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Soft Cell. Chopper’s UK parole.

You lookin’ at me?
2001: Guy’s moment.
Client: Rentlo  Title: Largescreen
Agency: M&C Saatchi
Director: Dogboy
Producer: Fiona McGregor
Writer & Art Director: Oliver Devaris
Agency Producer: Rod James
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- Fight Club
- Goldfinger
- The Patriot

### The Director's Cut
Richard Lowenstein on the swings and roundabouts on the path to directing a film.

### Hit the Road
Adrian Martin uncovers a vast history of road movies driving *The Goddess of 1967* through the Australian outback.

### Profiling Proyas
Murder, madness, and evil. According to Angus Fontaine that's just the beginning for Alex Proyas.

### Hide and Seek
Michaela Boland takes a peek into the Cubbyhouse and unravels the many departments involved in making horror.

### Some Kinda Guy
His rise to fame after *LA Confidential* has been a little slower than Russell Crowe’s but John K. Davies senses Guy Pearce is on the verge of making a mighty impact.

### Soft Cell
Chopper’s UK release gave Evan Maloney reason to explore the history of Oz bows in Blighty.

## Regulars

- **05. Welcome to Woop Woop.**
- **06. Newsfront.** Industry news.
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- **25. To Market, To Market.** John Fleming on the marketing importance of DVDs.
- **32. Snapshot.** Marieke Hardy on *Position Vacant*.
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- **46. Production Report.**
- **50. The Sum of Us and Darby**
Australia’s Centenary of Federation will be commemorated in Victoria with a series of celebrations including the Federation Festival from 9 to 27 May 2001. A short film competition and showcase will be held as part of the Festival and entries are now invited from interested persons or teams.

Submitted films must in some respect deal with indigenous-white relations in Australia. Entries should be submitted on PAL VHS and have a duration of ten minutes or less (except in unusual circumstances).

Approximately ten films will be selected by an industry panel for a public screening in Melbourne during the Federation Festival. The winning person or team, to be announced following the screening, will receive professional development opportunities in the area of filmmaking or associated fields.

Entries should be submitted by 31 March 2001. For further information and application forms, contact Vallejo Gantner at the Melbourne Festival:

Telephone (03) 9662 4242  Facsimile (03) 9663 4141
Email v.gantner@melbournefestival.com.au
or visit our website at www.melbournefestival.com.au
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Contributing Writers

Michael Body was born in Geelong, Barraeke for the Cats and is the daily telegraph's showbiz and arts editor.

Rochelle Siemenozicz is the Melbourne-based film reviewer for the big issue magazine.

Dino Scatena is the daily telegraph's music editor.

Angus Fontaine works as a mercenary for various tabloids and periodicals.

Rachel Newman is a pop culture journalist, published in rolling stone and the herald sun.

Margaret Smith is a Sydney reviewer.

Jason Harty is a former deputy editor for incore now a student of film producing after.

Alister Shew funds his burgeoning cultural consumption habit with a day job as an office administrator.

Richard Lowenstein directed doqs in space and the upcoming he died with a pafael in his hand.

Adrian Martin is a film critic for the age, and author.

Megan Sloley is film correspondent for impress.

Darby Hudson cartoons for monash uni's compass and Melbourne uni's Farrago.

Welcome to Woori Woori

→ Congratulations on winning Oscars Geoffrey Rush and Toni Collette. And Go Russ Go, you deserved one for The Insider in 2000, so you were a double cert this time round. Perfect Storm songs for John Seale and Richard Francis Bruce, ah, they were written in the clouds.

Hands together for Gladiator composer Lisa Gerrard's gong - off the back of a Golden Globe too. Meet the Parents, cinematographer Peter James, you came outta nowhere! Congratulations.

And Mel, Frances O'Connor, Cate, Heath, Adam Garcia, Rach, Sarah and Nicole your nominations were all deserved. And Wolverine. Finger nails crossed for X-Men parts 3, 4 and 5! On and on she raves, what's the point? Well, even Hugo Weaving, who never chased a Hollywood career, finds himself working in LA owing to the Wachowski's need to slap together a few pre-strike Matrix scenes.

Australian actors are working throughout Hollywood, filling the grand talent void. And treading the boards in New York and London too. Not to mention Portia and her pals on the pely.

Mel was possibly the richest B.O. earner, in the world, during 2000. What Women Want, Chicken Run and The Patriot - a stats fan kindly pointed out - each earned over US$100 million in the US. He also starred in Wim's Million Dollar Hotel farso but he disses it before it released. Thus crucifying any chance it might have had anyway and showing he was in on that joke before the rest of us.

The point is, Mel's and he's, he's not coming home to work any time soon.

Ditto Blanchett, O'Connor, Kidman and Crowe. There now a stratosphere beyond the reach of local producers. Especially with the soft dollar, Australian films can't afford them (don't attempt to call Moulin Rouge an Oz film, it's a Fox studio pic).

So how are local directors faring if they're trying to cast, say, an ensemble of strong thirty-something actors in your average budget feature? Maybe they should call LA's William Morris Agency direct and ask them to cut a deal? Maybe not.

That's why Guy Pearce graces the cover of Cinema Papers 137. He's hitting his strides in the US with Memento and planning to lead Blood and Guts for producer Al Clark in Oz mid year. Strike pending.

The actor's union, the MEAA, apparently can't make up its mind if local actors will or will not be asked to support the US actor's guild strike. Instead the union is burying its head in the sand and hoping the strike won't happen.

2001 is already proving a huge watershed for the local film industry as it benefits from the strike threat. The next step is for some of the Aussie headlines to consider the warm welcome they'll receive if they head home to Woori Woori.

Oh, and adios.

Michaela Boland
Editor
Sizzling Shorts

Hot Queensland summers are the common thread for three shorts produced and packaged as a 27-minute television half-hour called Extreme Heat by producer Mark Chapman. The three films are from Queensland writer/directors: Evan Clarry (AFI Winner for the short film script Mates), Anthony Mullins director of Stop (selected for competition at Cannes 2000) and Sandra Graham, writer/director of Christmas Tree (selected for Cannes 2000 Women in Cinema). Sue Ward reports, though it’s early days still, Chapman is quietly confident either the ABC or SBS will pick up the package.

Shot back-to-back over five weeks, Chapman said there were a number of benefits to keeping the projects together under one umbrella. “It means we had a big enough budget to pay professional crews and more production dollars on the screen. Keeping within the tight 27-minute time frame also meant the filmmakers had to be disciplined in determining what remained on the screen and what was left on the floor.”

The three films, shot on super 16 but finished on 35mm, means the filmmakers also have the added exposure of the international festival circuit. Sandra Graham’s Mohammed’s Passion evokes the heat of erotic desire and un consummated love between a middle-aged Muslim restaurateur, Mohammed and Maria, the widowed Greek owner of the deli across the street. Anthony Mullins’ Rubber Gloves focuses on a busy suburban housewife who earns a little on the side by providing a “personal service” to corporate executives with masochistic urges. An unexpected client achieves unexpected highs in erotic arousal when serviced by Mistress Roxanne, otherwise frantically pre-occupied with preparations for a family dinner. The last of the trilogy, Crack, directed by Evan Clarry, written by Annie Morris, centres on a very pregnant woman’s experience of heat, and discomfort while isolated in a shack somewhere in the tropics. As the temperature rises, her delirium reaches a climax — fortunately with happy consequences.

Billy in Bermagui

The relentless and wildly inaccurate stories of Nicole Kidman and husband Tom Cruise snapping up a house in Frankston ‘did our heads in’. But in Bermagui — on the NSW Sapphire Coast — locals had reason for excitement when Scottish comedian Billy Conolly actually spent part of February in the fishing town. Connelly teamed with Judy Davis on The Man Who Sued God for director Mark Joffe and producer Ben The Boy From Oz Gannon who was returning to making movies after an eight year absence. The Man Who Sued God, about an ex-lawyer now fisherman whose live-in fishing boat overturns after being struck by lightning, is based on an original idea by Patrick McCarville. Script has been 10 years in development with helmer Mark Joffe (The Matchmaker) and scribe Don Watson Passion. Other cast include Wendy Hughes, Billie Brown, John Howard and Colin Friels.

Production Overdrive

The threat of strikes in Hollywood has lead to a production rush in Oz and a 100 percent increase in enquiries from offshore productions. In Sydney, three major features are in pre-production and the Film and Television Office’s Kingston Anderson expects the industry will hit its stride late February. Fears of crew shortages touted late 2000 appear unwarranted except for reported ‘poaching’ by Queensland productions. Castle Rock and Jerry Bruckheimer’s Down and Under is scheduled to shoot from March in Sydney, South Australia and Ayer’s Rock. Fox Icon Jet Li movie of the week The Invincibles is scheduled to shoot in Sydney in coming months, Disappearance is shooting in Adelaide and Warner Roadshow’s Queen of the Damned recently wrapped in Melbourne.

Bana Hawk Rising

Eric Bana has been cast in Ridley Scott’s war drama Black Hawk Down. The former TV comedian signed with LA’s William Morris Agency in September and is taking on the role of a soldier called Mace alongside Josh Hartnett and Tom Sizemore.

Due on set in Morocco early February Bana had to pull out of commitments with ABC TV’s Something in the Air, his agent Lauren Bergman confirms he, “had to start a little bit earlier on the movie”.

Congratulations

To the winner of the $40,000 Apple Studio competition Queensland’s Colin Trehewey.
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Enquiries 1300 139 795
New Life for Classics

Screensound has produced a dozen new prints of classic Australian movies. Bruce Beresford's Breaker Morant and Don's Party, Henri Safran's Storm Boy, Tim Burstall's Alvin Purple, Phil Noyce's Newfront and Backroads, Fred Schepisi's The Devil's Playground, Paul Cox's Lonely Hearts, Albie Thoms' Palm Beach, Gillian Armstrong's The Singer and the Dancer, Ned Landers' Wrong Side of the Road and Tom Jeffrey's The Odd Angry Shot are screening at the Astor Theatre, Melbourne on Mondays throughout March and April. Selected titles will also be shown at the Byron Bay All Screen Celebration, 15-24 February. Fifty new cinema prints will be released over the next five years in an initiative announced last year. Others due for release later in 2001 include Brian Trenchard-Smith's The Man from Hong Kong, Mary Callaghan's Greetings from Wollongong and Michael Powell's They're a Weird Mob. Enquiries: 02 9380 1200 or sydney@screensound.gov.au

Ich Bin Ein Aussie

The Australian and German governments have signed a treaty designed to increase film and TV co-productions. Product made under the agreement will be considered 'national' by both governments, satisfy the content requirements of commercial TV webs and be eligible for government funding in each country. Australia has similar deals with the UK, France, Italy, Canada and Israel. President of the Screen Producer's Association, Nick Murray, says the treaty simply formalises previous ad-hoc arrangements and makes Oz a more attractive partner for German producers during a period of shrinking European expenditure.

Two Sides to Every Story

Alan Duff's piece 'L.A. Down Under' (CP 136) demands a response. To begin with, the name of the home country which he has 'temporarily forgotten', is New Zealand. Alan seems to have become increasingly forgetful. This is the same person who, on the eve of the 1999 General Election, declared he would emigrate to Australia if the Labor and/or Alliance parties came to power. This happened but Alan is still with us, hammering and badgering us with his weekly newspaper column, filled with contempt for those who don't agree with his version of the world, mixed with extended self-congratulations. Alan Jones might be a useful analogy for Australian readers. You get a sense of the latter trait in his Cinema Papers contribution but it also does not tell the full story. He did not write the screenplay for Once Were Warriors (the most successful of the two films based on his novels); his screenplay was passed over in favour of a script by Riwia Brown. He also over-simplifies the role and purpose of overseas productions filming in New Zealand. Like Australia, providing New Zealand locations and technical expertise for American filmmakers is an accommodation and a compromise; we provide the mountains and lighting crews (most recently for Vertical Limit), and they provide the local cash flows and opportunities for employment and training. This year (2000), for example, foreign exchange of $NZ455 million was generated by the New Zealand screen industry, and more than 14,000 jobs were undertaken (compared with 7730 in 1999). Even though a good slice of this foreign exchange came from biggie productions like Lord of the Rings, there was also a flow-on effect for local production, creating a buoyant local screen industry.

It is good you are providing coverage of New Zealand in your excellent journal but I would hate to think that your readers might go away with a sense that Alan Duff represents what Kiwis think and say.

Further to "L.A. Down Under" article in CP 136

Subsequent to the piece I wrote I'm feeling rather stupid about it. This is a form of apology to the film industry in general:

The trouble with being a frustrated writer (in films) is often your mouth engages before your head, especially when you're trying the big bust-in on the film world. I wrote my silly piece after three years of frustration at being unable to raise finance for film scripts I'd written. After a failed attempt at raising money through a public capital raising. And immediately after reading Alan Goldman took a few shots at the industry, I mindlessly parroted it, except not in his eloquent fashion, but rather in an out and out aggressive tone which I now deeply regret.

