish politics, because this film seems to skirt around them as well, one has to question why we are again presented with a criminal, albeit a charming and real one, as a sympathetic character, and something of a rôle model.

In fact, do we need to assume a moral or political standpoint on this issue, or can we just enjoy the film for what it is: a modern-day legend surrounding a real and fascinating man? ♦ TIM HUNTER

DIVORCING JACK

DIRECTOR: DAVID CAFFREY
PRODUCER: ROBERT COOPER
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS: MIKE POWELL, STEPHEN WOODLEY, DAVID THOMPSON
CO-PRODUCERS: FRANK MANNING, GEORGES BERNATON
CO-EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS: MARTINA GIFFERT, GARY SMITH, CHRIS CABAI
PRODUCTION EXECUTIVE FOR BBC: JENNIFER MCAULIFF
LINE PRODUCER: JANE ROBERTSON
SCRIPTWRITER: COLIN BATTEN
BASED ON THE NOVEL DIVORCING JACK BY COLIN BATTEN
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY: JAMES WELLARD
EDITOR: NICK MUSER
COMPOSER: ADRIAN JOHNSTON
PRODUCTION DESIGNER: CLAIRE KENNY
COSTUMES DESIGNER: FIONA TAYLOR
CAST: DAVID THRELMAC (DAWNEY STARK); ROBERT LINDSAY (MICHAEL BRINN); RACHEL GRIFFITHS (LISA COOPER); JASON ISAACS (“COW PAT” KEEGAN); LAINE MCKEAN (PATRICK STARKES); RICHARD GAY (CHARLES PARKER); LAURA FRAZER (MARGARET).
DISTRIBUTION: NEWVISION FILMS

A film that uses an image of Australian Rachel Griffiths in a nun’s habit wielding a gun, and has the title Divorcing Jack, has to catch your attention right away. And so it does, but it ends up being noteworthy for more than these two curiosities.

It’s set in contemporary Belfast, and has as its main character Dan Starkey, played wonderfully ironic and glib-tongued by David Thewlis. Starkey is a journalist writing a satirical column for the Belfast Evening News, and has as many powerful enemies around town as he does friends - more, most probably. But after he meets young art student Margaret (Laura Fraser), invites her home to a party and has an affair with her, he has no idea of the twisted and convoluted predicament he’s about to become embroiled in. For starters, his wife Patricia (Laine Magwan) isn’t particularly impressed with Starkey’s form, and takes her revenge by pottering Margaret’s warehouse apartment.

But there are bigger events on the horizon. Northern Ireland’s first independent election is only days away, and Starkey is seconded to chaperone visiting American journalist Charles Parker (Richard Gant) during the election coverage. Starkey’s not as impressed as most of the other journo’s are with PM candidate Michael Brinn (Robert Lindsay), and lets it show.

So it’s rather unfortunate timing on all fronts when Starkey discovers Margaret almost dead in her apartment, especially when she just happens to be ex-girlfriend of IRA man “Cow Pat” Keegan (Jason Isaacs), and, as he discovers the next day, the daughter of Brinn’s economic spokesperson. Starkey has to lie very low, linked as he is to her murder, and the mysterious death of her mother as well, with only Margaret’s dying words, “Divorce Jack”, as any clue to the whole unfortunate business. With the help of Parker, and the mysterious and fortuitous nurse-by-night, nunogram-by-night Lee Cooper (Rachel Griffiths), Starkey begins to unravel a very messy and complex blotch-up.

The likeable but innocent rogue caught up in events well beyond his control is no new plot device, but it does make for great entertainment. Hitchcock probably did it best with North By Northwest (1959), but first-time director David Caffrey doesn’t do too badly here.

Divorcing Jack is a lively and spirited film centred on a smart-mouthed hero in the middle of a political and personal bog – and getting deeper at every turn. Thewlis is perfectly cast here, finally fulfilling the promise he showed in Aocked (Mike Leigh, 1994), with just the right combination of scrofulous humour, intelligence and bemusement. Lindsay, not a well-known film actor, is also perfectly cast as the smooth, polished politician, as is Isaacs, giving his character a sophisticated, urbane, and therefore more menacing edge.

As for the women, they all seem a little under-utilized, but are still well-drawn and equally well-performed. In fact, for characters that are so important to the plot, and who have quite a lot of significant action, we see very little of them indeed.

At times, the whole thing gets confusing and hard to follow, but everything is accounted for once the end-credits roll. In many ways, it doesn’t really matter, because the journey was so enjoyable. It’s a tale told at breakneck speed that is very funny at times, surprisingly (but never gratuitously) violent at
Films continued

OTHERS, but quite enthralling all the way. The only problem is that it's likely to get over-hyped by all the marketing, publicity and critical reviews, and that never does a good film any favours.

As for Rachel Griffiths' character and the title well, seeing how they are both vital to the plot, I'm not going to say anything more about them. You'll just have to see it for yourself.

PRAISE

**PRODUCTION COMPANY:** Encke Films
**DISTRIBUTION:** Glove Film Co
**DIRECTOR:** John Curran
**PRODUCER:** Marthe Cole
**WRITER:** Andrew McGahan
**DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY:** Dion Beebe
**EDITOR:** Alexandre de Franceschi
**PRODUCTION DESIGNER:** Michael Phillips
**COSTUME DESIGNER:** Emily Seresin
**SOUND DESIGN:** Phil Tapner
**CAST:** Peter Fenton (Gordon), Sacha Horler (Cynthia), Marta Dusseldorp (Rachel), Joel Edgerton (Leo), Yvette Duncan (Molly), Ray Meagher (Steve), Gregory Perkins (Raymonds), Locie Carrhen (Cathy).

The press-kit for Praise comes in a natty little box, that for all intents and purposes looks like a cigarette packet. It even has a faux-warning on it. "Loving puts your heart at risk" it reads. Cigarettes feature largely in this film, as do many other addictions and predilections: sex, alcohol, LSD, heroin, poor dietary habits, and many of the seven deadly sins.

Adapted from Andrew McGahan's 1992 Vogel Award-winning novel, of the same name, Praise tells the story of the relationship between asthmatic Gordon (Peter Fenton) and exczema-ridden Cynthia (Sacha Horler). Visually pleasing and evoking a tangible and tropical lushness, the film looks great. Its settings, principally a Victorian mansion turned boarding-house, have a faded and tarnished elegance that belies their state of decay. The camera, under the guidance of DOP Dion Beebe, roams the decrepit lodgings like one of its dipsomaniac lodgers, pausing occasionally to offer an obese man, a drunken argument, a masturbating cretin, but always remaining on the periphery. It refuses to become involved, just as Gordon refuses to emotionally entangle with Cynthia. Praise offers a voyeuristic glimpse of life on the edges of society. An edge littered with miscreants who have lacked out, victims of a fragmented society, and, although the film does not judge these people, it does fail to illustrate why we, the audience, or they, are there.

The audience is simply an adjunct to the relationship between weezey Gordon and itchy Cynthia. We watch as he bravely informs her of his small penis, as she tells of her varieusaceous appetite. As Gordon ejaculates prematurely and Cynthia comes of age, we look on, unabashed. Scrabble, neediness and compulsion unite them, as the boarding-house quakes beneath their impassioned throes and under the weight of its alcoholic and misogynist tenants.

Gordon and Cynthia are victims of their own making. The film doesn't allow its audience to think otherwise, for it offers no reason for their apparent malaise. Both come from seemingly privileged backgrounds: he spawned by members of Queensland "squatter" daughter of a Major, so perhaps they're just slumming it - post-modern hipsters, looking for a beat experience. Kerouac might have been pleased, but this pair of beatniks aren't redeemed by any spiritual-ity; they're no dharma bums.

Gordon chooses his destiny by throwing in his job, ridding himself of Cynthia, and smoking, even though he is seriously asthmatic. When he puffs alternately on a cigarette and a Ventolin inhaler, his foolishness reveals itself to be foolishness. As for Cynthia, if it hadn't been Gordon's penis, it would have been somebody else's, for she's a victim of her own compulsive needs. Sometimes people are their own worst enemies.

At the risk of climbing on a high moral horse, it could be argued that the graphic drug use in the film is little more than a reflection of its characters' self-indulgence and that of its makers. "Look at the risk we're taking, we're showing it like it is," controversy for its own sake. Hurly Burly (Anthony Dziraz, 1999) does it better by allowing the audience to empathize with its morally-bankrupt characters and their statement on a materialistic and image-driven society. At least Hurly Burly's group of misanthropes try to communicate.

Although it is pleasing to see lonely Voss (Ray Bull) find himself a woman, it is hard to empathize with any of their plights.

Returning to the mock-cigarettes box-cum-press-kit, one reads that the director, John Curran, claims this genre of films scares him the most. "Mostly speaking, I don't like youth love stories with sex, drugs, and clubs. I rarely see a film of this genre that touches me - it's all very superficial." His comment has, unfortunately, become a self-fulfilling prophecy and, in this case, one cannot agree more.