My article was childish and it took a line of, "if you're in my way, then you're a target" and away I went. I've since been enlightened on just how the film world does work and, though some of my statements on Hollywood are
correct, it does not in any way mitigate my mouthing off. I'm sorry for lumping 'bearded' film directors into my appalling generalisation; sorry for saying how I'd thump any Hollywood studio boss who yelled at me. And most of all, sorry for failing to see that the profession is a difficult enough business as it is without big-mouthed novelists saying what I did.

I wrote it, have to live with it. Nothing personal against anyone was intended. It was just a mirror reflection of how I was feeling at the time.

Alan Duff
Author

Northern Exposure

→ Having watched (and enjoyed) Ten’s Sunday (July 9th) night telemovie, The Love of Lionel’s Life, as a Queensland filmmaker I was left with just one nagging question - must Queensland’s stories always be brought to the screen by southern cast and crew? Queensland’s film funding body, the Pacific Film and Television Commission (PFTC), were major investors in this production, shot in Brisbane and Clifton, with a Melbourne director (John Ruane) and main cast from south of the border (Matt Day, Nadine Garner, Alex Dimitriades).

These many accountants disguised as film doyens at the PFTC would undoubtedly argue that Day, Dimitriades and Garner are all known, marketable actors. This is true. They are all individually known, marketable actors. Surely any one of them would satisfy the bean counters. This would leave two leading roles for Queensland actors in a Queensland story. Are we to head into a new century with cultural cringe still the dominant factor in cast and crew choices for Queensland film and television productions?

Would the PFTC also have us believe that there is no director in Queensland capable of successfully helming a film production? That Queenslanders are only good for menial jobs on the large, usually US-backed productions which dominate our “Hollywood on the Gold Coast”? That no Queensland actors are of a calibre to star in local film productions? (This is patently untrue; ask any of the number of independent filmmakers who - tiring of the PFTC’s rigorous refusal to effectively nurture a local industry - have gone out ‘off their own bat’ and been inundated with the deluge of local acting talent crying out for work on a local product.)

Surely it is not being too parochial to expect that Queenslanders would have the chance to work on Queensland films in all key positions. (Sydney and Melbourne need no help: they both have local film industries.) Perhaps it is time that we question the validity of the PFTC, an organisation which has been for too long stifling our (still) infant film industry in its crib, while itself generously suckling off the baby’s bottle.

With the centenary of cinema come and gone, it might also be a good time to question why our local film industry remains so fledgling? If the PFTC were an Olympic swimmer, it would still be on the side of the pool, shivering, dipping in only one toe, cautiously testing the water.

Patrick N Hine
Producer/Director, Brizbin Boy Canberra Girl

You read it here first

→ I refer to your article “In a cinema not so far away”, October/November issue.

→ A financially viable alternative to a $250,000 digital projector may be the use of multiple compact LCD projectors, combined with a high gain screen. Using a 1024 x 768 pixel, 1000 ANSI lumens portable LCD projector ($9,000), I have achieved picture brightness better than cinema’s, on a high gain 16.5 feet wide screen. This screen has a gain of 7x matte white and is spherically dished to prevent hot spots, providing very even illumination across the viewing area. Two such projectors, side by side, could cover a similar type of screen 33 feet
Miramax came along this year claiming it would be aggressively buying product but by the end of the festival’s ‘Part A’ they had picked up nothing. Considering their track history, the Weinsteins are wary. In 1998 they purchased The Castle for a reported $US6 million and ended up making $US2 million in US domestic box office. The following year they purchased Happy Texas for $10 million, which also only returned $US2 million domestic US. Which is not to say you can’t snap up a film at a good price and make money. Fine Line’s purchase of Shine for $US2 million returned over $35.9 million. And, of the course, the success story of success stories is the cult success of The Blair Witch Project from 1999. Purchased for $1.1 million, it returned more than $140 million. Buyers have become savier. Only one of the top four purchases at Sundance 2000 failed to turn a profit.

At the same time, many of the big films screening at Sundance come with indie distributors already attached. Michael (Angel Baby) Rymer’s, new film Perfume comes with Lions Gate. The Dish, already well received at the Toronto film Festival, comes with Warner Bros attached. Chopper was picked up by First Look distribution. In fact the only Australian film this year that doesn’t come with distribution deals already attached are the shorts. And they’re being very well received. Andrew Lancaster’s in Search of Mike received positive reviews in local industry press. And Rachel Ward’s short The Big House has good buzz on the street. Hopefully they will face a long life on the festival circuit.

The festival has developed four levels

1. THE DESPERATE FILMMAKER.
Emitting a scent of desperation, they are having their unrealistic dreams shattered. The first question many have failed to ask themselves is whether or not their film is actually as good as they want it to be? Secondly, where do they expect it to get distribution? How many theatrical distributors are seriously looking for 20-minute short films?

2. FILMMAKER WITH GOOD PRODUCT BUT NO DISTRIBUTOR.
These are the films in the festival’s competition segments. The distributors are taking a keen interest in them.

3. SERIOUS CONVENTION-STYLE MEETINGS BETWEEN DISTRIBUTORS, MEDIA, THE KEY ARTHOUSE EXHIBITORS AND PR FIRMS.
They hook up for private dinners, display their product and the talent involved in an attempt to sell their latest acquisitions. These are the real players at Sundance.

4. THE CELEBRITY LEVEL.
Many people who come to Sundance expect a celebrity parade. And audiences haven’t been disappointed. Mick Jagger turned up for Enigma along with Kate Winslet, Gus Van Sant wandered through town. But they’re guarded by high-powered PR firms who locked them away except for key appearances. Many are only in town a few days.

So perhaps Sundance’s refusal that to admit that it is a buyers’ market is turning full circle. And perhaps we can begin to focus on the creative side of the process.

Tearlach Hutcheson
Landmark Theatres, US
A few years ago, after a protracted period of complete frustration at having to take yet another break from my sporadic bouts of script-writing in order to pay the bills, (by doing a TV commercial), I was rung up by a well-known Melbourne television production house and asked if I was interested in directing a feature film. The film was ready to shoot, almost completely funded and one of a package of three the company was about to produce. I went to meet them, selected the one with the most potential and, keen to get onto a film set without having to wade through six years of self-funded script-development, agreed to do it. The project had gotten the "green light" from one of the two major Australian-based international TV & Cinema sales companies that had a strangle-hold on local film financing at the time. Unless you were lucky enough to get financing from overseas (extremely rare), you had to go through one of these two companies in order to get them to invest a certain percentage of a film's budget that would then trigger the national film financing body into putting up the rest. The script offered the premise of a good idea and concept, but needed some intensive work and a filmmaker's vision, specifically in the area of the lead female character, before the project would even have a chance of standing up in an international arena. The local sales company behind the project seemed interested in keeping up their TV relationship with the
It goes way beyond the “Cinema of the Ugly”, our national cinema has become the “Cinema of the Idiot”. Count the Australian films of the past twenty years (Paul Cox films aside) that haven’t had some sort of simpleton or group of simpletons as the lead characters, and you’ll see what I mean.

what crew to use and dropped like hot-cakes if they fail to deliver ‘Tarantino’-like success on their first outing. Where a success has to be followed as quickly as possible by another and another, never mind if the first one took years upon years of blood, sweat and tears to develop and bring into being.

The director had to stop being known an “artist” (it gives them too much power]. They had to become people you “hired in” because they unfortunately knew where to put the camera and they knew all those mysteriously magical “right words” to say to those strange bundles of neuroses called ‘actors’ (who most annoyingly had a very strong union and could cost a lot of money) in order to help them bring out the award-winning performances they all carry inside them.

Apart from that, these “auteur” types were an annoying nuisance who seemed bent of going over budget and wanting things to be “great” instead of just “good enough”. They were the enemy.

As long as you had fast editing, constant use of close-ups (handy for the video release), lots of back light, in-your-face production design, lots of laughs and lead characters were a bunch of suburban or country idiots (or maybe even a lone idiot) we could all feel superior to, you’d be fine. Do that and everyone is happy. Don’t put anyone too intelligent in your movie, the Americans and Europeans do it so much better. It goes way beyond the “Cinema of the Ugly”, our national cinema has become the “Cinema of the Idiot”.

Count the Australian films of the past twenty years (Paul Cox films aside) that haven’t had some sort of simpleton or group of simpletons as the lead characters, and you’ll see what I mean.

On top of all that, the development situation in this country has become a complete joke. Compared to the amount of time, energy and money spent developing, funding and nurturing directors and projects in other, sometimes much smaller countries and industries than ours [Denmark is a fine example], the situation here has become one of “let’s throw a lot of shit and see what sticks” policy to film development and production coming from the companies with the “green-lighting” power in this country, invariably combined with some kind of backstage “political” agenda taking precedence over script and creative team qualifications...

Australian production and sales companies (what there are of them) put a pittance (if anything) into feature development, preferring to wait until the director/writer has either slaved their guts out on his/her “labour of love” or pulled some quickie out of the bottom drawer. Then they decide whether it’s a yes or no when the script comes through the door. If it’s a yes the FFC kicks in and it’s champagne for all. If no, they very rarely contact you, they just hope you go away...

In Europe (not to mention America), it is not uncommon for the production companies to provide a writer or writer/director with a seriously healthy amount of money in order to feed and clothe themselves and their loved ones, so that they might be able to go off, research and write a script without having the incessant worry of how one is going to survive beyond the next few weeks. And they have this strange concept of believing in developing a body of work with a writer, producer or director, perhaps over a decade or so, through success and failure.

On my last project, *He Died With A Felafel In His Hand*, the script went out to over 20 production and financing companies all over the world. The only companies that did not get back to me, or respond in any way at all, positive or negative, were the Australian ones. Even my international rejection...
On my last project, *He Died With A Felafel In His Hand*, the script went out to over twenty production and financing companies all over the world. The only companies that did not get back to me, or respond in any way at all, positive or negative, were the Australian ones.

letters would have a sense of a serious and adult approach to filmmaking about them, rather than the awkward embarrassed silences of the dysfunctional monoliths of our own retarded film industry.

"If you get a good cameraman, it becomes cinema" should’ve warned me. I should’ve backed out quietly, mouthing platitudes about hearing my mother calling and not being late for dinner, but I paid no heed. I persevered. I asked for a rewrite. The producer/scriptwriter gave me a one week re-write in between episodes of the miniseries and a script edit on one of the other features that she had to do. Nothing had changed. The script was getting worse. I decided to do a rewrite myself, totally prepared to be unpaid and uncredited. I handed it back to them a few weeks later. They read it, called me into a meeting, sat me down and said, "Why can’t you be like our TV directors and just give us notes?"

This time it was serious. I smiled at them and told them if they wanted someone like one of their TV directors, why don’t they just get one of their TV directors and do it with them or maybe the producer should direct it herself, since she was so happy with mediocrity. Apparently they wanted a rent-boy (or girl) that would take on their folly, do what they told him/her to do, stand in the background if there was any glory to be had and be pushed forward to take the blame if it all turned to shit. This time I did back out of there quietly. On my way out, I mentioned a local director I knew of, who I thought was good and suggested they hire him. And next thing I know, they had.

I don’t think he’s ever forgiven me...

A few months ago, while watching an excerpt of an after-party of our national film awards ceremony on television, a well-known television movie review show host was asked by the interviewer what she could recommend to the young up-coming (and very talented) director of the year who had won the major award of the night. She answered, "Make another film as quickly as possible." Never mind the quality, never mind the eight years of stop-start development the director has had to go through to get to this stage. Never mind the constant breaks needed to earn money from commercials or music-videos in order to sustain yourself. That’s if you’re lucky enough to get a commercial or video (most film directors have trouble crossing between these two worlds). Never mind the months waiting for your form letter of rejection from one or other of the script development funding bodies, or if you are lucky enough get an approval, finding out the money allocated turns out to be less than the unemployment benefits you were on, when spread out over the time you need to write the script. Just deliver us the end product as quickly as possible. The beast is hungry. Otherwise there’ll always be a first-timer waiting behind the counter of the nearest video store with a pile of scripts they’ve been slaving over (on their own coin, of course), just desperate to become the next overnight success. And if they don’t end up becoming the next hot young thing. Well, we can always drop ‘em and go onto the next one, can’t we...? •

→ ADDENDUM All three feature films and the miniseries mentioned, ended up being made into a sequence of quite mediocre productions. The production company went back to quality television and did very well indeed... *He Died With A Felafel In His Hand* was eventually financed through a sizeable investment of Italian money, in conjunction with Village Roadshow and the FFC, who as essential and fair-handed as they are, unfortunately are not able to finance script and project development in this country...RL
On the Road

Adrian Martin uncovers a vast history of road movies driving The Goddess of 1967.

In The Goddess of 1967, Clara Law speaks of wanting to capture "a state of mystery, paradox, ambiguity."
The road movie is many things, across high and low culture, arthouse and popular cinema alike. It's Wim Wenders' spiritually lost characters, from *Alice in the Cities* (1974) to *Until the End of the World* (1991), travelling gravely in search of home, origin and meaning. The high-speed chases, low humour and blown-off hubcaps in *Smoky and the Bandit* (1977) and its ilk. High spirited, outlaw lovers on the run in *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967) and *The Sugarland Express* (1974). The terse, hardboiled mystery of *Blacktop*, 1971). The romantic comedy of dysfunctional couples (*It Happened One Night*, 1934) and families (*Flirting with Disaster*, 1996) on road trips. The post-apocalyptic, highway clashes of feral gangs and reluctant heroes in the post-apocalyptic, highway clashes of *Mad Max* (1979), or where the drama or comedy of interpersonal connection gets a technological booster via satellite and new digital technology. Gone are the days when Harry Dean Stanton could simply wander out of a desert in *Paris, Texas* (1984) and slowly integrate himself into society via the classic road movie pitstops of petrol stations and motels; Wenders' next project, an as-yet-untilled collaboration with Sam Shepard, will be "a road movie right across the United States - a family saga and, at the same time, a story which takes place in the age of the internet and global communication". As today's screenwriting gurus never tire of telling us, it's the emotional journey that really matters in a movie - the 'hero's journey' towards insight, fearlessness, triumph or compassion. Road movies are compelling because they reinforce this metaphorical and internal journey with a literal, external one. The Coen brothers made this connection comically explicit by pitching their *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* (2000) as a retelling of Homer's *The Odyssey*. Australian cinema - because of our landscape, because of low-budget possibilities, and because of our predilection for stories of travel and discovery - is especially fond of the road movie form. In recent years, films including *Kiss or Kill* (1997), *Heaven's Burning* (1996) and *True Love and Chaos* (1997) have mixed action elements with personal journey plots. George Miller's *Mad Max* series is currently cranking up for a fourth installment. Both Wenders and Herzog (*Where the Green Ants Dream*, 1984) easily transported their obsessions with nomadic mobility and spiritual questing into the Australian continent - particularly the 'dead heart' of the central desert spaces, eternally fascinating to cultured European city dwellers looking for a trace of the 'primitive'. American road movies, with their vast stretches of landscape, are often given a grandiloquent gloss: in the shadow of classic Westerns, country'n'western music, and Jack Kerouac's seminal *On the Road*, these films are taken to be about a glamorous bid for freedom out on the 'final frontier' - which essentially refers to the drama of men getting together (hence the 'buddy road movie' variation) and escaping the sphere of women, families, suburbia and personal responsibility. The editors of the 1997 American anthology *The Road Movie Book* tell us that the genre is all about "fantasies of escape and opposition"; while Timothy Corrigan in his invaluable *A Cinema Without Walls* relates the form to real-world crises of the "recent historical fracturing of the male subject" and "the breakdown of the family unit". Australian movies also reflect these kinds of melodramatic tensions that mix a love of freedom with an intuition of large-scale social disintegration. We, too, have our 'wide open spaces', and the dreams to fill them. But, on the whole, the 'moves' in Australian road movies tend to be a road movie right across the United States - a family saga

Like some other unusual genres, we know what a road movie is when we see one, without being able to really define the term with much precision. A recent useful survey by Mia Tracey in *Metro* magazine begins with the basics: a road movie "would appear to be the combination of road, vehicle and human occupants". Suitable for a genre that seems to have begun long, long ago, with the popular embrace of train travel, 'road movie' has become a loose and flexible designation. These days, in daily journalistic parlance, it covers films where travel is at a crawling pace on horse or by foot (*Jim Jarmusch's Dead Man*, 1995); where gallivanting is aided by the occasional plane ride to another country (*Wong Kar-Wai's Happy Together*, 1997); or where the drama or comedy of interpersonal connection gets a technological booster via satellite and new digital technology. Gone are the days when Harry Dean Stanton could simply wander out of a desert in *Paris, Texas* (1984) and slowly integrate himself into society via the classic road movie pitstops of petrol stations and motels; Wenders' next project, an as-yet-untilled collaboration with Sam Shepard, will be "a road movie right across the United States - a family saga and, at the same time, a story which takes place in the age of the internet and global communication". As today's screenwriting gurus never tire of telling us, it's the emotional journey that really matters in a movie - the 'hero's journey' towards insight, fearlessness, triumph or compassion. Road movies are compelling because they reinforce this metaphorical and internal journey with a literal, external one. The Coen brothers made this connection comically explicit by pitching their *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* (2000) as a retelling of Homer's *The Odyssey*. Australian cinema - because of our landscape,
to occur in smaller, more precisely defined circles. The car and motor bike culture which has been such an obsessive topic in our national cinema - from Weir’s The Cars that Ate Paris (1974) and Stone (1974) through Midnite Spares (1983) and Dead-End Drive-In (1986) to Metal Skin (1995) - is often urban, fugitive, ready to auto-destructively implode at any moment. Sometimes this mundane, mobile world receives a lighter treatment - as in the underrated gem BMX Bandits (1983), featuring a very young Nicole Kidman, which weaves a typically daggy teenage reverie from humble bicycles and CB radios. Australia can even boast an important, world cinema precedent to the entire road genre in John Heyer’s The Back of Beyond (not to be confused, on any account, with the dreadful Paul Mercurio vehicle Back of Beyond, 1995) - a modestly presented but uncommonly haunting tale from 1954 of land, survival, communication and spontaneous cultural mixing.

As is often the case, the Australian ‘customising’ of a popular genre too often perceived (especially by Americans) as ‘peculiarly American’ is best compared with similar manoeuvres in the cinemas of (for example) Britain (Gallivant, 1994), Iceland (Cold Fever, 1994), Cuba (Guantanamera, 1994) or Iran (Abbas Kiarostami’s And Life Goes On…, 1992). What we invariably find is that, once the road movie shakes off its outsized ‘mythic’ trappings, it hones in on microcosmic, everyday diagrams of social power, involving every imaginable variable of class, gender, work, age and sexual orientation.

So Australian cinema has given us, indelibly, a vacationing family seething inside a car (Jane Campion’s famous short Peel, 1982); daily struggles over means of transportation that provide access to blessed release at havens like the pub or the sports ground (The FJ Holden, 1977); the tenacious efforts of a black rock band to be allowed to play their music (Wrong Side of the Road, 1981); and the dissolve, ‘dusk to dawn’ wandering of a disaffected teenager (Head On, 1998). And a static, overturned car is just as interesting as a moving one to the makers of Road to Nhill (1997).

As is also characteristic of some non-Hollywood cinemas, there may be as many significant independent and experimental films that engage with the road movie as there are features. All the standard generic elements are condensed, exaggerated, torn asunder or put under the microscope in notable works including David Caesar’s Car Crash (1996), Margaret Dodd’s This Woman is Not a Car (1997), John Cumming’s Obsession (1985), Ross Gibson’s Camera Natura (1986), Mairi Cameron’s Driving Ms Crazy (1994) and Catherine Birmingham’s Drive (1992) - plumbing levels of fantasy and/or despair more akin to David Cronenberg’s eerily perverse Crash (1997) or Gregg Araki’s violently queer The Doom Generation (1995) than the hippie trip of Easy Rider (1969).

In particular, if we examine local road movies including Ebson Storm’s In Search of Anna (1979), Bill Bennett’s debut Backlash (1986), Ian Pringle’s Wrong World (1985) or Laurie Maclnnes’ Broken Highway (1994), we turn up a model of the road journey that is not quite so neat or optimistic as the ‘hero’s journey’ formula, with its reliance on mainstream, action-packed, goal-oriented narratives. These are the arty road movies in which people, as much a mystery to themselves as to us, go on meandering trails and end up nowhere they ever expected. Circular trips, labyrinths, dreamscapes, sudden vanishing points, trails without seeming end: the easy riders of the road movie have, for around 40 years, beaten such real and metaphorical paths.

Rod Bishop, now head of the Australian Film, Television and Radio School, asserted in a Stuffing magazine of the mid 80s that “the best of the road movies collapse inwards, their resolutions lost in destruction or nihilism or existential hiatus”. The current era of the ‘internationalist’ road movie - with characters often fleeing their past in one country for the sake of anonymity in another - extends and expands the road movie’s terrain for such ‘destruction’. The films of Alain Tanner (In the White City, 1983), Theo Angelopoulos (Landscape in the Mist, 1988) and many others have created, in American critic Ronnie Scheib’s sensitive account, a ‘cinema of exile’, brimming with scattered sensations that are reminiscent of Lou Reed and John Cale’s ode to nomadic travel, “Forever Changed”': “My whole life disappearing/Disappearing from view”. Clara Law’s new film The Goddess of 1967 could have been made to fit the fanciful title of Corrigan’s discussion of the genre as it stands today: ‘The

Once the road movie shakes off its outsized ‘mythic’ trappings, it hones in on microcosmic, everyday diagrams of social power, involving every imaginable variable of class, gender, work, age and sexual orientation.
Road Movie in Outer Space”. Law speaks of wanting to capture “a state of mystery, paradox, ambiguity”. Many of Law’s films - as the title of her previous one, Floating Life (1996), makes clear - are about the curious, suspended state of being that comes from inhabiting a uniformly fragmented, multicultural, ‘post-everything’ world. Everything is in pieces and nothing adds up: people hop from country to country in a flash, connect with perfect strangers in cyberspace, and dimly grasp the consequences as once intimate friends, lovers and family members pass out of sight, out of mind.

Everyone is a foreigner to everyone else in this melancholic charge in Law’s vision. Even the occasional ecstatic moments - of dancing, laughter or sex - carry a solipsistic, solitary, flatline of impersonality: businessman JM (Rikiya Kurokawa) arrives in outback Australia to pick up his purchased DS (a 1967 Citroen) and encounters the blind BG (Rose Byrne). Like for the Porsche-driving male duo in Philippe Garrel’s Night Wind (1999), the displaced, train travelling narrator in Claire Denis’ Beau Travail (1999), or the hero of In Search of Anna, the forward journey in space for BG and JM becomes a backward journey in time, back over the memory-traces of troubled origins, formative experiences and sacred sites. As in many a road movie, the drive to settle the ‘unfinished business’ of family life - in particular, the wounded, psychic legacy left by unloving, abusive or repressive parents - looms large over this particular voyage. The Goddess of 1967 occasionally raises expectations of conventional thriller intrigue or ‘chase-film action, but deliberately misplaces these threads. These genres are hollowed out to mere husks and left to dry in the scorching sun. Typical of the ‘cinema of exile’ tradition, the vacuum left by the absence of a ‘driving’ plot or crystal-clear psychological motivation is filled to the brim with moods, atmospheres, sensations - and on this level, the film is superbly crafted and spectacularly successful.

Australia has never been so noir as here - not even in Kiss or Kill, which has a more direct link to the classic film noir and contemporary neo noir traditions. Pubs, caravans and hotel rooms look like dank caves. Cinematographer Dion Beebe (Vacant Possession, 1995) pulls out all the stops in remarkable, painterly frames that place patches of lurid, deliberately mismatched colour between slabs of pitch black. Editor Kate Williams [The Myth of Fingerprints, 1997] masters the multiple dislocations between times and places, always finding unusual rhythms to surprise and disorient us. Roger Savage’s sound design is an aesthetic event in itself, with walls of noise and layers of music (by Jen Anderson) evoking the ‘monumentality’ of films by Kubrick or Kieslowski. Even at the most fundamental level of mise en scene - the placing of bodies into a physical environment - The Goddess of 1967 weaves discontent and disconnection. Here, the Australian landscape, as seen through the windows of the DS, is a washy, abstract, stop-start rear projection, recalling the way Jean-Luc Godard splashed coloured lights onto a windscreen to express a similarly alienated sensation of travel in Pierrot le fou (1965). When human beings are so completely disconnected from the world, a sense of paranoiaic menace invariably takes over, and in this light Law’s view of the Australian ‘wilderness’ recalls the sombre classic Wake in Fright (1971). As French critic Serge Grunberg said of the Australian short Road to Alice (1992), “one can find all the ingredients of the ‘Australian neurosis’: a fascination with violence that never takes place; vast, empty spaces; and the ultimate ‘moral’ of the story - that all roads lead nowhere”.

In many contemporary road movies, roads neither lead anywhere nor join up, and this is the key to a larger malaise. Since the 60s, modern cinema has agonised over the possibility or impossibility of reconciliation (the emblematic title of that decade is Straub-Huillet’s Not Reconciled, 1965) - whether that’s reconciliation between individuals, generations, countries, or fundamental viewpoints upon the world itself. Clara Law regenerates this malaise by proliferating the disparate lines of her movie: each main character has their own ‘backstories’, and in the case of BG, this flashback branches and grows into an enigmatic family melodrama saga spanning (with merry disregard for linear chronology) many years and participants. How different this all is to a jollier lineage of local road movies, topped by Stephan Elliott’s The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert (1995), in which characters of different races, classes and sexual preferences reconcile with each other and ‘the land’, via the splendid mobility offered by a tour bus. The Goddess of 1967 ultimately tries for a kindly, peaceable gesture in this direction - although the effort is rather uneasy and uncertain. For Law and her filmmaking partner Eddie L.C. Fong, the postmodern world poses a particular ethical and moral dilemma: the further out from the centre that everybody flies, and the less connected to history and family that anyone feels, the more likely we are to drift into previously ‘forbidden’ and destructive territory - as is the case with BG’s rather haunted outback clan.