**THE CRAIC**

**PRODUCTION COMPANY:** Foster-Graeke
**AUSTRALIAN DISTRIBUTION:** Village Roadshow Ltd
**INTERNATIONAL SALES:** Beyond International
**DIRECTOR:** Ten Emily
**PRODUCERS:** Marc Graeke, David Foster
**EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS:** Bruno Carbone, Alan Finney
**WRITER:** [movie title]
**DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY:** John Wheeler
**PRODUCTION DESIGNER:** Penny Southgate
**COSTUME DESIGNER:** Michael Charnock
**EDITOR:** Michael Collins
**CAST:** [movie list]

Ireland is a small country. Cold and verdant, its very name evokes quaint vistas of thatched stone cottages, peat fires, snug pubs, and trawler-dark pints of Guiness. For a small country with a modest-sized population, it has made a large imprint on the world. James Joyce and Oscar Wilde immediately come to mind, while Liam Neeson and Neil Jordan are two of the country's latter day saints.

Here, in the Antipodes, it would appear that Ireland is the flavour of the moment; there are more Irish pubs in Melbourne than in most Irish hamlets. There are stage pro-

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As predicted, the paths of all CINEMA PAPERS • JUNE
Franklin - Colin prepares for a new identity, a new house and a his IRA compatriots, ends up in the
now in hiding after "grassing" on
Weasley's comes knocking, dressed as an Irish slang for a laugh, a good-time, a giggle, and Jimeno's film of the same name and pronunciation is just that.
Fergus (Jimeno) and Wesley (Alan McKe) have had an enjoyable night on the Guinness. But when an altercation in a Belfast fish-and-chippery results in the arrest of IRA hard-man, Colin (Robert Morgan), the pair flee to warmer climes, namely Australia, to escape his wrath.
In Sydney, that annoyingly familiar backpacker pastime, car window-washing, fills Fergus' and Wesley's days - until destiny intervenes for Fergus. It appears in the form of 1980s game-show icon, Greg Evans, while Wesley's comes knocking, dressed as an immigration officer.

Winning a blind-date competition on The Meest Market - a thinly-veiled Perfect Match - Fergus departs for Queensland, followed closely by Wesley and a diligent stallwart from the Immigration Department.

In a typical "out of the fry-pan and into the fire" scenario, Colin, now in hiding after "grassing" on his IRA compatriots, ends up in the same part of Queensland. With a new identity, a new house and a pair of guardian SAS agents - Barry (Colin Hay) and Bob (Bob Franklin) - Colin prepares for a new life. But he is reluctant to forget Fergus' and Wesley's transgression. Predictably, the paths of all these characters cross and a pursuit ensues.

Republican Colin's reticence to forget past events, coupled with the fact that he is watched over by members of the British SAS, just as Northern Ireland is watched over by British forces, may be viewed as an allegorical reference to the "troubles" in Northern Ireland, and, given the film's IRA and Belfast beginning, this allusion is not too extreme. Cryptic advice that, perhaps, Ireland needs to look more to the future, than dwell on its past. This connection is reinforced further into the film: when Fergus, in conversation with Alice (Jane Hall), expresses the opinion that Ireland is "fucked". "It's a lovely country, but it's fucking" he states, repeating the point for emphasis.

But essentially this is a comedy, a view of Australia by an outsider, Jimeno. Though now less an outsider, he's almost as recognisable in Australia as Paul Hogan, another comic turned scriptwriter.

Hogan (Crocodile Dundee, Peter Faiman, 1986) followed Barry Humphries, creator of the comic strip character Bazza McKenzie, The Adventures of Bazza McKenzie, Bruce Beresford, 1979 in beginning an ever-increasing tradition of broad Australian characters. Crackers (David Swann, 1999), Welcome to Waap Wop (Stephen Elliot, 1998), The Castle (Rob Sitch, 1997), Muriel's Wedding (P. Hogan, 1994) and Strictly Ballroom (Baz Luhmann, 1992) have all reinforced long-standing perceptions of Australia. And although The Croac has none of the black humour that made the latter films so memorably affecting, it's a brave filmmaker who includes a scene, albeit brief, of a utility-truck loaded with drinking Aboriginals, in this era of thin-skinned political correctness.

Part of this genre's attraction, though, is its portrayal of extreme Australian characters. Folk heroes of Australia's mythic-bush past are relentlessly crucified in these, the most cosmopolitan of urban times. In The Croac, itinerant farm-hands, shearers, miners, truck-drivers, drunken hotel patrons and country residents all get a lambasting. While The Croac doesn't break any new ground in its lampooning of familiar Australian caricatures, the price of admission is well-spent. If only to see and hear the satirical and orally elegant Charles "Bob" Tingwell as a licentious, crook-hating, melon-farmer.

First-time feature film director Ted Emery is no novice. With a string of television comedy credits behind him, he is best known for Full Frontal, Fast Forward, Acropolis Now and D-Generation. But he is also responsible for directing that kitch icon Countdown, and perhaps this is why Australian kitch features so largely in The Croac. Cheap Bali-style fashions, safari suits, body shirts, toupees, bleached blonde hair, perms, combi vans and, that temple of over-developed urbanity, the Gold Coast, are important accoutrements to the tale. Even though the Gold Coast location is actually Patterson Lakes in Melbourne, it bears a remarkably close resemblance to Porpoise Spill of Muriel's Wedding fame.

The combination of good direction, clever scriptwriting and strong acting performances make The Croac an enjoyable cinema experience. If a preview audience's reaction is any indication of a film's potential marketability and earnings, one imagines that Jimeno and his production team are in for a bit of a cranking good-time themselves.

Christopher Matthews
perhaps no other English-speaking filmmaker has been the subject of such intense scrutiny, praise and condemnation as Alfred Hitchcock, who, in a career spanning more than forty years, has spawned more imitators than a frog has tadpoles. There are countless excellent monographs about this seminal British director, but the least of which is Robin Wood's Hitchcock's Films. So, do we need another Hitchcock book, or is it a case of whenever you hear of a good new book, you rush out and buy an old one?

Because Camille Paglia sources a substantial number of books, interviews and articles on Hitchcock, her new book on The Birds (1963) is, in one sense, also an old book, but her idiosyncratic approach, brilliant frame-by-frame commentary and peppery wit immediately make this delightful book a must buy.

During an interview, Paglia said that when the British Film Institute invited her to write about Hitchcock's 1963 film saw it as a great opportunity to redress some wrongs. "He's a first-rate artist," she pointed out. But you have to realize how low his reputation is right now. Because Camille Paglia sources are in widescreen format (although apparently) simply recounts the events of the sequence; but the dreaming and the mapping are also description and analysis, which are also evoking and prescribing, and in this remarkable chapter we see Martin create memory before our eyes. It is a pleasure to join in this seeing and spinning.

Subsequent chapters gracefully meld Martin's agenda and the requirements of the BFI series. Chapters 3 and 8 are extremely useful pre-and-post-production histories about script development, and about the various release versions of the film (here Martin reads different cuts against his vision of the ideal film). Chapter 4 is an essay on the theme of male friendship. Chapter 5 is a tight, precise disquisition on the gangster genre and how Once Upon a Time in America fits and doesn't. Chapter 6 tackles the (for me) very difficult area of music and segues from there into dance and rap. Chapter 7 is a sharp move from the repeated toilet imagery in the film into notions of melancholy and death. Chapter 9 symmetrically balances chapter 2: a close symptomatic reading of the late, crank scene in Deborah's dressing room, while chapter 10 deals with possibilities arising from the ending. The postscript catalogues instances of Leone's imagery and techniques cropping up in films of the past two decades.

The BFI Film Classics: Modern Classics series is, of course, uneven. When it began, Martin was among those who expressed some reasonable reservations. But this volume justifies the series. It is beautifully produced: 43 of its 55 illustrations are in colour and all are in widescreen format (although the extensive screen-credit appendix gives neither the aspect ratio in which the film was shot released, nor the colour process); the bibliography is select in the best sense of the word; the design and layout make it a pleasure to read. This book sets the standard for the BFI series, and it is gratifying that a writer and writing produced by Australian film culture should do so.

THE BIRDS

Camille Paglia

THE BIRDS

Camille Paglia

England's mature artistry, subtle layering of themes and the "documentary naturalism" initially deployed to establish the film's later eruptions of violence and slow deterioration of culture before nature's onslaught. Coming as it did in the early '60s, The Birds follow on from the '50s radioactive-giant-insects-on-the-rampage movies, and clearly pre-empted the disaster movies of the '70s and late '80s. What partly distinguishes it, however, is Hitchcock's manner of fleshing out his four main characters so that, when the birds descend, there's plenty of meat for them to pick!

Paglia begins by placing The Birds "in the mainline of British Romanticism, descending from the raw nature-tableaux and sinister female fatalities of Colderidge". As someone who shares Hitchcock's view of women as "capricious and elusive", Paglia sees the film "as a perverse ode to woman's sexual glamour and is struck by its themes of "capriciousness and domestication". Not before time, she also places Hitchcock among noted Surrealist filmmakers, with themes and images from his overall oeuvre traceable to early Surrealist films, such as Un Chien Andalou (Dali Buñuel, 1928), which Hitchcock clearly favoured. Like the American Surrealist Rod Serling's Twilight Zone, Hitchcock made a career of introducing the uncanny, whether it be the unexpected criminality of A Shadow of a Doubt (1943) or the haunting presence of Rebecca (1940), into the mundane everyday and subtly shifting perspectives to accommodate "a release of primitive forces of sex and appetite that have been subdued but never fully tamed".

The inner-dynamic of the film, and a good reason why it still captivates, is the underpinning of three central female characters: an insecure mother; an isolated ex-girlfriend; and a sophisticated new woman in the life of macho Mitch, played by Australian Rod Taylor. In a sense, the women are "the birds" as much as the film's avian maneuverers. Mother-dominated Hitchcock has placed three "devouring females at the crux" of his story. Jessica Tandy and Suzanne Pleshette represent the clinging, self-sacrificing aspects, while the predatory element is conveyed in Melanie's habit of using either a pencil or cigarette to jab and stab the air when she's speaking to her "male quarry", or, more significantly, in her practice of twisting the phone cord when she's speaking on the telephone. This binary representation of women as conversely vulnerable and predatory leads to two of the film's most vibrant exchanges between women.

The first is the tense, brandy-soaked discussion between ex-girlfriend Annie and her rival, Melanie, in the former's home. The other takes place in the besieged diner where a woman accuses Melanie of bringing on the bird attacks, thus further linking woman to complex vitalities beyond the rational mind. Paglia observes that the woman's charges are irrational, but "they have a mystic power that cannot be shaken off. On some level Melanie is a kind of vampire attuned to nature's occult messages."

Seen here in her first rôle, model-turned-actress Tippi Hedren couldn't have stepped into a more demanding and arduous part. But thanks to her extraordinary poise and innate sense of body language, in the space of five tortuous days, she goes from strong-willed, flirtatious and impeccable fashionplate to a dishevelled, semi-comatose mess covered in scratches, bandages and hair in disarray! But where past feminist critics have seen misogyny, Paglia sees a complex universal sex-war of give and take being waged between the
The message of The Birds is that biological imperatives and emotional powers rule man’s helpless flung about like driftwood on the sea of life.

Hitchcock, Paglia argues, was no misogynist but a subtle observer of the ebb and flow of desire, and its influence on the sexual dynamics flowing between men and women. As a chubby youngster, he lived in awe of beautiful women forever beyond his reach. As a filmmaker, his displaced eroticism—voyeurism allowed him to create some of the most incandescent images of godless-like women ever put to celluloid. Who can forget Grace Kelly’s entrance in Rear Window (1954) or Kim Novak’s phantom-like beauty in Vertigo (1958)?

But behind Hitchcock’s adulation lay fear and suspicion. For him, women were also supreme beings of artifice and deception. So he took mordant pleasure in raising them on pedestals and then eroding the foundations on which they stood. As he did with Tallulah Bankhead in Lifeboat (1944), Hitchcock again uses wardrobe, female accessories and household paraphernalia to define and slowly destabilize his female characters. Paglia’s reading of Melanie through this method is sharp, bit- ing and funny; Melanie’s ever-present clutch bag “is a hunt bag in which to stuff male quarry

David Lean.

Research paints a portrait of a colourful man, part-visionary, part-stylist. Lean’s chequered career begins with a disastrous stint as a trainee chartered accountant, replete with umbrella and bowler hat over his rather large, protuding ears. Calling on the only person he knew in the film industry—a friend in the accounts department—his Quaker father wavered in his wosser opinions, and the young Lean was allowed to go to work as a tea-boy and clapper-loader at Gaumont Studios.

Lean started at the studio in his late adolescence and, having an insatiable passion for cinema, drifted from department to department, learning his trade. He found his niche as a master film editor and soon made his mark on classics such as Pygmalion (1938) and The 49th Parallel (1941).

It was this solid reputation as an editor that led playwright Noli Coward to insist on hiring Lean as co-director on his critical and popular success, In Which We Serve (1942). Two further Coward adaptations and two moody Dickens adaptations, Great Expectations (1946) and Oliver Twist (1948), saw Lean’s career as a director flourish.

In the late 1950s, Lean abandoned his previously modest British productions for “mega productions”. Utilizing both size and stature, Lean rivalled his American colleagues with The Bridge On The River Kwai (1958), making it clear that he was now in the business of producing epics.

Whilst Lean’s films were immensely popular worldwide, Lean himself seems a distant character, a blank personality, far removed from the larger-than-life personalities he conjured on screen—a strange curio in the world of celebrity. An intensely private man, Lean could be described as a latter-day romantic with delusions of grandeur. He left six wives (dubbed ‘celluloid widows’ by Brownlow) for the next of his rich marriages. A perfectionist, Lean caused grief for his actors, technicians and the ‘money-men’ (his volatile relationship with producer Sam Spiegel alone could fill another expansive biography).

Lean obsessively carried on whatever the impediment, until 1970 when critics, weary of his trademark extravagance, mercilessly derided Ryan’s Daughter (1970). “Such a big film, for such a small romance!”, one wrote. Lean was crushed, and did not make another film for 15 years.

During his retirement, Lean travelled the world extensively, vainly seeking locations for future projects. While he bided his time waiting to secure the next project on his own terms and scale, Gandhi (1982) passed, with Lean’s blessing, into Richard Attenborough’s hands. It was not until 1985 that Lean resurfaced with an adaptation of E. M. Forster’s A Passage to India. Considered decidedly old-fashioned for its sweeping vistas and conspicuously spectacular, it quickly became a major hit. The critics were silenced, and Lean found himself a bankable director once again.

Upon the restoration and release of Lawrence of Arabia in 1989, new generations discovered the style and story that Lean was famous for, one that other directors, such as Steven Spielberg, had made their own.

In March 1990, Lean was honored with an award for lifetime achievement from the American Film Institute. Despite ill health he attended and in a heartfelt speech he thanked the many colleagues for his years in the industry. But he left himself plenty of time to berate the vanity of those wily ‘money-men’ and producers.

In his eighties, Lean attempted to bring Joseph Conrad’s Nostromo to the screen, but the project was eventually aborted due to financial problems and Lean’s precarious health. Sadly, he died in April 1991. In his time, Lean had produced 16 motion picture pictures, and edited many more.

Audience tastes may have changed over the years, but Lean’s credo never wavered: “romantic stories, handsomely told, on a grand scale”. Recent films such as The English Patient (Anthony Minghella, 1996) and Titanic (James Cameron, 1997) suggest that Lean’s torch has been passed on. Brownlow, like Lean, is an idealist. Both believe in producing a quality product, and this great biography, like its subject, is destined to be a classic...
High Concept: Don Simpson and the Culture of Hollywood Excess is a serious attempt to delve into Hollywood cinema of the 1980s and one of the decade's figurehead producers, Don Simpson. It is a lively, provocative, if uneven book — best in its detailed dissection of Simpson's colourful life, worst when it turns into a broadside against Hollywood 'excess'.

It is suitably salacious and contentious. It pulls no punches and side against Hollywood 'excess'.

It is suitably salacious and contentious. It pulls no punches and side against Hollywood 'excess'.

When told of his death, Disney executive Doug Feldman was apparently sitting on the toilet reading a biography of Oliver Stone. (Tony Scott, 1990) failed to attain the status of the son Michael Corleone, Godfather 3 (sic) must be the story of Anthony, Michael's son. He suggested that the child has been estranged from his mother, Kay, and has returned to the family, as a graduating naval cadet, to attend Michael Corleone's funeral.

Jeffrey Katzenberg and Simpson disagree over who hit upon the idea of casting Eddie Murphy in Beverly Hills Cop (Martin Brest, 1984), a role for which Sylvester Stallone and Mickey Rourke were considered.

Few of the films that Simpson produced are likely to be enshrined as anything other than big money-earners, though some, most notably Days of Thunder (Tony Scott, 1990) failed to attain even that status.

Simpson left his mark on Hollywood cinema. As a self-described 'creative producer', he was a vital element of big-budget, high-concept movie-making that is still very much in our midst. His extravagant lifestyle is emblematic of Hollywood myths, the actual practice of which may still be as prevalent as it always was.

High Concept: Don Simpson and the Culture of Hollywood Excess}

There's a pattern here that would repeat itself on numerous Simpson films. For instance, the story: a blue-collar worker who realizes her dream of dancing, but must first be brought down to her lowest emotional ebb; a love story that is a mere backdrop to the hero's quest; a protagonist with parents forced to develop skills of self-reliance from an early age, male characters who develop a kinship through adversity that places them in a venerated position to the woman.

Music was an integral element not only of the culture described in the films, but its marketing (Simpson was amongst the first to exploit the potential of the then-nascent MTV phenomenon; every time the clip was played on television it was a free advertisement for the film.)