How can there possibly be a ‘hero’s journey’ in such a world? JM and BG could sing Tina Turner’s lines from Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome (1985): we don’t need another hero, we just need to find the way home.
The Australian Film Commission saw Alex Proyas’ first feature, the apocalyptic western *Spirits of the Air, Gremlins of the Clouds*, and told him to give up. Fifty million moviegoers saw his next one, *The Crow*, but only after Proyas witnessed an eerie death, multiple lawsuits and blowtorch exposure to the Hollywood underbelly. When a few million saw his third - the big-budget brooder *Dark City* - and only a few thousand understood it, it was little wonder when the man behind the vision was spending his days and nights “just trying not to have nightmares”.

*The Outsider*  
By Angus Fontaine
It's a crude summation of a career to date. But it has landed Alex Proyas into the company of some of the world's best directors. OK, in this case it was just another advertising agency with another concept – this time renowned French firm JC Decaux. The pitch: "Your city and Our billboard for seven seconds at dawn"


With Kubrick out of town and Russell Mulcahy M.I.A., Proyas took his crew down to the shopping metropolis Martin Place in central Sydney and got his shot: businessmen in suits acting like apes and bowing before the monolithic 'product' in the dim glow of a Sydney sunrise – a typically sly and obscure image from a largely misunderstood man.

Alex Proyas laughs a lot for a man supposedly running from the Shadow. And it's not just his looming presence that is Hitchcockian. Like the great man, Proyas has made a career of dealing in what he calls the "playful elements – murder, madness, and evil". But rather than setting them in Everyday, he plays them out in his own vast and splintered dreamscape: the place where multi-storey jet liners crash on him and over-sized ferrets with black exoskeletons act as his watchdogs.

Since Dark City smouldered in cinemas three years ago, Proyas has been busy in the bustling Paddington bunker he calls Mystery Clock. Late last year he launched mysteryclock.com – a web site of his short films, mind games and archives. Then, just before Christmas the FFC announced it had agreed to help fund his feature Garage Days for Fox Searchlight. Proyas will co-write, co-produce with Topher Dow, and direct the story of a kid's dream of becoming a rock star and landing on stage at The Big Day out.

He claims to have other films in development for different studios and also a TV series, Riverworld, based on the books by Philip Jose Farmer and dealing in another of his predilections: the after-life. All are self-realised and funded and all are being conducted a long way from Los Angeles.

"You are never on the inside," says Proyas. "People might have the impression that I'm in there with the Hollywood system but unless you're a Spielberg you're always on the outside; living off the dole, waiting and praying and going around to studios to beg for crumbs so you can get your film made. I wish it was different but for me it's not, and it never will be. That's why I'm here doing what I'm doing.

The films I don't fit the mould – they're 'off' in terms of Hollywood. But they're the films I want to make."

Foremost in Proyas' mind at the moment is his long awaited fourth feature – a rock 'n' roll comedy called Garage Days which starts shooting in Sydney in the new year. It's a punk fable – four friends in a band that can't get a gig and who do a lot of growing up on the way to babylon. It'll be shot in pubs, flats, tattoo parlours, and gyros dispensaries, and the dialogue and music promise to be earthy and obscene. But can the dark man do funny?

Proyas accepts that the switch from sci-fi to comedy is a risk. "It's always slightly scary to announce your new film is going to be a comedy because if people don't laugh you're in real trouble," he smiles. "And it's true that most of the projects I'm working on are large-scale, heavily art-directed fantasies. But for this one I'm looking forward to getting back to a film-school level of production and keeping it simple.

"Garage Days" is a jump, but I want to make something that's going to challenge me and not the same film over and over.

"It's a risk in that I haven't done a comedy before and certainly, there are people in the States who think I've gone insane. They have me pigeonholed in a certain category and they're saying 'what the hell is this?' For me, that's encouraging. That's why I'm doing it."

Proyas calls the film "a coming of age story" but winces doing so. And already there are signs of his trademark undertow. One of the characters is a manic-depressive (no prizes for guessing what his instrument he plays) and the rest of the band are in manic-depressive frames of mind (and I don't mean the ones he keeps in jars on his desk) – script doctors, technicians and artists who can stoke his coals and help him decide sort of innate darkness on my part. I like the dressings of darkness. But for me my films aren't dark because I'm trying to see the light in each of the characters. If I was going to go somewhere really dark it would be much more extreme and I don't think many people would follow me."

Proyas was a punk rocker himself "a long, long time ago" in the 80s, and he's done his share of bad Iggy Pop covers with the odd original thrown in – "for shock value".

Garage Days isn't his story per se ("thank god none of our material exists") but his experiences have rubbed off to the tune of a $10-12 million dollar budget, a soundtrack to kill for, and what's already shaping up as one of the most coveted casting calls of the year. Mostly he likes working with young fresh minds (and I don't mean the ones he keeps in jars on his desk) – script doctors, technicians and artists who can stoke his coals and help him decide

People might have the impression that I'm in there with the Hollywood system but unless you're a Spielberg you're always on the outside; living off the dole, waiting and praying and going around to studios to beg for crumbs so you can get your film made. Alex Proyas
between the 20-30 scripts he gets sent a week. Alex Proyas is a future-eater after all. "One of the reasons I'm excited by the internet revolution is that for the first time filmmaking will be on the same level as releasing a record. That means I'm going to be able to have a few friends over for a barbecue and some drinks and later turn on a wall-size screen and tap in martinscorcese.com and get his latest film. And as a film-guy, a film-lover that is all I care about.

"As much as I love that communal experience of cinemas, the blockbuster mentality that has been around ever since Star Wars and Jaws – where people won't see a film unless it's been number one at the box office – has been totally destroying the craft of filmmaking."

"Finally we're at a stage now where films will have a shelf-life and directors can take a breath rather than wait for opening weekend to see if they've made it or they're dead in the water."

After Brandon Lee was shot and killed in the final days of shooting The Crow, Proyas changed a good deal. Long days deconstructing a dead friend's image for celluloid profit will do that to a man making his first foray into the big leagues. Proyas doesn't talk of the experience easily, never has. The film is his stillborn – what one critic called "a most morbid film... with shards of black wisecracking splintering through the portentousness.”

When he does hesitantly start talking about The Crow, the rubber band he's been fiddling with, snaps. "I finished the film for Brandon, in Brandon's honour and that's where I want to leave it," he says stiffly. "Any more discussion about what happened or what I believe or what anyone believes doesn't help Brandon in any way. It doesn't bring him back or do anything for his memory. I did very little press at the time and I don't now. As far as I'm concerned, I was involved in The Crow, but it's his movie."

Proyas did, however, ensure Brandon Lee's legacy. He fought the unions for the unprecedented right to run just two title cards before the film: Lee's name and that of the film. His own credit and those of the crew followed only at the end. And he also made sure the video release carried only one trailer – an interview with Lee in the days before the accident. To call his Hollywood debut a baptism of fire, he says, "would be understating it in the extreme". "I didn't question the way I make films but I did doubt the way films are produced in the United States," says Proyas. "It was a freak occurrence. But at the same time I feel there are very relaxed approaches to the way guns are handled on US film sets. Here in Australia, weapons are treated with a respect and fear which mirrors the society. In the States guns are too readily available and frequently abused. And as an Australian I felt very weird and very uncomfortable in that situation. But it wasn't my role to tell them how to do their job. I was an outsider and I had to conform to an extent."

However, in the wake of The Crow and the siege of Gothbuster script offers that followed, it was no coincidence that the one project Proyas was strongly suremored to be making was a film of Edgar Allan Poe's Masque of the Red Death, the callow tale of some fat cats who watch a plague rage from within their sumptuous sealed castle. And just as the reaper descended then, it's tempting to think that this too will Proyas as he wages his own war from his (and Mr Murdoch's) antipodean Fox-holes. "I don't know what's going to happen in the future. One thing I know for sure is that in 10 years time, filmmaking – in fact everything – is going to be 100 percent different. My brain explodes just keeping up with the technological possibilities. But in the end what good films do and will always do is tell people a story, and if you can tell that story well, the technological trappings will be almost irrelevant. The power of the buck and the desire of studios and big corporations to generate enormous profits and shitloads of money will remain but there will always be that desire for good story-telling and that is what we as film makers and audiences want."

Proyas's own storytelling, he says, sides with Blade Runner author Philip K Dick's – "our world dislocated by some kind of mental effort on the part of the author... our world transformed into that which it is not or not yet. "Proyas craves the shock of 'dysrecognition' from his audiences. And Garage Days is no different to the alternate worlds of The Crow, Dark City and Spirits... in that the true protagonist is an idea and not a person. "I've always believed that dreaming is problem solving, reconfiguring details and trying to come up with solutions,” he says. “That's what I like about science fiction – it's a cinematic dream trying to solve the problems of our world.”

And his nightmares? Well they’re one problem Proyas thinks he has solved. "Actually,” he laughs, “I think that was the Thai food I ate last night."
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Early summer and Queensland’s Gold Coast seems dreamy. It’s awash with golden light filtering through a brown haze of acrid smelling smoke generated by persistent scrub fires nearby. Beyond the high-rises, highways and vast stretches of sand, residents are encountering real hardship. But inside a studio on Kortum Drive in Burleigh Heads reality is a million miles away as special effects supervisor Kevin Chisnell wrangles machine generated smoke into place for a scene in Australia’s latest horror movie, Cubbyhouse.

In Oz we’re not exactly famous for producing horror. Sure, Cut (2000) and Body Melt (1993) occupy their own special place in our cinematic history but those films never reached a sizeable audience. And reaching sizeable audiences is precisely what the producers of Cubbyhouse are all about.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING PLOT:
Recovering from a traumatic divorce Lynne Graham relocates her young family from the US to Brisbane but selects a new family home containing a backyard cubbyhouse that is a gateway to horror. Six-year-old Natalie and eight-year-old Ivan become captivated by the initially derelict cubbyhouse. Unaware a powerful demon resides within they are powerless to resist becoming possessed. Meanwhile, older teenage brother Danny and neighbour Bronwyn independently resolve to discover the cubbyhouse’s dark allure.

The demon’s power grows, the cubbyhouse becomes alive and the four youngsters get swept further into its grasp.

CINEMA PAPERS. FEBRUARY. MARCH. 2001
"Which is not to say everything's like that but here it is so fresh. I wanted to come back because nobody seemed to be accessing that talent," he says.

Which is not to say Cubbyhouse was written on the back of a shopping docket in a CD shop in Surfer's Paradise mall.

According to director, and erstwhile comedian Murray Fahey, he and co-producer David Hannay have been developing the script for eight years.

Fahey, who directed and starred in Dags, expects his comedic background will imbue the horror with "a slightly twisted sense of humour, so it's got a little bit of peculiarity to it."

Fully aware of the enormity of what they're trying to pull off, Fahey takes a very low-key approach to directing.

Dressed in an oversized Hawaiian shirt, which appears to be a kind-of Cubbyhouse uniform, he sits quietly behind the video split, monitoring what's being captured on camera.

→ Pyjama clad youngsters Josh Tainish-Biagi and Amy Reti are walking gingerly through the night towards the vine covered cubbyhouse. They step in front of a thatch of potted plants and dried shrubbery, teddy bear in hand, smoky mist seeping from the garden and red lighting emitting just enough eeriness.

Fahey governs gently and consults widely.

"We've got children, animals, CGI, special effects, mostly night shoots, the one thing we don't have is water but half of Queensland is burning as we're shooting," he wryly acknowledges the variables of his dominion.

The previous week on location at an avocado farm in nearby Duranbah they had to torch the cubbyhouse. A total fire ban day in Queensland - "luckily we were just over the border in NSW", Fahey muses.

Despite the extensive trickery being employed on Cubbyhouse both during the shoot and later in post-production, Fahey insists the film will succeed or fail by the performances.

"The whole premise rests on the characters and the family unit in crisis," he says.

To get the actors into the mind-set he sent them shopping together and encouraged the formation of a little family unit. He's since noticed the bonding come through as the on-screen family bickers, settles into a new place and experiences the growing terror.

"If you've got $40 million and you need a special effect you just write a cheque. If you've got $5 million then you have to really think about how you're going to do it." Producer Chris Brown
"In Dags I had to have a very clear idea because it was an ensemble piece and I was performing in it but you can't be a fascist with kids even though you want to be." Much of Cubbyhouse is set at night and the gruelling night shoots could easily take their toll on the youngsters, actually aged 11 and 10, carrying much of the film. That said, the effects unit devised a pair of mock-up kids to overcome needing the little ones late at night.

→ The vines covering the cubbyhouse are the film’s biggest effects component. Plus, the actual cubby changes in appearance from the film’s beginning to the end. It starts out looking ramshackle but as the demon’s powers grow it looks increasingly attractive to the kids. Second stage it is cleared of vines, then it is cleaned up and finally it’s chain-sawed. The vines act as the cubbyhouse’s arms - they attack people, come out and wrap around them. ProFX’s Brad Greenwood and Kym Sainsbury designed three types of latex mechanical and animatronic vines - wire, rope and air-actuated - sculpted and coloured to match real ones also being used. “Some of the mechanical vines grab things and other ones are attached to monofilament (fishing line) so they snake along the ground when pulled along. The monofilament lets it swing a little bit and lift off the ground so you get a snaking effect,” Greenwood explains. “If they keep a straight line they tend to look like they’re being pulled along by a string. ‘We’re working on a low budget horror movie, we don’t have hundreds of thousands of dollars to go to town on all sorts of wild computer controlled stuff so we have to come up with simple ways of trying to accomplish different effects.’” Among other constraints low budgets usually force diminished set up periods, so we come like a guerrilla effects unit. Jump in there, set up our thing and away we go. We have to get the effect and we have to be able to make it repeatable.” “We’re using some reverse photography as well,” he says. “We had a scene the other day where we rolled up a soft rubber vine, put it in Craig McLachlan’s mouth and pulled it. When we reverse the film it will look like the vine’s going in and right down his throat causing some very serious damage.”