On other projects, Simpson exercised a brilliant perspective. Briefly oversighting screenplays and treatments of The Godfather Part III (Francis Ford Coppola, 1990), which had been in the works for several years already, Simpson insisted that, as The Godfather had been essentially the story of Don Corleone, and The Godfather 2 (sic) had been essentially the story of Don Corleone, Godfather 3 (sic) must be the story of Anthony, Michael's son. He suggested that the child has been estranged from his mother, Kay, and has returned to the family, as a graduating naval cadet, to attend Michael Corleone's funeral.

Simpson wrote that Anthony, wants to realise his father's dream of legitimising the Corleone family enterprise. He's opposed by other dons. Even key members of his family are against him. This modern-day Mafia is a breed apart. The code of Omerta ("Silence or death") no longer seems to exist. The organization is full of independent operators, with no sense of loyalty — squealers, snitches, informants who can be bought by rival dons and law enforcement alike [...] The sons of Corleone are cursed, their lives are an inherited disease, a misma (that) forces them to commit their fathers' crimes [...] Every crime in the house of Corleone is a crime against the filial bond itself.
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I am quite happy to admit to an enormous prejudice on behalf of Charles Chaplin, whom I consider to be the greatest creative motivator after William Shakespeare and before Bob Dylan: his amazing tight-rope dancing and ballet-boxing between comedy and tragedy, sentimentality and romance, idealism and world-awareness soaring high above mono-dimensional genius and achieving total theatre to a much greater degree than Richard Wagner ever did. However theatrical his tragi-comedies may appear alongside movies of a differing, “newer” technique, their efficacy — to a viewer willing to suspend disbelief — never fails: one can literally watch them thousands of times and laugh again and again with the freshness of a well-loved child.

The saddest aspect of today’s movie scene is the extreme naivety of the showing of these masterpieces. This compendium seeks to concentrate on the films themselves rather “than on any sexual or political intrigues” (as the author so sweetly puts it), but also covers exhaustively every player who appears in any film, every abandoned project Chaplin undertook. In fact, everything one could ever wish to know about the subject. His devotion to Chaplin is absolute.

The one flaw, to my eyes, is that, in describing what happens step-by-step and blow-by-blow, one somewhat squashes humour and treads on the delicate balance of comedy and tragedy which is the essence of Chaplin’s exquisite art. But as an "encyclopedia", this is a compelling book and a wonderful reservoir of source material. It squashes many false romours, such as the supposed rivalry, even enmity, between Chaplin and Keaton, and raises the important minor point of whether the artist did or did not cut his own hair.

With recent publicity about George Orwell’s attribution of Communist sympathies to Chaplin — a point which belongs in the most absurd waste-basked of McCarthyist nonsense — it is good to have the often critical as well as laudatory material Mitchell here includes. Highly recommended.

© ADRIAN RAWLINS

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**THE CHAPLIN ENCYCLOPEDIA**

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To make a dollar out of CGI animation, current theory would seem to indicate you need little more than a huff of Octanes and a slew of dedicated software to get your team into action. But t’ain’t necessarily so!

Silicon Graphics will happily sell you the boxes, while the software distributors will delightedly ship you the programmes to put life and motion into the bits and bytes of CGI graphics. And? Operators? The human interface? No problem: tech colleges and art schools across the country are shipping out computer-savvy designers by the box load.

However, an important element is missing in the motion equation: the animation director. And many ambitious groups are attacking this problem in various ways.

But, undisguised in this sector of the motion picture-television-multimedia industry is the sheer enthusiasm and vigour of individuals and teams out there. Cinema Papers spoke to three companies engaged in CGI animation to discern the state of play. With all, the common desire was to create animation sequences for feature film productions.

Rising Sun
Over on the banks of the Torrens, Gail Fuller of Rising Sun Pictures stresses feature film work has “always been our ambition and focus”. There is a staff complement of 11, working with “a couple of Octanes” plus a suite of around 10 machines feed an Origin 200 server, which is, as she says, “the backbone of the whole thing”, and about four SGI O2s.

In software — for animation, SoftImage, Alias/Wavefront and Maya, plus “quite a few miscellaneous bits and pieces that do different things” like Elastic Reality for morphing and Photoshop for painting. For compositing, the group runs the Avid Illusion system. Fuller feels it “basically does everything that Flame does, but runs on Octane”.

Like many in CGI animation it pays to cover a broad canvas. Rising Sun has, in the past, been busy with television commercials for major companies.

Children’s television is another area that has enticed. The company recently completed a series of 13 half-hours called Driven Crazy for Barron Entertainment. A live-action concept, the series still contained many fantasy elements.

A Rising Sun company director is feature-film DOP Tony Clark, who shot four films with Rolf de Heer. Fuller explains that Clark’s presence has always given Rising Sun “a focus on film”. After three years of operation this focus has paid off handsomely: Rising Sun’s first major film project, 30 shots for The Real Macaw landed at the doorstep.

Fuller:
We didn’t go down the Babe (Chris Noonan, 1996) route of animating beak movements, but what we did provide was a stand-in for the real birds that were the stars of the...
show a completely animated stunt double that was used anywhere where there was a danger of the birds flying away or aspects of the performance that were either dangerous or that they just couldn’t get the bird to perform. We then filled in with our completely computer-generated bird. I think it was about the toughest call you can have. But it was a real challenge because, of course, it had to hold up next to the real, living breathing thing. We’ve had a very good response to our work on that.

So, what’s next?

Currently, four features are on the lists: Bill Bennett’s *In a Savage Land*; *Slum Sunset*, John Poilson’s directorial début; and *Sample People*, by first time director Clinton Smith, for which Rising Sun are creating a fantasy sequence. And another: a children’s film *Selfie*, shot in Adelaide, based on a very old myth about the people who turn into seals when they hit the water. For the latter, the company is making a 3D seal, a similar requirement to *The Real Macaw*.

Alistair Murray of Melbourne’s Alistair Murray: "the animators become the performers, driving a mix of SGI Octane and a \*

In terms of the CGI animation industry, Fuller predicts that entry-level costs would fall as “the animators become much more like grips and gaffers, having their own equipment”. In this fashion, she could see it becoming practical to assemble a team for a particular project as a virtual team.

Imagine If

Alistair Murray of Melbourne’s *Imagine If* has the opinion that the current hunger for CGI animation is driven by public taste as audiences embrace this relatively new method of story telling.

His company has a staff of 21 people, driving a mix of SGI Octane and a DEC Alpha 500 MHz plus four workstations. The company “render box” has four CPUs. The software complement follows the route of Softimage as the 3D animation package, Photoshop as the 2D graphics package and Softimage Eddie as the compositing package.

The company also has a deep involvement in children’s animation.

Murray: "We’re involved in a project involving Australian bushland characters aimed at the children’s market. *The Enchanted Billabong* is a story about fairies, with fully “CG” generated backgrounds and characters. The film will be “exported” as an IMAX 3D format. Everything will be in stereo, so double the amount of rendering is required. Asked how long would the production time be, Murray answered “Long!” as he explained the basic processes involved:

The first one is design, preproduction and modelling of the characters. Then, once the characters have been made and the sets completed, the animation for each scene is done. While he admits there is a current fervour about CGI animation, he denies it’s all that new:

About 20-25 years ago television people started using effects. That was a major change in the way that everyone looked at things. He feels you don’t discard techniques but adopt a new vision. The public, in his view, is becoming increasingly aware of the look that they get—whether they know it or not. Because of that, all it needed was a *Jurassic Park* and a *Toy Story* to make people accept it.

Murray: They could have done *Jurassic Park* or *Antz* ten years ago, but it would have taken them about ten years to make. The technology has had a hell of a lot to do with why people would even bother. Acceleration of hardware and software capabilities have now made things conceivable within a time-frame. That is about the only reason that things have changed so dramatically. As they’ve been able to produce stuff faster, they’ve been able to speed up the learning of techniques.

When the time comes to find art talent, Murray says that,

A lot of the people who are working here have a graphics background and have been interested in art from school. A lot of the people, especially young people between 17-22, want to get into it [CGI animation] because it’s the latest thing. There’s always been a hell of a lot of people who are talented, but now they’re getting more access to the gear. He adds,

There are only a limited number of people who have had enough experience ... if you’ve had five years of CG experience you’re actually like an old timer. That’s the type of person who becomes an animation director.

Murray has noticed the software used by most CGI designers is becoming, seriously complicated. In a way it’s like learning a musical instrument. You can play one badly really easily, but to play one well it just takes nothing but time to get better. The people at the top know the 10 percent that nobody else gets to. You can learn 60 percent of it easily, you can learn an extra 30 percent after a couple of years but it’s the final tenth that makes you the expert.
APRA applauds Burkhard Dallwitz, winner of the Golden Globe for best original score for his work on The Truman Show.

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Digital Pictures

GM of Sydney's Digital Pictures, Chris Berry agrees “finding good people is not easy” adding the company has been fortunate in being able to pick up a couple of new people over recent times and part of that has come as a result of the unfortunate demise of Conja. We've ended up with three of their key staff.

A continuing process is the company's internal training scheme for people who show potential and enthusiasm. He agrees there is a lack of experienced animation designers and notes that "some of the more traditional tape-house post facilities have tagged two or three 3D boxes on the end of the rest of their facility," which he feels is, a bit like a dog that hangs off a sheep's bum, with no real thought put into how that resource is integrated into what you offer your client base. They probably have a couple of capable 3D animators, but no design or animation director to be able to pull the components into the overall project to marry it seamlessly. It's like: We better have 3D, otherwise we might miss out on the job.

DP's modus operandi is predominantly in the 3D area with Alias/Wavefront and Maya running on a combination of SGI Octanes, High Impacts and Indigos. Also in use is 3D Studio on an NT system with, from the 2D side, Inferno, Fire, Flint, etc. The company's animation director, Russell Tagg, has, for over 20 years, involved himself in an amazing variety of output: from traditional animation, motion graphics and claymation to special effects CG 3D animation for features and commercials.

His experience includes Universal Pictures in London for a Spielberg film, enabling him to develop an expertise with motion-control systems as well as develop a critical eye for complex 2D layout perspective distortions. In his opinion, things haven't changed over the years, but rather it is the way results are achieved that has changed dramatically. We're still creating images we could have done many years ago, but then there was a definite limit to what something could look like.

Now if you can visualize something you can do it. I hope that we're not going to see a return to the early days of CG when a lot of animation was done by people from computer rather than art backgrounds — when the lack of visualisation skills led to some terribly sterile work. He reminds us to remember that the box is only part of what makes animation special, a good animator knows exactly what something looks like in their head before it happens in reality. To me, that is the skill.

Also new to the Digital Pictures animation team is Chris Norris, who graduated in 1983 from RMIT and went on to work as a model-maker crafting scale models, sets, props and sculpting. He is also experienced in mould making and creature fabrication and design. He served as a 3D Animator on a range of television commercials and films including Babe: Pig in the City (George Miller, 1998), Dark City (Alex Proyas, 1998), Mighty Morphin Power Rangers: The Movie (Bryan Spicer, 1995) and Street Fighter (Steven E. de Souza, 1992).

Another is artist and musician Llaszlo Kiss, one of the most experienced animators in Europe and Asia. With over eleven years experience working with Alias/Wavefront, his commercial clients have included Phillips, Sony and Peugeot.

Berry describes the company's output as "the traditional combination of television commercials and some long form work" flowing along with the desire, to increasing the amount of work we get involved from the feature film side. In the past, our experience with the feature film has been quite exciting, but it's only been in fairly small chunks. I think that only now are we able to take on larger, more fascinating projects. Berry believes that "Projects like these help extend the expertise of our artists."
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Script-processing programmes

By Sean Cousins

Have you asked yourself recently: Do I need a script-processing programme? If you are writing scripts on a computer, then you probably do. These programmes are designed to make writing in correct script format faster and more consistent. Even if you type 150 words per minute and have the skills to create a 'macro' or a keyboard-shortcut on your standard word processor, when it comes to editing, the script-specific programmes really shine. Having the ability to easily move between scenes, create lists of scenes (which can be printed on to index cards) and, best of all, be untroubled with scene renumbering or cutting-and-pasting your page labour of love surely justifies the expense.

The next question is which programme should one choose? If you have done any research on the subject, you will know there are a great many to choose from, each claiming to be the best programme available. In reality, there is very little between most of the programmes in terms of features and price. Two of the leading programmes, both with local distributors, are FINAL DRAFT and SCRIPTWARE.

In the Macintosh environment, perhaps the de facto standard for script processors is FINAL DRAFT, by BC software. It has most of the bells and Whistles of the better word processors. Features such as background pagination, multiple undo/redo, variable text justification, adjustable font size and style (including colour), WYSIWYG pull-down font menu, (limited) find-and-replace, and so on.

Of course, all of these programmes incorporate features specifically to make writing screenplays less labour-intensive. The makers recognize that writing screenplays involves a great deal of formatting and repetitive typing of such things as Character Names, Transitions, as well as the 'More' and 'Continued' page formatting conventions, and Scene Headings (regrettably and immutably called Slug Lines in FINAL DRAFT).

When it comes to editing these script-specific programmes really shine.

The technology that makes repetitive typing and re-formatting obsolete is called Smart Type-E. It is well named, as it seeks to effect 'intuitive' behaviour. One of the ways it does this is by memorizing the names and locations when they are entered, so that the next time you need to type them only the first letter or two need be tapped in (before it offers to type the rest for you). You need only hit the TAB key. But, as they say at Studio Bert, there's more! Smart Type-E attempts to interpret the formatting 'logic' of screenplays. For example, an 'Action' line usually follows a 'Scene Heading', a 'Character Name' is always followed by 'Dialogue'. Knowing this, Smart Type-E automatically changes the formatting to suit. It's as simple as typing the first letter of a character's name, hitting TAB, then RETURN, entering the dialogue, and so on to The End. Soon you'll have reams of dialogue on perfectly formatted pages, so you can spend the time you used to waste changing formatting editing it all out again.

Similarly, once you have created your first Scene Heading, Smart Type-E offers to type the scene location (INT, EXT), the time (DAY, NIGHT etc) and even remembers the locations. After typing BOB'S ROOM once, just typing b+o will be enough for the program to intuit the rest thereafter. Once other locations have been entered, a list of the scene locations pops up. Select one, hit the TAB key and it's done. In this way, a Scene Heading can be entered with as few as four keystrokes!

FINAL DRAFT grew from the Macintosh environment, consequently it has a professional appearance and, for those familiar with the Mac, is logical and intuitive. FINAL DRAFT claims to be 100% cross-platform compatible. This means it should be possible to view your script on a Wintel machine (providing it has FINAL DRAFT software installed) without converting. Very handy if your writing partner or editor has a Wintel PC.

SCRIPTWARE, which shares many of these features, has been a popular product in the Wintel/PC world for a number of years, evidenced by the fact that it is still available in a DOS version. Like its competitor, it is basically a conventional word processor with add-ons. A feature of the programme is a large menu-bar (called a 'Button Bar') that can be customized to match the user's needs. If you are not accustomed to keyboard short cuts, you can easily add Icons (Speed Buttons) to the menu bar for virtually any oft-repeated task. Included are dozens of cute little illustrated 'head shots' designed to match the personalities of your characters, as well as icons for more banal things like moving around the script.

In terms of appearance SCRIPTWARE is not quite 24-bit sophistication, but its Spartan appearance will appeal to some, particularly as there is now a significant price difference.

SCRIPTWARE has at its heart a system called Smarttype-E, which performs the same set of functions as Smart Type-E in FINAL DRAFT. In fact beside their proprietary names, and interfaces, there is little to distinguish the two instruction sets.

One of SCRIPTWARE'S best features is the 'Scene Shuffle' mode. With the click of button a script is reduced to just the scene headers, allowing the writer to rearrange the scenes in any order. The text from these scenes (and the corresponding scene numbers) is moved automatically. There is also an option to show the first two lines of each scene.

Another great feature is the Notes menu. To add reminders, suggestions, questions and ideas to your script, just place the cursor in the text where you want the note, hit the key combination [ctrl-N on a Mac] and type away. These notes can be printed separately, collectively, or within the script. There is also a Bookmarks feature that allows marked-up text to be viewed in a separate window. Click on a bookmark and be transported to that spot in the script—very useful for editing and re-drafting text.

Like its competitor, SCRIPTWARE can also be set up for the stage play format, TV drama and a half-hour sitcom format. FINAL Draft also has a collection of successful US sitcom scripts that can be used as templates, available at additional cost.

Obviously, both SCRIPTWARE and FINAL DRAFT are designed in the USA, consequently they both have features which scriptwriters in other parts of the world will find annoying. Neither programme allows the ruler, and therefore page size, to be calibrated in cms, offering only Inches or Points, nor are there plans to change this in future versions.

SCRIPTWARE does not offer an Australian or British Dictionary/The-saurus presently. FINAL Draft offers a 'British English' Dictionary.

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CINEMA PAPERS • JUNE 1999
55  technicalities: script-processing programmes
and Thesaurus. But unfortunately it is an optional extra, available from the local distributor for $100.

Most frustrating for the Australian scriptwriter, neither programme allows adequate modification of the elements necessary to produce a script conforming to Australian specifications. It may be only a small thing, but it is not possible in either programme to underline a Scene Heading so that it runs the full width of the page under the scene number (in accord with Australian standards).

If you are about to buy a scriptwriting programme, you will want to be confident that it is possible to import your scripts without having to re-format them.

You better be sitting down for this bit. SCRIPTWARE claimed I could import scripts from other word processors (which I could do) without the loss of formatting (which I could not). The only way to import from Microsoft Office '98 (and, I assume, from other earlier Microsoft word processors), without losing most of the formatting, is to use the cumbersome 'cut and paste' method.

The tech support people say that an RTF (Rich Text Format) option (that will do a better job of maintaining formatting) will be available in the next version.