→ Greenwood and Sainsbury returned from New Zealand and the set of Peter Jackson’s Lord of the Rings trilogy not so long ago. So they’re used to working well-resourced. They had to ease themselves into the Cubbyhouse headspace. “It’s not $360 million, or whatever it is, but this is still a big effects show, given that it’s a very low budget. It’s a case of coming in and saying, ‘OK we’ve got X amount of dollars to deal with and we want to achieve these shots to give the impression of these vines being alive and attacking people. So, how can we, in a way that’s reasonably cost effective, and reasonably simple, achieve that?” Greenwood explains. The large special effects component reduces the need for expensive computer graphic imaging (CGI), so the more they get right on film, the less work is required in post production.

Greenwood admits: “‘If it had a bigger budget maybe a lot of these effects would be done with CGI.’ Sounds like his profession is under threat? “No, the process of coming up with what it looks like and how to do it, which is what Kym and I are doing, never changes,” he says. “Even if the practical work eroded away because of the CGI aspect, we would still be in business because we come up with the solutions. We’re the visual effects designers and CGI has actually created more work for us.” He says it’s raised the bar and moviegoer’s expectations.

→ The team from Complete Post who’ve been engaged for the CGI component are lingering alongside the bluescreen onto which they will later create effects. They predict Cubbyhouse has possibly one of the largest visual effects budgets of an Australian film ever. They got extensive pre-production time which enabled them to isolate all the elements of the film and then during production they need to keep ‘a sharp eye’ on everything. Effects executive producer Chris Schwarze says the overall low budget matters little when audiences are deciding which movie they’ll see tonight. They “expect to see a certain standard,” he says. Of course you don’t have the extensive budget to do research so you have to work closely with the director and the DOP to make sure you get what you need and that it works. So when you go into digital effects you don’t spend a few days, years sometimes, fixing it up. You’ve really got to get it nailed to start off with.”

Beyond International will unleash Cubbyhouse upon the world at Cannes Film Festival 2001.
To market to market. John Fleming

If VHS reigned supreme in the '70s and '80s, then DVD looks set to dominate home entertainment in the new millennium. It has certainly been gaining enormous momentum since its introduction in early 1997. By the end of 1999, DVD had swept into 8.5 million households worldwide, more than doubling the previous year's figures. Independent forecasters confirm DVD movie sales and rental revenue in 1999 totalled in excess of $2 billion. Although accurate figures are not yet available for Australia, the selection of DVDs available from stores and video libraries is undoubtedly expanding. DVD discs are more resilient than VHS tapes, revisiting the controversial subject of advertising.

At the core of DVD is the concept of interactivity. Its simplest form is the menu. Menu design and function are also crucial and a production in itself and one that is in tune with the creative vision of the original production. An additional, dedicated producer is often required to develop and produce the supplementary DVD content and special sequences, plus the EPKs and web site, alongside the production of the actual film. DVD preparation should commence as early as possible in the filmmaking process. This allows producers to seek advice on post-production, visual effects and design. As the project progresses, they can discuss which material should ideally form part of the DVD and how the special elements can be incorporated in a dynamic and seamless way. Leaving it until the project is in post-production will seriously limit the range of material available and the potential impact of the end product.

A well-produced DVD can deliver up to 20 hours of entertainment, compared with a two-hour home video, or cinema experience.

A wide range of options are available when preparing DVD content. Soundtracks, high quality surround sound audio, multi-aspect ratios, multi-camera angles and full web connectivity. Knowing their audience, film producers need to tap into a value-added mindset when producing DVD. They need to consider what aspects will add value to the main feature. The more common extras include behind the scenes stories as well as sound fx, music-only audio tracks, directors' commentaries and deleted scenes. More adventurous features include short films, music video clips, topic-related documentaries and the sometimes-controversial subject of advertising. Some feature film directors, already wise to the benefits of using technology to give their product a broader reach, are creating web sites to generate interest/anticipation during a film's production. Not only does DVD provide web connectivity, it can also link back to an established web site, consistently reinforcing a title or brand. In the event of a sequel, momentum can be leveraged from the previously established audience. The web site can also back to an established web site, consistently reinforcing a title or brand. In the event of a sequel, momentum can be leveraged from the previously established audience. The web site can be used to maintain brand loyalty and becomes an invaluable tool to gauge audience interest during the various phases of production and distribution.

For a DVD to be successful, it needs to be a production in itself and one that is in tune with the creative vision of the original production. An additional, dedicated producer is often required to develop and produce the supplementary DVD content and special sequences, plus the EPKs and web site, alongside the production of the actual film. DVD preparation should commence as early as possible in the filmmaking process. This allows producers to seek advice on post-production, visual effects and design. As the project progresses, they can discuss which material should ideally form part of the DVD and how the special elements can be incorporated in a dynamic and seamless way. Leaving it until the project is in post-production will seriously limit the range of material available and the potential impact of the end product.

Aspect ratio versions and web site access will also have a budgetary impact. The task of choosing a DVD authoring service should be left to companies with a thorough understanding of interactivity, image quality and the requirements of film and TV producers. Their authoring systems should be compliant with DVD specifications and a strong relationship with a DVD replicator is definitely an advantage. Most importantly, a DVD supplier must be able to provide a service guarantee that details all of the elements incorporated in the cost of the project. DVD appears to open up marketing opportunities, offering filmmakers a chance to extend the shelf life of their products beyond the realms of traditional theatrical, video and TV distribution.

Producers also need to bear funding in mind. As local projects are usually required to establish funding levels before they commence, producers need to work with distributors to factor in their DVD release before budgets are finalised.

Pricing can vary dramatically depending on which DVD authoring service is used and the level of sophistication required. The amount of material and number of features included, as well as the sophistication of the menu design and implementation, will affect the cost. The level of options available, such as multiple language tracks, subtitles,
Guy Pearce doesn’t mess around. Not on the set when he’s making a film nor doing the publicity afterward. He’s had some good film experiences, some downright horrendous ones and he doesn’t mince words when it comes to discussing them.

"In Australia when you get a script up - there are little things you can tweak but essentially you’re all going to make that film. In America there are so many fucking cooks it shits me and it probably shits every other Australian who goes there." You would think someone in his position would be more career calculating. But Guy Pearce comes across as the complete antithesis of the “If I say too much I’ll never be employed again” submissive. Fortunately Pearce loved making Memento, his latest offering where he gives a finely detailed and bravura performance as Leonard Shelby, a man intent on avenging the rape and murder of his wife. A character driven by revenge is nothing new, but Shelby suffers from short-term memory loss.

Memento’s treatment is given an added twist with an involving screenplay tracking the story in reverse. To piece together any sort of sense-making linear narrative the audience is forced to remember details of previous scenes. And there you are in the same headspace as Shelby,
using your own short-term memory to keep up with the film. It’s a testing and involving cinematic experience. Did the screenplay alone attract Pearce to the project?

"Absolutely. This was one of those experiences that doesn’t come along very often, where you read (a script) and you get completely ensconced in it from the beginning. When my agent sent it to me he said, ‘this will be right up your alley’, and it was.”

But wanting the part and then actually getting it are two different things. Although Pearce didn’t have to audition, the director and producers were familiar with his work, primarily from LA Confidential, Pearce knew if he liked it there would be just as many actors also wanting it. Good quality scripts and high-octane parts are rarely on offer.

Pearce readily admits to some panic before he knew absolutely it was his. Other actors up for the role had met with writer/director Christopher Nolan and feigned a complete understanding of the script from the start. Who wouldn’t? The guy wrote it. But Pearce says he admitted straight away he didn’t quite get it.

“I said, look I’m going to have to read this another two or three times to understand it completely. Sorry I’m a bit stupid.”

It seems this appealed to Nolan who assured Pearce it was OK to take his time.

“He said, You know people will come to these meetings and make out and pretend they know what is going on completely which is the irony of it because that’s what the film is about - people pretending to be some identity when they are really some other identity.’’

The part was clinched.

> Over the years, Pearce has been steadily building a reputation as a fine actor with an impressive range. From a camp turn in Priscilla Queen of the Desert to a critically lauded performance in LA Confidential the developing scope of his work has seen him become an in-demand actor, both here and overseas. Even so, this was one of the first times he has had to ‘carry’ a film.

"I did a film about Errol Flynn [Flynn 1996] years ago which was just a big pile of crap and I completely and utterly was not ready to carry a film. "With Memento we shot in just 25 days so we really had to be well prepared. I’m a real continuity stickler. You know, if I wasn’t an actor I’d be a continuity ‘lady’ probably, and the AD, I think Chris respected that practical aspect.”

So Nolan was getting an AD, a continuity ‘lady’ and a lead actor all in one? Any trepidation about actually ‘carrying’ the film suddenly seems to pale.

One of the starting points for an actor working on a scene is to ask where the character has just been and where he/she is next going. But Memento is told backwards and the central character can’t remember what went before. Did this prove more problematic than say a traditional linear narrative where the protagonist learns things as he goes along and, presumably, remembers them?

"Essentially I had to forget anything that happened anyway but I said to Chris, ‘I feel I have to know something in order to forget something… because if Guy walks on set and doesn’t know what’s going on then Guy won’t be happy about the performance he is giving’. And he’d say things to me like, ‘I’d rather you didn’t know so there’s this look, you know, of confusion or whatever’, and I said ‘Chris I’m an actor OK? I will act whatever you want me to act. Don’t try and stooge me into thinking this isn’t really a film because there is a fucking film crew standing around us and I’m just too conscious of the fact that this is a film.’"

Presumably Nolan chose a different tactic, but Pearce himself admits, in retrospect, the director
Pearce seems to be attracted to smaller projects and the first or second time director as a means of asserting some sort of creative input and control. “I probably prey on first time directors because it makes me feel I know more,” he says. "I probably prey on first time directors because it makes me feel I know more, that I’m really experienced. Whereas when you work with someone like Billy Friedkin (Rules Of Engagement) he screams at you and tells you what you’re doing is fucking horrible, you really feel like an idiot who’s never done it before. I hate that feeling.”

The further away Pearce is from the big budget studio experience the better, but he admitsthe he is still attracted by the work offered overseas. He recently wrapped on The Count of Monte Cristo for Warners, directed by Kevin[Prince of Thieves] Reynolds and co-starring Richard Harris and Jim Caviezel. He has signed on next year for The Time Machine (a remake of the original which starred Rod Taylor) for DreamWorks. Pearce admits he is an opportunist in this regard, but still he was enticed back for the Australian experience. Last year he co-starred with Helena Bonham Carter in Till Human Voices Wake Us, Michael Petroni’s first feature, shot in Melbourne, and later this year he will feature in Blood and Guts for producer Al Clark.

But surely coming back to do a smaller Australian film, when there are bigger things on offer overseas, would seem to some, like his agent for example, a little nonsensical career-wise? Is there a pressure on him to think broader than that?

"There is. Well it’s not really a pressure, but there’s ‘supposed’ best film I guess in the AFI world they honours the industry somehow but deep down, I feel completely hypocritical about it. I go and I present an award because I like to think I can honour the industry somehow but deep down, honestly I don’t agree with saying ‘that’s the best film’ using the word ‘best’. That’s why I said the 'supposed' best film I guess in the AFI world they have the right to do that, and I apologise if I offended anyone."

If he keeps doing the sort of quality work as evidenced in Memento - all is forgiven. •
Whether you thought it morally retrograde or artistically sublime, *Chopper* was undoubtedly a runaway success in Australian cinemas last year. The previous box office record for an R-rated film was *Romper Stomper*, which took $2.7 million dollars. *Chopper* took just under $6 million and garnered 10 AFI nominations, of which it won three including best lead actor (Eric Bana) and best director (Andrew Dominik).

The film's success in the UK is harder to determine. It received good reviews but, unlike the media reaction it enjoyed in Australia, there was almost no publicity in the UK prior to the film's release, nor after. There was no controversy, no debate, no outrage. As a result, the film passed largely unnoticed from cinema screens, collecting about £220,000 (AU$550,000) at the box office. This is significantly less than films such as *Muriel's Wedding*, *Babe*, and *Shine*, all of which enjoyed a number of weeks at the number one spot in the UK. While *Chopper*’s R-rating limited its potential audience, this alone does not explain its modest box office here. The success of Guy Ritchie's *Snatch* a few months earlier suggested the British public was ready for an Australian-style crime-flick. But after being released in 35 cinemas on November 24, it was showing in less than 20 cinemas two weeks later.