FINAL DRAFT did a better job of importing text on my computer (it is after all a Mac native programme). They claim it is equally effective on a Windows machine.

SCRIPTWARE, to its credit, comes with an excellent manual written with a sense of fun, a minimum of jargon and a layout that quickly enables one to grasp the essential elements of the programme.

Best of all, SCRIPTWARE offers an excellent, extremely prompt, e-mail Tech-support service for those of us outside the US. I sent them a list of questions regarding this programme and received a reply the following day. Regrettably, not all the answers were completely satisfactory.

Neither FINAL DRAFT nor SCRIPTWARE is perfect. Because they are designed for, and by Americans, changing the settings to suit Australian requirements is, in both cases, difficult and ultimately unsatisfactory. None-the-less using a script writing-specific word processor is an incomparable improvement on a conventional word processor.

25 another world
United States. And I'm excited about doing it in a different environment, seeing how their system works, what that's like, and then coming home. It's being developed for Jersey, Danny De Vito's film production company. They're bankrolled by Universal, and my deal with Universal is that I work with Jersey.

They've done Gattaca [Andrew Nicoll, 1997] and Out of Sight [Steven Soderbergh, 1998] and, of course, Pulp Fiction [Quentin Tarantino, 1994].

Danny De Vito really believes in the writer and the director — what they call in America, "the creatives". He's quite supportive and there isn't that sense of fear of the creative process. In a lot of bigger studios it's harder to try and find a place. So I'm quite confident about working with Jersey. I hope we get to make the movie; development is a very unusual position to be in.

31 eyes wide shut
into a nightmarish framework (with one actual nightmare included) around the central situation of a tentative love affair between a young couple. This develops — like the rough time scheme of Traumnovelle — over a mere two days.

It involves much ambiguous toing and froing of feeling, and an occasion apiece for one to abandon the other. What connects them, though, are their different but equally vulnerable physical situations (he’s a boxer, she’s a dancehall girl), and before their love affair is clinched the film has paired them through the punishment they suffer.

Kubrick's films of late have suggested — after his run of exploitable 'big subjects' up to A Clockwork Orange (1971) — something of a falling back on its own resources, even to his beginnings in genre. Under cover of Schnitzler, Freud and the longest recorded shot in movie history, he has now made “Kiss Me, Kill Me” — at last, or again.

19 a savage land
I don't know if it's mainstream [...] it's a thinking person's film. But look at Dr Zhivago [David Lean, 1965] or Lawrence of Arabia [David Lean, 1962], or The Piano [Jane Campion, 1993] — they're all thinking people's films.

Is this his private code for the films that form a rôle model for In a Savage Land? Is it up himself juxtaposition? It is just that they are all highly emotional films: "But that's what I do best [...] I think I work best with emotional colours."

When Rufus Sewell first read the script, his reaction was, Oh my God, a real movie part! I was very excited reading the script. It struck me like it was a rôle a Robert Mitchum or a Humphrey Bogart could play. Then I went and took it in the opposite direction. And I'm surprised to hear it described simply as a romance - it's misleading because it's not about people or events being romanticized. You tend to think of something not gritty and realistic.

It's telling that an actor of Sewell's experience found the rôle enormously challenging: "My first thought was, can I do it [...] or would I fuck it up, I thought probably I'd fuck it up. So I thought I should be brave."

Sewell's evident enthusiasm for the film is shared by all the team, from lead actors to crew, and watching them work dispels any suspicion that it's something put on for the visiting journos. Chris Webb, for example, one of the industry's most sought after and proficient 'Firsts' (The First Assistant Director — like a Sergeant Major in the army, is indispensable to even the best directors), is a good gauge for how a shoot is going — if you can read him, that is. When he calls out, "Lock it down", it's the tone of his voice that gives away the level of angst. His dry humour and quiet efficiency give him an iron grip on the production process itself.

Martin Donovan — the American actor best known for his work with Hal Hartley (but not limited to that) — is overwhelmed by the experience.

I'm really glad I did this — I've had an incredible experience. The ingredients have all come together in the film: the location, the people, and a culture we've never seen before. It's a traditional epic kind of story and style of shooting, almost cinéma vérité, a very effortless look, which has a magical effect. It's very cohesive.

This, despite the fact that Donovan found playing his character involved a good deal of pain. It was painful — personally confronting in some aspects of Phillip's crisis of faith and how he thinks he was, versus how the world perceives him. It rips him apart, and I had to deal with that pain — how his relationship fell apart. Donovan's refuge was Bennett's directing approach.

With each new director you go through a dance, trying to develop some trust — both ways. I think I can make myself terribly insecure about the process and need to know they can protect me. But while I did less improve on a script than usual, Bill listened, and we had a very healthy relationship. It's also probably the first film I've been on when we had not a single day of tension, or pressured people lashing out.

The newcomer on the set is the much anticipated Maya Stange, an Australian actress in her third movie — but her first lead rôle. She says, I knew this would be confronting and testing, I expected I would lose the plot at some point and I was a bit disappointed when I didn't. I worried that maybe I wasn't doing it properly. But Bill Bennett and I did lots of preparation — four months researching and training physically — which was the best thing. Swimming, gym, yoga and running [...] It's like a marathon, making a film like this.

The rôle itself put a strain on Stange: Playing a rôle that is emotionally demanding can put you into an irrational head space in yourself, making it difficult to operate with the technical demands of filmmaking while keeping emotionally on track — no tantrums or anything — but it's an amazing skill to live on two planes.

But Stange seems to manage it; in her early twenties, she seems to have a pool of wisdom at her disposal: As an actress, you live a thousand lives and you learn to experience things you wouldn't otherwise. It's always a life-changing experience — and this is an extreme case. What this [filmmaking experience] has left me with as an actor and as a human being, is a sense of being relaxed about who I am.

That's what you get when you work with good artists and filmmakers.
prior to the shower scene), again it would appear someone missed this nuance.

Tony Perkins told me it was implicit in the original that Norman masturbates while watching Marion undress. I was not aware of this and doubt many others got it. However, in the new version it’s blatant, damaging the ironic (as it was bold) effect of making Norman the dillen- boy cleaning up after his hamshee mother into an audience identification figure.

Most surprising, however, is that while being slavish to a scene like that at the Sheriff’s house (which Hitchcock characterized as a “B scene” and threw away, in order to spend 10 of his 30-day schedule in the shower), the new version varies the shower murder – to my mind considerably. Two cutaways of a stormy sky have been inserted as well as (if I am not mistaken – it happens pretty fast) an additional shot of an eyebrow. I do not take issue with the single helicopter move into the bedroom which opens the film (Hitchcock would have done it in one if technology and budget had permitted).

But I am mystified at the additional rotation, then truncation of the dolly pull-back from the eye and corpse, which is also quite poorly executed (as are many of the camera moves). And to my utter astonishment, they miss the major conceit in the entire scene.

Look again at the shot of Janet Leigh’s hand (almost certainly that of Marli Ren- fro, her nude double) trailing for the shower curtain. It had always bothered me how poorly framed it is, until I realized it is not primarily of the hand, but a full-frame shot (admittedly out of focus) of female breasts. Hitchcock told the Hayes office (then run by a man named Breen) that he had used a boy in the shower and that therefore there was no possibility breasts were seen. He had in fact used a stripper when Janet Leigh insisted on the obligatory breast cups that were used at the time. It would appear the creatives (and I’m deliber- ately not singling out the director) believed Hitchcock’s “legend” rather than their own eyes. And they appear also to miss the penetration shot of the knife (just below the navel – done with a rubber torso) for the same reason.

Enough nit-picking!

One pleasant surprise for me was that (as with a new theatre production) hearing familiar dialogue afresh can sometimes give it new life. Here the intellectual-themed content has risen to the sur- face, as the plot machinations become less important. Dialogue which was terribly familiar – “Mother is not quite herself today”, “You eat like a

bird” (Miss Crane from Phoenix), “...put her someplace” – seemed fresh and intelligent. And a sad commentary on contemporary screenwriting. Especially when one considers Joseph Stefano was a minor playwright (hardly an Arthur Miller) writing his first screenplay, of which they filmed the first draft. And, above all, the misremembered fact that Hitchcock was slumping and was pilloried at the time for descending to the “trashy” B-pictures of, say, William Castle (whose The Tingler the year before is the picture many people misremember as the film in which the blood was red in an otherwise black-and-white film).

I confess I did not sit through the whole film, which I would consider an indictment of a reviewer, but, as stated, this is not a review. But I will venture to suggest the reason Psycho the re- make may not have been the success that was hoped for (theas rolled at Universal).

From Marion’s death, Psycho is essentially a mystery with a twist – something Hitchcock saw as antithetical to “suspense” – the sort of fare associated with the Alfred Hitchcock Presents show, then at its peak. Psycho was shot by Hitchcock’s television unit and at one point he got cold feet and considered re-cutting it as a special 90-minute episode. But the terrible mystery (the Ed Gein case can still strike terror) is no longer a mystery, and the surprise ending no longer surprising. Norman has been out of the closet (or should I say armoire) thirty-nine years. And while the original still holds, for me the fruitless pursuit of Marion and unmask- ing of poor Norman started to wear thin – especially as a “copy” (except that, is as a curiosity and contemplation of post-modernity).

It has been argued that the 1960s began with Psycho and it is easy now to forget that Hitch- cock’s main censorship problem vis-à-vis the shower murder was not violence but nudity. The combination of the two (not to mention the cinematic challenge of dealing with “mother”) would have suggested Robert Bloch’s novel was com- pletely inappropriate for cinematic treatment, but Hitchcock was up to the challenge.

As a 12-year-old, I saw Psycho five or six times at the Savoy Theatre in Russell Street. It scared the bejesus out of me. More so than anything ever since – the only thing that came close (especially with the fol de rol surrounding it) was The Exorcist (William Friedkin, 1973).

The early scenes were literally dreadful (as in full of dread). A woman in a bra on a bed with a man in the mid-afternoon just had to be heading for something terrible. And once she took off the bra (even for the purposes of showering), you knew she was gone.

I am certain Hitchcock would have chosen to have Marion naked in the opening scene if it had been done even a decade later (cf, Frenzy, 1972). The re-make retains the bra, but adds some tawdry wallpaper and the sound of off-screen fucking. But even if the illicit couple had been using gynae- cological instruments, the terrible seediness of it all is inevitably, almost entirely, gone. And with it the sense of a woman rushing headlong not towards “a private island”, but perdition. This was really a new, since the 1960s ended the morality which Hitchcock was both repressed and fasci- nated by.

I was much criticized in Psycho II for changing the ground-rules at the end of the second act by stabbing Vera Miles through the mouth. I did this for one reason. Hitchcock had changed the ground-rules, completely pulled the rug from under the audience by killing his leading lady at the end of the first act. Had I been asked to re- make the original, regardless of whether I took the copy-book approach (and we used Richard Anobile’s photo book of Psycho when we were storyboarding), I would have taken my mandate to be that of adjusting particularly the opening to the modern (or rather post-modern) moral sensibility. It was after all Hitchcock’s, not author Robert Bloch’s, prelude to the murder, and the date of the new picture is titled as 1998. This may not have been possible, but here is another instance of the copy-book approach not serving the material thirty-nine years later.

Which brings me to the bigger and vexed ques- tion of copying. Apparently there are at least a half-dozen genuine “Mona Lisa”s in the world. Art experts agree they are genuine, yet it is known Leonardo did not paint them all. It is known he painted more than one, so the copies, the “fakes”, all pass for genuine “masterpieces”. (For more similarly astonishing art trivia, I recommend Orson Welles’ F For Fake (1975).

Psycho is not Hitchcock’s masterpiece (that hon- our is claimed, at least on the Saul Bass poster, by Vertigo two years earlier). It is, however, one of the great works of cinema and arguably the twentieth century’s Oedipus Rex. It is common for art stu- dents to copy the great masters – and the above example apparently art forgers are capable of fooling not only the experts – but the likes of Elnyr De Hory has actually expanded the oeuvre of Modigliani and others (not imitating existing works, but painting ‘genuine’ works in the style of).

Psycho is neither a work of study (except perhaps for its director), nor a forgery. It is a money-making venture, likened by its makers to a Broadway revival. However, it is generally incumb- ent on a new production of anything from Shakespeare to Showboat to put some sort of new spin on the material (not always for the best). Broadway’s demigod (and Tony Perkins’ close per- sonal friend) Stephen Sondheim has said that the great thing about cinema (as opposed to theatre) is its “permanence”. Which, he points out, is also its failing (in that it can never be improved).

So we now have two Psychos and several sequels. I doubt scholars of future millennia will be terribly confused, but Gus Van Sant has done something that’s not been done before, taking post-modern pastiche to new heights (or depths depending on your perspective). For my part, let’s hope this will not be the trendsetter its fore- bear has become.
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FFC Funding Decisions

Following a Board meeting held in October 1998, the FFC has entered into contract negotiations with the producers of the following projects:

Feature Films

MY MOTHER FRANK (95 MINUTES)
INTREPID FILMS LTD
W/D: MARK LAMPRELL
P: PHILIP YASS, SUSAN YASS
D: BEYOND FLAME, DISTRIBUTION, PMP, CHANNEL 4

Frank, 51 year-old Frances Regina Allen Nana Kennedy, has created a safe, secure, if somewhat bizarre world for herself, and it's boring her to death. Everyone thinks Frank should get a life and, after initial resistance, she enrolls at the same university as her son David. Frank soon becomes Frank-the-warden until the next thing they know she is expelled for cheating. It seems things can't get any worse, but then they do - she discovers she has Alzheimer's disease. My Mother Frank is a film about how life offers you two basic options: change or die.

DOGWATCH (90 MINUTES)
BLACK RAY FILMS LTD
W/D: LAURA MCINNES
P: RICHARD BOWDEN
D: THE GLOBE FILM CO, INTRA FILMS

William is a ship's captain, somewhere in South East Asia in the 1960's. His last ship went down with his entire crew and since then he has been unemployed and alcoholic. Now he has a job, but not an enviable one. The owner of the ship wants it sunk for insurance. A crew has been found and all is set for the deep sea adventure.

Children's Television Drama

THUNDERSTONE 2
JONATHAN M. SHIFF PRODUCTIONS LTD
W/D: MARK DEPIERFELT, JULIET McWHENY
P: JONATHAN M. SHIFF
P: PETER KINSELLA, BANANA BISHOP, DAVID PHILLIPS, MARIEKE HARDY, RICHARD MCWHENY, RICHARD DUNN, LOIS BOUTON
D: PETER TOLSTOY, JOHN TEN, THE DISNEY CHANNEL
D: BEYOND DISTRIBUTION, TELEMAIRES

Thunderstone 2 tells the story of Noah and his friends from the future, the Nomads. Together they combine forces, not only to rescue the population of animals in Haven from drought, but also to fight mysterious Family, whose motives for time travel aren't all they seem to be. Eventually Noah and his friends are met with the toughest task of all - to change history.

Documentaries

PIG TUSKS & PAPER MONEY (55 MINUTE ACCORD)
LILLIANA GIBBS PRODUCTIONS LTD
D: TRACEY HOLLOWAY
P: LILLIANA GIBBS
PUBLIC: ABC TV

For most of us money is a fact of life. Without it, our most basic needs would go unmet. In Melanesia most people still grow their own food and build their own homes. Money and possessions are gauges of success, our common measure of wealth based on acquisition. Throughout the Pacific, traditional wealth and status is measured by the distribution of food and valuables. In Melanesia, these paradigms now operate simultaneously. The film will explore the meaning of money for people who have only recently begun to use it. Shot in Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, it will challenge some of our long-held beliefs about the quality of life, power and wealth and how money works.

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Short Films

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Opening Day 78
Snowdroppers 78

Since opening in 1938, the Lort Smith Animal Hospital has pursued the unique policy that all animals should receive treatment regardless of the owner's ability to pay. Today the hospital has reached a crisis point. The hospital is currently operating at a loss of a million dollars a year. To help raise money and bring Lort Smith into the new Millennium, ammunition dealers have employed a dynamic young fundraising film. The Lort Smith shows will weave together intimate stories from contrasting worlds as staff, clients and management struggle to realise their dream of the "Animal Hospital of the Future".

FCC Features in Pre-Production

The question is who is the killer?

that this is the real reason for the 1960s. His last ship went down with

Aileen Nano Kennedy, has created a

Aileen Nano Kennedy, has created a

the 1960s. His last ship went down with

the 1960s. His last ship went down with
year-old son, Ricky Tompberry, risks all for a World Super-Middleweight championship. Ricky has a baby son the same age he was when one punch threw his dad into another world in one of the worst cases of brain damage the sport has seen. Ice and Ice tells the story of the good-looking, articulate, intelligent young man and his date with destiny, and asks — does history repeat itself?

The Raymonds children are seeking to escape from Treasure Island in the old submarine. With their parents once more in the hands of their enemies, the children flees to the unknown Western side of the island. They are joined by their friends, plus a more sinister companions. The children realize that this quest may also lead to ancient pirate treasure.

The Business travels with seven people as they follow their dreams of wealth and freedom through the seductive world of Network marketing. It is big business, ruled by companies like Amway, J referral, Neawns and Manna. It is a time­way, army of representatives who do the business at nights and on weekends, while their wives go to rubber regular jobs. The majority of people who do well at Network Marketing in Australia are Lebanese, Greek, Indian or Tunisian.

The Battleships (4 X 1 HOUR NON­ACCORD)

The Business travels with seven people as they follow their dreams of wealth and freedom through the seductive world of Network Marketing. It is big business, ruled by companies like Amway, J referral, Neawns and Manna. It is a time­way, army of representatives who do the business at nights and on weekends, while their wives go to rubber regular jobs. The majority of people who do well at Network Marketing in Australia are Lebanese, Greek, Indian or Tunisian.