Many people in London believe *Chopper's* failure to attract a large audience is just further proof that Australian films struggle to make an impact on the UK box office. "There have been exceptions," says Christopher Tookey, film critic for the *Daily Mail*. "But generally the style and content of Australian films do not appeal to British audiences. Your films are made for Australian audiences, which is as it should be."
The Producer’s Take

UK distributors Metrodome decided against TV advertising, they said it just didn’t make sense on a 36-print release. They concentrated on a saturation poster and sticker campaign in city centres, reinforced by outstanding advance reviews. In central London and in Underground stations, the film was unavoidable: there seemed to be posters and stickers everywhere. One of the stickers, a cartoon balloon asking, “Who is Chopper?”, was added to other posters and pretty soon there was some counter-sabotage. A West End hairdresser had stickers printed up and out of Chopper’s mouth now came a cartoon balloon reading “I get my hair cut at Rolfs.” When that happens, a campaign can really be said to have entered people’s consciousness.

With a ‘foreign’ film like ours, the gulf between awareness of the movie in central London and in the rest of the country appears to be growing. On our first weekend, half the income came from less than a quarter of the screens – the London West end ones. Chopper didn’t really seem to connect in the mainstream multiplexes, where it takes longer for awareness to turn into curiosity.

Central London audiences are much quicker to pick up on unusual films, more review-conscious, less star-driven and the word-of-mouth was very good, so much so that (writing mid January) it looks as if the movie will continue to play in at least several cinemas indefinitely. In other words, in the UK, Chopper’s a cult hit. Al Clark

Rupert Preston, head of cinema sales at Metrodome. Chopper’s UK distributor, believes there is a general consensus in the UK film industry: “Australian films don’t travel particularly well. They might be very big in Australia but traditionally they don’t get much of a release outside of Australia,” he says. These attitudes best illustrate the difficulties Australian filmmakers face in getting their films distributed in the UK. Despite the high number of Australian films that have done good box office in the UK over the past decade, people who work in the industry still maintain that Australian films are difficult to sell to a UK audience.

There are a number of reasons for this prejudice. The UK is a diminishing market for all foreign films because of the burgeoning local content and the higher levels of Hollywood programming. Any film which is not a US or UK/US production is automatically considered an arthouse film, which places restrictions both on the number of cinemas in which they can be released and the amount of money spent on promoting them. Preston believes, generally, the Australian films that have succeeded in the UK are those which have been marketed, not as Australian films, but as commercial films made in Australia.

Catriona Hughes, Chief Executive of the FFC disagrees. “Muriel’s Wedding is only considered a commercial film because it was successful. It’s not whether you’re marketed as a commercial film that is made in Australia or a good Australian film. The real problem is it’s very hard for the people involved in making films (in Australia) to get a look in over there, because they are a largely unknown quantity. The closure of Polygram, a major distributor of Australian films in the UK has made things more difficult. And I think Chopper did extremely well in the UK. It received great critical reviews and it made a significant amount of money for an 18 certificate.”

Chopper was a relatively unknown quantity when Rupert Preston purchased it for Metrodome after a Cannes market screening last year. The film had not been released in Australia at the time. “But it was such an extraordinary piece of filmmaking that I felt it would succeed here,” Preston explains. “It’s the type of film Metrodome looks to distribute.” Metrodome is a relatively small distributor in the UK. It releases about 15 films each year into UK cinemas and deals in independent films that are adult rather than family oriented. Chopper is its first Australian title. “I do think it has been a success,” Preston says. “You have to put it into perspective.”

This is not a problem peculiar to Australian films in the UK. If you turn the figures round, UK films also falter at the international box office. And only one of the top 20 films in 2000 was a UK production (East is East), although our industry receives a massive amount of public funding compared to Australia.” Australian films are not expected to compete with the Hollywood system, either in the UK or at home, but the competition between independent films in the UK market is equally fierce. Hughes believes Australian films must strive to become more competitive in this market.

“When you’ve got independent or arthouse films you’re entirely dependent on the script,” Hughes says. “You don’t have the special effects or the star power on which to rely. Script development is certainly an area in which Australian films can improve. The AFC released a paper recently, which found that small independent film industries need to put more resources into script development. Currently only 1.4 percent of the total budgets of films is being spent on script development.”
Relative to the size of its local industry, Australian films have left a visible mark on UK box office figures in the past two decades. Since 1980, 134 Australian feature films have been screened in UK cinemas.

"But I'm not prepared to say that the Australian films don't travel well because they don't make millions of pounds at the UK box office. They have a very crowded market place in the UK. I think it's more a reflection on the UK market place than on Australian films. Our films are doing extremely well in the Australian box office, we expect to get eight percent for the year 2000. And if you look at the figures you'll see that we have had some great successes in the UK."

Relative to the size of its local industry, Australian films have left a visible mark on UK box office figures in the past two decades. Since 1980, 134 Australian feature films have been screened in UK cinemas. This represents around 23 percent of the total Australian features made in this period. Australian features have been number one in the UK box office for a total of 26 weeks, and 11 Australian films have reached the number one spot: Gallipoli, Mad Max 2, Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome, Crocodile Dundee, Crocodile Dundee II, Strictly Ballroom, The Piano, Sirens, Muriel's Wedding, Babe and Shine.

“What you have to worry about is this,” says Christopher Tookey, "Will commercial success kill your local industry? With more and more Hollywood films being produced in Australia the industry will become larger, but will all that talent be drawn into the commercial assembly line?"

Working Dog’s The Dish is soon to be released in the UK. It will be the tenth Australian feature film to gain a UK release since Shine. While The Castle was only a modest success in UK cinemas, word is The Dish will have broader appeal because of the quasi-global nature of its subject (man’s first landing on the moon). It may well challenge, once again, the general consensus that Australian films do not travel well.
snipshot.marieke josephine hardy

→ Aren't penises getting a lot of attention these days? Not that they don't deserve it, of course - fascinating, fleshy, gymnastic things that they are, coming in all shapes and sizes. There are particularly snake-like whammers, blocky pounders and 'mini-me' tinkers. Bulbous, pustulently infectious wrigglers and cool charm-fresh danglers. And they seem to be making a resurgence in film.

You might recall a recent celluloid offering spearheaded by comedian Mick Molloy, well-known for his penchant for wang-based humour. With (now ex) radio partner Tony Martin, he could - and would - fill Triple M's drivetime slot with hours of pocket rocket posturing and excellent locker-room giggling. This love for the gristle missile and all things related led to a pet project for Molloy - the 2000 documentary Tackle Happy, (Cinema Papers 133), which followed two performers, Simon Morley and David Friend, as they travelled the country entertaining the masses with a craft referred to as 'Puppetry of the Penis.'

The shows involve, among other things, stretching one's nutsack to form a sculpture known as 'The Windsurfer', threading one's baloney pony through the legs and up against the bum crack to complete 'The 0-String', and (the grand finale), inviting a lucky female audience member up on stage to drink out of one's scrotum. 'Puppetry of the Penis' made its overseas debut at the 2000 Edinburgh Festival. The show was considered one of the festival's biggest success stories, and the two self-confessed masters of 'genital origami' are currently performing a show in London's famous West End.

Not that Tackle Happy kick-started the most recent love affair between audiences and mutton daggers. From Kevin Bacon's genitally-led performance in Wild Things to the now increasingly familiar sight of Harvey Keitel's special friend in just about every film he appears (put it away, son), the thrill drill is now becoming a common sight in mainstream cinema.

The best example of this is the climactic scene to Paul Thomas Anderson's Boogie Nights, when fictional porn star Dirk Diggler (played by Chesty Bonds himself, Mark Wahlberg) unleashed the lengthy beast, and audiences worldwide squealed with uniform delight. It was this film which supposedly made pornography 'cool' again. Though no-one seemed prepared to tackle the many sticky feminist or moral issues involved in what undoubtedly is just one male-dominated profession among many. Position Vacant attempts to do just that, in all of three minutes. Director Patrick Burns graduated from VCA in 1997 with a lengthy, black and white piece about death and mortality titled Jupiter which appeared to profoundly depress audiences to the point of tears. Thankfully, he's come a long way since then, branching out from straight 'writer/director' roles to include exemplary work in cinematography. His d.o.p. role in director Phillip Crawford's AFI award-winning Denial (1997) led to their teaming up again in First Love (1998), doing much to assist creating Crawford's now signature style.

It is the strength of his co-creators which seems to bring out the best in Burns. Position Vacant sees him partnered off with co-writers Rob McDermid and Justine Spicer, who have attempted to create a light-hearted look at job-hunting in the noughties with a mix of cartoon-ish live-action performances and simple animation.

Essentially, Position Vacant is about cocks. Or, more specifically, a cock. When my partner was invited to a screening of the film, he scribbled down a reminder for himself - which would explain why my diary has the words 'Animated Penis' written down with a date and phone number underneath (that's what I tell visitors, anyway).

We open on the film's protagonist, 'girl' (Rochelle Gonsal), squirming through a painful job interview. Burns wastes no time in cutting to the chase - the first 15 seconds alone include the words 'stiff', 'hard' and 'firm', each presented to the audience via a spitting, entendre-soaked monologue (shades of Mrs. Slocombe!). When 'girl' is told she just hasn't 'got the balls' for the job, the interview's over. Or is it?

The pacey, sharp-shootin' remainder of the film leads us head first into a feminist fantasy land, with 'girl' retiring to the men's urinal and squeezing out an animated trouser pipe, which nestles comfortably in the crease of her miniskirt.

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The pacey, sharp-shootin' remainder of the film leads us head first into feminist fantasy land, with 'girl' retiring to the men's urinal and squeezing out an animated trouser pipe, which nestles comfortably in the crease of her miniskirt. This god rod has attitude and a mind of its own (don't they all?), and when 'girl' marches determinedly back into the interview room, our off-the-bone(r) employer has met his match.

Rochelle Gonsal gives a beautifully understated performance as our wingsus-swingin' heroine. The same can't be said, however, for Les Wallis as the employer - he's red-faced and fist-shaking like Col. Klink before the sound has even faded up properly. Still, with three minutes there's no time to waste, and Burns has used both his actors and his script economically. This time he's handballed the cinematography duties to the ubiquitous and capable Tim Spicer, who tells the story with smooth, black and white pictures. Short filmmakers often 'do' wazoobased films with more than a hint of schoolboy tittering and Benny Hill hamminess. All this is fine and dandy if, somewhere underneath the rib-poking innuendo, there lies a meaning. Co-writer Spicer has prosessed her intention to make a 'short, feminist comedy', and in Position Vacant, she has succeeded. The film recently won 'Best Comedy' at the Glen Eira Film Festival, and will no doubt be appearing elsewhere over the next few years.

So if you manage to catch Burns's animated, razor-toothed piss pump in action, enjoy and be aware: the penis is now a genre. ●
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Stephen Johnson’s first feature has a strong and irresistible storyline, and its Arnhem Land setting is magically surreal with fantastic land and waterscapes. Johnson’s directed Yothu Yindi’s video clips, their Tribal Voice doco, and the Yunupingu brothers are associate producers.

Yolngu Boy’s protagonists are three boys who grow up together in Yirrkala, so close, they are almost like brothers. In flashbacks we see them aged nine, beginning to be initiated into secret men’s business and here you can hardly tell them apart. They are young and free and undaunted. But at 14, things are beginning to change. Botj has just been released from a stint in juvenile jail, Lorrpu dreams of returning to the ways of traditional hunting, and Milika wants to play football in Darwin. Girls have also become a complication. Botj comes home to Yirrkala wired for trouble and, despite the warnings of his Uncle Matjala, he ends up in hospital badly burned. Then in a moment of inspiration (or madness?), Lorrpu decides on a desperate measure and the three boys set off on an epic journey overland to Darwin.

Chris Anastassiades’ [Wog Boy] inventive script moves the film along, but something happened on the way to the shoot. DOP Brad Shield’s hand held sequences start to jar, and editor Ken Sallows (Chopper) keeps chopping into scenes at arbitrary points. It’s not that the video clip style isn’t visually enticing but the constant breaking up of the material doesn’t let the characters breathe. Sadly there’s also an inevitability about the film’s ending. Director Stephen Johnson lives in Darwin and has cast three young untrained actors to play the leads. They are superb, especially the tortured Botj (Sean Mununggurr), who emerged late into test screenings of nearly 1000 youths, to play alongside John Sebastian and Nathan Daniels. The young girl who likes Lorrpu is a beguiling mixture of innocence and experience, and Makuma Yunupingu as the Uncle and Nungri Yunupingu as the wise elder give moody ambient performances. Jack Thompson appears once or twice as a senior policeman. Finally Yolngu Boy seems to promise so much more than it actually delivers. But my Koori friend and I came out of the cinema depressed by a missed opportunity. It’s still a brave attempt to do something different, but in the end it’s not different enough. If the filmmakers had been braver and more inspired by films such as Walkabout, Thunderheart and The Thin Red Line, we could have had something to really remember.
The Monkey's Mask

DIRECTOR
SAMANTHA LANG

SUSIE PORTER, KELLY MCGILLIS, MARTIN CSOKAS, ABBIE CORNISH

PRODUCER
ROBERT CONNOLLY, JOHN MAYNARD, DOMENICO PROCACCI (CO-PRODUCER)

WRITER
ANNE KENNEDY, ADAPTED FROM DOROTHY PORTER NOVEL

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DURATION
90 MINUTES

→ Susie Porter’s character opens The Monkey’s Mask with a question for herself: “Jill, how much guts have you got?” If the question was asked of director Samantha Lang, the answer would be “fair whack”. Unfortunately, there’s little glory in her gutsy effort. The Monkey’s Mask is a good-looking, occasionally diverting, film but one conspired to wilt commercially. No

dishonour there, lesbian private investigator tales set in the rollicking Sydney poetry scene do not have successful antecedents. Lang’s intentions with this adaptation of the Dorothy Porter verse novel of the same name aren’t quite clear. With its atmospheric, stiff silences and Jill’s matter of fact narration, it is in many ways your standard p.i. drama. But its overblown denouement, in which the weapon is strikingly revealed, could well be straight from an episode of Chances. Whatever the intention, and I sense it were 200 years back.