The Fortune Teller. He can predict the future. His image is richer and richer because he knows all about what’s “going up” and what’s “going down”. He knows about shares. He can predict the future. His image is also a commodity he sells to punters who share his aspirations, who, like him, want to be at the top end of town.

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**The Adventures of Chuck Finn**

(13 X 24 MINUTE EPISODES)

**Production company:** BUNNIN ENTERTAINMENT LIMITED

**Location:** MURRAY RIVER, SOUTH AUSTRALIA

**Production:** EARLY MAY – JUNE 1999

**Directors:** MARCO ANDREACCHIO

**Producers:** BABBL TAYLOR FUNDING:

**Funding:** SAFCA

Other Funding:

**Private Investment:**

**Marketing:**

International Sales Agents: CASCADE (SCOTTISH TELEVISION INTERNATIONAL, BARRON ENTERTAINMENT LIMITED)

**DISTRIBUTION:**

**Sydney:**

**Distribution:**

**Synopsis:**

Henry Jekyll, a young cocky doctor, has just ended his tenure at a country hospital doctor. Anticipating a wealthy, happy future with his address to the Jekyll goes to Hong Kong for their honeymoon, where their blissful one-day marriage ends in tragedy.

**Farscape**

**Production company:** Nine Films and TeleVision Pty Ltd

**Production office:** Sydney

**Location:** FOX STUDIOS, Sydney

**Production:** 28th – March 1999

**Principal Credits:**

**Directors:** BRIAN HENDON, ANDREW PROSSER, PETER HEGEDUS

**Producers:** PETER TAYLOR, ROWAN WOODS, TONY BARTON, JOHN WATSON, PETER ANDRIKOS

**Executive Producer:** MARK CAROLL

**Production:**

**Synopsis:**

Three Australian men search for a mate. Their quest is almost like a contemporary fairyland with the prince and the princesses. Their search crosses national borders through the internet, newspapers and travel with each of the friends from different cultural backgrounds. Lust, compatibility, love, dictatorship by society, and a desire to belong are intrinsic to each of the characters’ search.

**Grandfather & Revolution**

**Directors:** PETER HEGEDUS

**Producers:** PETER HEGEDUS, MARK RAND, DEAN MARSHALL

**Synopsis:**

Pete Hagedus confronts his grandfather, the leader of the Communist Party during the Russian invasion of Hungary. What he finds is a man of contradictions.

**EPI**

**Directors:** RANDALL WOOD

**Producers:** RANDALL WOOD, GABRIELLE JONES

**Synopsis:**

Farscape tells the story of astronaut John Drichton, a man from another world, during an experimental space flight.
mission, is hurled across a thousand galaxies to a completely alien world. He finds himself aboard a starship populated by escaping political prisoners from myriad alien cultures. Crichton must survive in a world he barely understands, keeping one step ahead of the pursuing Peacekeepers who will stop at nothing to capture him.

**SURVIVOR SERIES**

(2 EPISODES OF A DOCU-DRAAMA SERIES)

Production company: UNITED PRODUCTIONS, UK Location: Fiji; New Zealand; Queensland

**PRINCIPAL CREDITS**

Director: Simon Kerrfoot
Producer: Hammy Yates (FLD)
1st assistant director: Jane Hamblin

**SYNOPSIS**

Two episodes of this series are filmed in Queensland. The first is a recreation of the Newcastle earthquake; the second is the episode of the Ash Wednesday fires in Victoria.

**TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT**

(DOCU-DRAAMA SERIES)

Production company: BBC TV (UK) Location: Fiji; New Zealand; Queensland

**PRINCIPAL CREDITS**

Producers: Wendy Darke, Caroline Hannick

**SYNOPSIS**

1999 long natural history series for BBC TV. Docu-dramas of dangerous/scary situations, such as being bitten by a snake whilst mountain climbing or walking, and a crocodile escaping from its crate whilst being air freighted in a small plane.

**TRIBE**

(4 HOUR MINI SERIES)

Production company: CANAL+ Australia
Location: Mission Beach, Queensland

**PRINCIPAL CREDITS**

Producer: Jock Blair
Writer: Jock Blair
Government Agencies Investment: Production PTC, FFC

**SYNOPSIS**

A small group of tourists board an old sailing boat, the Sea Treno, for a two-week sailing cruise through a largely overlooked corner of Micronesia. It should have been the holiday of a lifetime, but five days out from port they rescue Minh-Tam, a young Vietnamese woman, from her sinking fish trawler. As they attempt to outrun Minh-Tam’s attackers, who have reappeared at the prospect of fresh fish, a fire breaks out below deck of the Sea Treno, and the ship burns to the waterline and sinks. Only a handful of the crew and passengers survive the twin perils of pirates and fire to reach an uninhabited island that is too dangerous to live on, and too dangerous to leave.

**Short Films**

**ABOVE THE DUST LEVEL**

Production company: SCARECROW PICTURES Pty Ltd
Output: $50,000
Pre-production: November 17 – 27, 1998
Production: November 30 – December 1, 1998

**PRINCIPAL CREDITS**

Director: Andrew Slattery
Screenplay: Andrew Slattery
Director of photography: Tammi Meem

**SYNOPSIS**

He finds himself aboard a starship fire to reach an uninhabited island that is populated by escaped political prisoners from myriad alien cultures. Crichton must survive in a world he barely understands, keeping one step ahead of the pursuing Peacekeepers who will stop at nothing to capture him.

**ONAN’S REVENGE**

Production company: RED MOVIES Pty Ltd
Pre-production: December 1998

**PRINCIPAL CREDITS**

Director: Bruce Redman
Producer: Bruce Redman, Dan Rogers
Co-producer: Nathan Mayfield
Screenplay: Bruce Redman
Director of photography: Jo Eiriksen
Production designer: Matthew Crocker
Editor: Jolene Chandler
Costume designer: Barbara Scott
Sound designer: Liam Price

**SYNOPSIS**

A short film about love found and lost in a laundromat.

**Production Survey continued**
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**Pig's Breakfast**
(currently casting)
Channel Nine & Southern Star
Children's TV Series

**King of the Mountain**
(currently casting)
Feature Film

**Land of the Long White Sheila**
(In development)
Feature Film

**Simply the Best**
(In development)
Feature Film

For truly personal and inspired casting
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).

### The Dirty Dozen

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<tr>
<td>CUBE: Vincento Natali</td>
<td>Bill Collins</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEAR CLAUDIA: Chris Cudlipp</td>
<td>Sandra Hall</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIRLS NIGHT: Nick Hurran</td>
<td>Peter Castaldi</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIGH ART: Lisa Cholodenko</td>
<td>Paul Harris</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HURLY BURLY: Anthony Dragan</td>
<td>Tim Hunter</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEET JOE BLACK: Martin Brent</td>
<td>Stan James</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLEASANTVILLE: Gary Ross</td>
<td>Peter Castaldi</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RUSHMORE: Wes Anderson</td>
<td>Peter Castaldi</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE: John Madden</td>
<td>Tim Hunter</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A SIMPLE PLAN: Sam Raimi</td>
<td>Peter Castaldi</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE THIN RED LINE: Terrence Malick</td>
<td>Evan Williams</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Average Ratings

- **BULWORTH**: 10
- **CUBE**: 7
- **DEAR CLAUDIA**: 2
- **GIRLS NIGHT**: 7
- **HIGH ART**: 8
- **HURLY BURLY**: 8
- **MEET JOE BLACK**: 5
- **PLEASANTVILLE**: 9
- **RUSHMORE**: 8
- **SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE**: 8
- **A SIMPLE PLAN**: 8
- **THE THIN RED LINE**: 10

**Average Rating**: 6.4

### Spotlight: Australia and the Romantic Comedy

The Australian film industry has had a bad run with that popular, but American genre, the romantic comedy. While we tend to do dark comedy – i.e., Strictly Ballroom (Baz Luhrmann, 1992), Muriel's Wedding (P. Hogan, 1994), The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert (Stephan Elliott, 1994) – or in more recent times, even darkly dark – i.e., Kiss or Kill (Bill Bennett, 1997), Head On (Ana Kokkinos, 1998), The Boys (Rowan Woods, 1998). We don't have a handle on that most formulaic of film-types. Past misfires include Hotel de Love (Craig Rosenberg, 1996), All Men Are Liars (Gerard Lee, 1995), and to a lesser degree, Dating the Enemy (Megan Simpson Huberman, 1996). Already this year, we've had two attempts, Dear Claudia (Chris Cudlipp, 1999) and Paperback Hero (Antony J. Bowman, 1999), but they're being crucified by critics.

This is understandable with Dear Claudia (see above) which is, for all intents and purposes, a lame and unfunny film with no romantic spark at all. The music is overdone, the script laboured, the acting and the jokes forced.

And while Paperback Hero is getting just as harsh a serve, it's not as deserving. At least Jackman and Karvan actually spark romantically and this makes up for some broad caricatures and some very awkward establishing scenes.

Maybe we should just learn our lesson, and leave the dreamweaving to those who do it best, while we stick to what we do best.
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