The shock value in Quills is never derived from the Marquis’ own text - his limericks and salacious, scandalous prose are treated throughout with the bawdiness of an old Carry On routine. Instead, the drama is drawn from the reactions his words stir, while the grandeur comes simply from the writer’s intentions with this adaptation - 20th CENTURY FOX

Quills

DIRECTOR
PHILIP KAUFMAN
CAST
GEOFFREY RUSH, MICHAEL CAINE, KATE Winslet, JOAQUIN PHOENIX, JANE MENELAUS

PRODUCERS
NICK WECHSLER, PETER KAUFMAN, JULIA CLASMAN

SCREENPLAY
DOUG WRIGHT

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN
US

DISTRIBUTION
20TH CENTURY FOX

→ Quills isn’t quite in the tradition of Shakespeare In Love, While Hollywood has a long history in pilfering the biographies of the art world’s most famous and infamous figures, liberally turning facts upside down under its own artistic licence, rarely has it resorted to such

unsavoury themes as necrophilia, sodomy and so forth to incite a reaction from its audiences.

And certainly never when a project has involved a cast of its brightest players. But in tackling the legend of the Marquis de Sade, as tempting a forbidden literary pleasure as it has always been, such subjects are unavoidable and prove to be just as effective a dramatic device as they were 200 years back. The film stumbles because of its

dramatic device as they were 200 years back.

But the shock value in Quills is never derived from the Marquis’ own text - his limericks and salacious, scandalous prose are treated throughout with the bawdiness of an old Carry On routine. Instead, the drama is drawn from the reactions his words stir, while the grandeur comes simply from the period in which the story is set. On the art side, Quills explores such hefty concepts as freedom of expression, some bit-players (a couple of performances are most ill-conceived although the stars - Caroline Gillmer, Jean-Pierre Mignon, Chris Haywood, Deborah Mailman, and William Zappa - suggest they should not be). Then Kennedy’s screenplay focuses upon the burgeoning affair between Jill and Diana. All the while, Jill’s inner thoughts give it the cred of a reflective French-style female character study, without the wank. Unfortunately, it tends to focus upon the affair and treat the mystery as an overblown hindrance.

Despite the film’s brazen nudity and language – or perhaps due to – this lesbian affair has all the truth and heat of a Ken Russell film. Their first love-making scene is embarrassingly short and unconvincing, more a still life than a leap into something torrid. A later scene works but McGillis appears to be vamping it up far too much to be simpatico with Porter’s truer performance.

Technically, it’s one of the more accomplished Australian efforts of recent years. Lang abandons the artful but artificial look of the over-rated The Well for a crisper view. Gary Phillips’ framing of Sydney, particularly as a windowed backdrop, is understated but always interesting. Single Gun Theory also adds an agreeable score.

To its credit, The Monkey’s Mask is certainly a distinct Australian film. It’s just with its inconsistent performances, erratic tone and jerky screenplay, this film is too different too often.

MICHAEL BODEY
Memento

DIRECTOR
CHRISTOPHER NOLAN
CAST
GUY PEARCE, CARRIE-ANN MOSS, JOE PANTOLIANO
PRODUCERS
JENNIFER TODD, SUSANNE TODD & WILLIAM TRYER
WRITER
CHRISTOPHER NOLAN FROM A JONATHAN NOLAN STORY
DISTRIBUTOR
BVI
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN
US
DURATION
113 MINUTES

Above: Guy Pearce and Carrie-Ann Moss in Memento
Below: Guy Pearce

Pearce’s performance is a cracker, not once lurching into that grievous sort of revenge mode Stallone and Van Damme types draw upon. This is convincing stuff that shows he can carry a film.

Nolan’s direction is sharp, if a little too pleased with itself and its David Fincher-type stylings. Technically though, Memento doesn’t slip up once throughout its sharp screenplay. Inventive, enthralling cinema.

~MICHAEL BODEY

The Brits seem to have something about going backwards. Author Martin Amis [Time’s Arrow, playwright Harold Pinter (Betrayal, d. Jones, 1982) and now exciting London director Christopher Nolan all explored the reverse narrative. This ambitious story-telling ploy could invite claims of pretentiousness, as well as bring troublesome muddles in its making. Yet Nolan’s visual and plot acuity in Memento combine with a bravura lead performance by Geelong-bred Guy Pearce to produce an original take on an abused genre, the new noir thriller.

Memento will also re-launch Pearce in a 2001 likely to be for the actor what 2000 was for fellow LA Confidential star, Russell Crowe.

Memento will tempt lazy comparisons to recent noir examples like The Usual Suspects, or the films of Carl Franklin and John Dahl but it owes more to Point Blank (Boorman, 1967), Madigan (Siegel, 1967), The Long Goodbye (Altman, 1973) and earlier works. It doesn’t approach the machismo-driven, stylistically pretentious style of today’s LA noir. Rather Memento paces a cool, modern, and only occasionally showy, tightrope walk.

Nolan gives Pearce a character that suits him down to the ground, a suave, not overly expressive man with a job to do. Pearce seems best when his characters don’t need swagger and when he makes you puzzle at what’s going on behind those razor cheekbones and steely eyes. The film begins focused tightly on a fading photograph held by Leonard Shelby (Pearce), who’s standing over a body. It soon transpires Shelby uses such photos from his Instamatic camera to keep track of his life. Assorted notes, reminders, even tattoos littered throughout his existence are his only form of memory because Shelby lost his recall after a grave head injury. But yes, he has motivation, indeed a purpose, to his now charmless life: revenge. But how satisfying is revenge when you won’t remember it?

Nolan’s backwards exposition would seem to make little sense when his motivation is bared so early but a smart, logical conclusion enhances a tense journey. Every action is loaded with meaning, even if the director sometimes labours points. Memento is in effect a three-hander chamber piece. Only Shelby’s nervy and completely sux aide Teddy (Pantoliano) and the distraction Natalie (Moss) impinge upon what is an intriguing and chilling excursion for our protagonist.

~DINO SCATENA

...censorship, artistic responsibility. On the life side, it juxtaposes multiple levels of evil and human fallibility. Whatever the flaws in Quills, and there are several [subplots left dangling, overwrought morality subtexts], it is lifted high by the performances of its superb, international A-list cast. Despite being dealt fairly two-dimensional characters, Michael Caine, Joaquin Phoenix and Kate Winslet all shine, the power of their individual screen presence still given more than enough scope to steal several scenes apiece. But make no mistake - Quills is a stage purpose-built for Geoffrey Rush. The intentional rigidity of the supporting characters makes his overly flamboyant Marquis the undisputed centre of this messed up universe. Each of Rush’s energetic scenes deserves a standing ovation in its own right. Could anyone else have made this self-centred, ultimately spiteful despicable pornographer so enchanting and likable?

He’s even allowed to bring his real-life wife in on the party. Stage veteran Jane Fonda, who’s standing over a body. It soon transpires Shelby uses such photos from his Instamatic camera to keep track of his life. Assorted notes, reminders, even tattoos littered throughout his existence are his only form of memory because Shelby lost his recall after a grave head injury. But yes, he has motivation, indeed a purpose, to his now charmless life: revenge. But how satisfying is revenge when you won’t remember it?

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Asian films with its Silk Screen series last year. In the Mood for Love was one of many Asian films which screened at Cannes, picking up competition prizes for best actor Tony Leung and best cinematography – won by Australian DOP Christopher Doyle. Wong who shares his passion for
Wong uses slow, hypnotic camera
movements and a warm balance
between colour and contrast to provide
impressive without being intrusive.
In the Mood for Love does not have the
deliberately mismatched stocks and
colour and contrast to provide

Tony Leung and Maggie Cheung get In the Mood For Love

• JASON HARDY

The 6th Day

DIRECTOR ROGER SPOTTISWOODE
CAST ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER, TONY GOLDWYN, MICHAEL RAPAPORT, MICHAEL ROOKER, SARAH WINTER, WENDY CREWS, ROB ROWLAND, TERRY CREWS, ROBERT DUVALL.
PRODUCERS MIKE McDAVY, ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER, JON DAVISON
SCREENWRITER CORMAC WIBBERLEY AND MARIANNE WIBBERLEY
DISTRIBUTOR COLUMBIA TRISTAR
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN US
DURATION 123 MINUTES

Ah, so the inevitable comes to pass. Two Arnies. A dream come true for anyone who ascribes to the belief that you can never get too much Arnie.
Unfortunately, double the dose doesn’t mean that The 6th Day is twice as good as any of Arnold Schwarzenegger’s other films. In fact, it struggles on almost every level as it attempts to find some middle ground between the schmaltzy Arnie (Kindergarten Cop) and action Arnie (Terminator). Adam Gibson (Schwarzenegger) is a very normal, happy family man (familiar territory these days in Arnie land) until he suddenly finds himself the innocent victim of an illegal-genetic-cloning-project-gone-wrong. Set in the not too distant future, The 6th Day (from the biblical passage “... and God created man on the sixth day”) finds Earth riddled with genetically engineered pets. Human cloning is outlawed. But millionaire and megalomaniac Michael Drucker (Tony Goldwyn) is doing it anyway and accidentally clones the wrong guy. So Gibson goes home to his

In the Mood for Love

DIRECTOR WONG KAR-WAI
CAST TONY LEUNG, MAGGIE CHEUNG, LAI CHIN, REBECCA PAN, SUI-PING-LAM
PRODUCER WONG KAR-WAI, WILLIAM CHANG
WRITER WONG KAR-WAI
DISTRIBUTOR DENDY FILMS
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN HONG KONG
DURATION 90 MINUTES

Bookmakers for UK industry magazine Moving Pictures have listed Wong Kar-wai’s In the Mood for Love as the 3-1 second favourite to win this year’s Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film behind Ang Lee’s unbackable Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon.

While the Hong Kong-produced film will find it tough going against such stiff competition, the honour caps a year which saw an explosion in the worldwide appetite for Asian films, with a strong showing of Asian films in festival line-ups and awards the world over.

Similarly, Columbia TriStar locally mined a rich vein of local support for

CINEMA PAPERS: FEBRUARY - MARCH 2001 [17]
picture-perfect life to find that he's already at home. Of course, since Gibson has seen his own clone, he must be killed. Enter the henchman and woman: Marshall (Michael Rooker) and Talia (Newcastle-born Sarah Wynter). Their mission is tolynch Gibson at any cost. Their own deaths are not an issue—they've already died plenty of times and come back as clones. Naturally, there's lots of bad acting from Schwarzenegger, but at least in having his own clone there on screen with him, Arnie's got someone to laugh at his own jokes. To be fair, Schwarzenegger isn't the only culprit in the bad acting stakes. With the exception of Sarah Wynter and the infallible Robert Duvall (Dr. Griffin Weir), everyone involved gives a lackluster performance. But rather than fall victim to pretentiousness, this stunning and ambitious film by Hong Kong/Australian director Clara Law is relentlessly visual, a showy catalogue of her skills in evoking the ephemeral surfaces and textures of life lived in a transnational world. This insistent showmanship and stylistic excess will divide audiences. Like the Citroen DS automobile (the Goddess of the title), some will find it sublime, elegant; others will deem it grotesque and pretentious.

As in their earlier films, Autumn Moon (1992) and Floating Life (1996), Law and her scriptwriter husband Eddie Fong, here take a young angst-ridden Asian male (known only as JM) and send him drifting into an alien culture. This character, suitably underplayed by newcomer Japanese Prada model Rikuya Kurokawa, is handsomely bland and restrained, but always suggesting emergent warmth and injured humanity. As he dances alone in his Tokyo apartment, after feeding boiled mice to his pet snakes, his exhilaration is startling; autistic and pure. Of course, since Gibson has seen his own clone, he must be killed. Enter the henchman and woman: Marshall (Michael Rooker) and Talia (Newcastle-born Sarah Wynter). Their mission is to Lynch Gibson at any cost. Opening the door to him is the blind BG (Rose Byrne) who eats a meal amidst the gore. Like a fumbling and slightly bruised Botticelli angel, Byrne is both earthy and otherworldly. It is an awkward, jarring, yet ultimately compelling performance that won her a best actress award at the Venice Film Festival. Together the strange pair drives into the centre of Australia, searching for the true owner of the goddess. DOP Don Beebe (Holy Smoke, Praise) proves yet again that he is a master alchemist with Australian light, making interesting what we have seen far too often—the painfully blue skies, scrappy trees and shimmering bitumen of outback road movies. While JM tries to describe Tokyo as like Mars, it is the salt-crusted lakes of our own interior, and the underground dwellings of Coober Pedy that truly seem alien and ancient. Tokyo’s smooth cool surfaces, blurred with constant motion, seem at least to be creations of human intention. As the surreal journey progresses, depicted with high-contrast bleached out colours, BG’s violent past is evoked through flashbacks. These miniature stories, which contain the essence of her twisted gothic relationships with her mother (Elise McCredie) and grandfather (Nicholas Hope), are told with telling colour palettes ranging from whitewashed sand to earth tones through passionate plum purples and reds. While visually striking, these moody vignettes seem underscenario and overacted. Hope’s abusive monster is bizarre beyond belief, and it seems a pity that this original piece of cinema must turn on a narrative that is, like far too many these days, built around the cliched revelation of child sexual abuse. This twisted outworking of family romance may be a sad statistical reality, but it feels like a storytelling shortcut, a lazy and inadequate way to explicate character. Ultimately this story should be about the faltering growth of cross-cultural intimacy, and while Byrne and Kurokawa manage to portray a weird tragicomic love link, each and every one of the performers seems lost and disoriented, in search of direction. Law’s overemphasis on the ‘look’ of the film may spectacularly invoke the isolation of the postmodern condition, but her characters need more of her attention if they are to truly reach out to each other and to the viewer. • ROCHELLE SIEMENOWICZ

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These days, in the age of the no-holds-barred biography, it's common knowledge that a creative genius can also be hell to live with, with philandering and emotional abuse par for the course. William S. Burroughs not only neglected his wife, but shot her dead in the course of a "William Tell" party trick, an event that he claimed profoundly influenced his writing henceforth. Although generally known only for the circumstances of her death, Joan Vollmer was in fact a key figure in the formation of the Beat movement - and Beat is here to tell her story. Courtney Love was no doubt cast on the strength of her performance in The People vs Larry Flynt, and it doesn't hurt the film that this is a largely reprise of that role - an intelligent, independent but troubled young woman. Ron Livingston is excellent as Allen Ginsberg, as is Norman Reedus as Lucien Carr, the relatively unknown, non-writer of the group, whose attractiveness to men and women alike drives the entire story. Though raves have been going on in the US for years, it seems the electronic dance scene is now taking off in a big way. The medium is very much the message here - eclectic filming techniques, cyberdelic animation and of course plenty of dance. The artists are mostly quite articulate, and their interviews have been carefully assembled to draw out common ground. From big names like Moby and Carl Cox to more fringe artists such as Scanner and Psychic TV, a collective message forms - this, for dropping it big time. In truth, the screenplay is based on one written by Welles and companion/collaborator, Oja Kodar. Director George Hickenlooper (Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker's Apocalypse) and F.X. Feeney have substantially rewritten the piece, updating the political landscape. Essentially this is a story about political skeletons-in-the-closet. William Hurt is Blake Pellarin, an independent candidate running for Governor of Missouri. His wife [Miranda Richardson, teetering on the brink of parody] has endured his Clinton-esque series of dalliances for so long that she now does little more than hiss at him between chugs of vodka. Nigel Hawthorne really carries the film, with his subtle, complex portrayal of the ex-senator who raised Pellarin and his brother. As this was made by Mel Gibson's Fox, the film's main flaw is that it expends too much time and energy on the convoluted events of the present; you may want to scream, "That's It?"
Recent visitor to Australia, Professor Ray Carney, has finally published his academic hagiography of British director Mike Leigh. The Films of Mike Leigh, Embracing The World (Carney and Quart, Cambridge University Press, $34.95/$99.00 hb). After a smoothly written introductory biography, this book makes a solid case for Leigh’s worth with its even-handed criticisms. Then it veers into an empathetic film by film analysis. Carney and Quart come from the position that the director produces great art, so any other view is confidently dispatched. Carney persuasively, and rightly, distinguishes Leigh’s style both from fellow malcontent Ken Loach and the Hollywood modus operandi of unreality (it’s not as obvious as it sounds). But he does so with an infuriating style that presages any logical synthesis of one statement with paragraphs of academic waffle. It’s dangerously indulgent but thoughtful. Then again, how can you take seriously someone who spells Jody Foster thus or a book that hasn’t yet chronicled Secrets & Lies, Career Girls and Topsy-Turvy?

Original poster and a no-nonsense reproduction of the text, a jaunty little tale of a college guy gone nuts. Admittedly, director Oswald added a fine visual touch to the film adaptation but Levin’s novel displays why ‘noir’ thrillers were so great at displaying tension, threat and panic - economy. You don’t read novels with such stark exposition as this nowadays. Already Levin has three novels in this bright, repackaged series (The Stepford Wives and The Boys From Brazil). Bloomsbury’s selections thus far, including Once upon A Time In America, Deliverance and Vertigo, are inspired commercial marketing. Look up A Kiss Before Dying in the Time Out Film Guide (9th edition 2001, Penguin, $40.00) and you’ll find two on-the-money reviews of the ’55 and ’91 films. With 13,300 films reviewed, it’s no Maltin’s Movie & Video Guide (he’s well over 20,000 reviews now), particularly with the standard of the 150-300 word reviews varying from the well considered to the glib (Gettysburg is “a film about men with whiskers”); Jules.
et. "watchable"). As with all guides, it can be maddeningly frustrating — why bother with a 200-word plot synopsis for *Jumanji*? — but this one’s value lies up the back. Its appendices are knockouts — film categories; major film producing countries including, aw shucks, 240 Australian films listed; an actors index, a comprehensive directors index; and assorted awards lists. Its general subject index makes this an essential reference book though. Thirteen films about sex changes [see also Hermaphroditism] anyone?

“She is the man I would have liked to be,” Gerard Depardieu said of Catherine Deneuve, according to Cassell’s Movie Quotations (Nigel Rees, Cassell Reference, $59.95). Attractively, almost indulgently, presented, this is an inviting collection of quotes from on and off screen, including sections of cliches, slogans, catchphrases and origins of film titles. Unsurprisingly, the best quotes are about actors, not from them. Very entertaining.

*The Variety International Film Guide 2001* (Faber & Faber, $40.00), with its survey of the film year in countries from Argentina to Zimbabwe and its five directors of the year (including Lasse Hallstrom?), wants to be to film as the *Wisden Almanac* is to cricket. Very handy stuff, particularly for producers on the international flog but its harsh layout and advertising ensure it is an office reference, not something for the home bookcase.

Steve Martin’s novella, *Shopgirl* (Allen & Unwin, $24.95) is a gorgeously presented book but its contents have been praised too much. Now, I’m as big a Martin fan as one could be. I find his whimsies for *The New Yorker* essential. But his sly, thoughtful observations and tangential comic ideas rarely surface in this slight, ultimately forgettable tale of a glove counter girl who struggles to find love, or a life in Los Angeles. Not hardly as enchanting as his plays or screenplays, flawed as they can be, *Shopgirl* is fey rather than funny. Steve, you don’t need to be a serious writer, you’re a serious talent.

— MICHAEL BOOEY
GLADIATOR

**DIRECTOR** Ridley Scott  
**CAST** Russell Crowe, Joaquin Phoenix, Connie Nielsen, Oliver Reed, Richard Harris  
**PRODUCERS** David H. Frankel, Brian Luechtefeld, Steven Spielberg, Douglas Wick  
**DISTRIBUTOR** Columbia TriStar  
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN** US  
**DURATION** 134 minutes  
**PRICE** $39.95

**» The biggest film of 2000 just got bigger! By about seven minutes, and that’s just the main feature.**
The two-disc, "deluxe collector’s edition" DVD release of *Gladiator* (is there any other kind?) includes three bonus video documentaries – a soft, hour-long *Entertainment Tonight*-style look at the legend of the Roman gladiators, a "behind-the-scenes" extended promo and a boring profile on composer Hans Zimmer. But it’s the briefest of the extra elements which is the most fascinating: 11 fully-conceived, deleted scenes, each with an optional voice-over from director Ridley Scott explaining exactly why they didn’t make the final cut. Several are simply drawn-out, mood-setters, sensibly dropped from what made the final cut. There are two additional, contemporary featurettes on this single disc release: (stuff like how many toy Aston Martin cars got sold). Each relies heavily on archival material to package up with the feature itself (which, incidentally, looks stunningly vibrant in this form). There are two additional, contemporary documentaries presented here, one on the making of, the other curiously accompanies every modern release. One thing the special features section doesn’t explain is us how our hero Aussie Mel can live with himself (the already now-standard behind-the-scenes extended promo which accompanies every modern release!)

FIGHT CLUB

**DIRECTOR** David Fincher  
**CAST** Edward Norton, Brad Pitt, Helena Bonham Carter, Meat Loaf  
**PRODUCERS** Ross Belf, Christian Chabert, Art Linson  
**DISTRIBUTOR** Twentieth Century Fox  
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN** US  
**DURATION** 114 minutes  
**PRICE** $37.95

**» Film directors must love DVD:**
Previously they’d have to write books to reveal the subtleties of their cinematic genius. Now, with the flick of a switch on the remote control, they can be sitting over the viewer’s shoulder, whispering every minute detail of their thought process like a little kid in a cinema who just won’t shut up.

Most of these directorial commentaries are sombre, analytical affairs. Not so on *Fight Club*, where director David Fincher is happy to share his audio spotlight with the film’s stars and the whole thing sounds more like a party rather than an anachronistic extension of the on-screen action. In this instance, it’s Edward Norton who just won’t shut up, displaying a rather obsession-affection for his own work. Brad Pitt plays the dumb blonde, not saying much at all. Helena Bonham Carter, whose contribution was recorded separately from the others, doesn’t have much insight to offer either, but at least she gets the chance to get a word in. There are a handful of deleted and alternative takes (nothing special) and a complete illustrated storyboard, but the most interesting bonus feature in this immaculately presented two-disc set are the mini-docos on the film’s special effects.

So you get to see exactly how to blow up a city skyline, or what it takes for Norton to put a bullet through his head. Pity it’s just an effect.

GOLDFINGER

**DIRECTOR** Guy Hamilton  
**CAST** Sean Connery, Gert Frobe, Harold Sakata, Honor Blackman  
**PRODUCERS** Albert R. Broccoli, Harry Saltzman  
**DISTRIBUTOR** Twentieth Century Fox  
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN** UK  
**DURATION** 105 minutes  
**PRICE** $37.95

**» A dilemma for Hollywood studios:**
How do you make your library of cinema classics attractive in a home-entertainment format that demands the tag “jam-packed with exclusive additional special features”?

What most have opted for, some considerably more successfully than others, is to plough the archives for anything loosely related to their feature presentation: old adverts, trailers, promo stilts, new introductions by old stars. Unfortunately, that only ever offers an additional few minutes of entertainment.

But no such problem for a classic such as 1964’s *Goldfinger*. Sean Connery’s third appearance as James Bond was set to be a blockbuster even before its release, so there’s an abundance of archival material to package up with the feature itself (which, incidentally, looks stunningly vibrant in this form). There are two additional, contemporary documentaries presented here, one on the "making of", the other curiously accompanies every modern release. One thing the special features section doesn’t explain is us how our hero Aussie Mel can live with himself (the already now-standard behind-the-scenes extended promo which accompanies every modern release!)

THE PATRIOT

**DIRECTOR** Roland Emmerich  
**CAST** Mel Gibson, Greg Hamid, Jodie Foster, Joaquin Phoenix, Martin Landau, Rene Auberjonois, Tom Wilkinson, Chris Cooper, Tchéky Karyo  
**DISTRIBUTOR** Columbia TriStar  
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN** US  
**DURATION** 135 minutes  
**PRICE** $40

**» The DVD version of The Patriot contains one of the format’s most innovative special features. But you can’t see it just by looking at it.**
This disc is the first DVD to be encrypted with Regional Coding Enhancement, the Hollywood studios’ latest weapon to enforce its region restriction system. (Apparently this disc won’t play on a multi-region DVD player.)

Of the disc’s other special features, its interactive visual effects feature is the cleverest. Each of the five scenes examined is split into three concurrently running film loops, each representing a different stage and layer of the effect. There’s also a bonus six deleted scenes which, if they’d been included, would have pushed the [ahem] civil war epic over the three-hour mark [arrggh]

There’s also two additional mini-featurettes on this single disc release: *The Art Of War* (where we get a history lesson on the American Revolution) and *The Patriots* (the already now-standard behind-the-scenes extended promo which accompanies every modern release!)

One thing the special features section doesn’t explain is us how our hero Aussie Mel can live with himself (the already now-standard behind-the-scenes extended promo which accompanies every modern release!)

Dino Scatena and Rachel Newman
The arrival of digital TV and the increasing sophistication of the internet and gaming are propelling the local visual effects forward fast. Once visual effects for film and television were created on set or on tape but film and television product is increasingly shot or scanned in digital format where effects can be created or manipulated using specialised FX computer systems.

The head of post house AA V's digital pictures division, John Fleming, says “because film can be scanned into digital we now post produce features the way we post TV programs.” This allows directors and techs to do “amazing things with images” during post production like grading scenes with a particular colour. According to Fleming, the next 18 months will also see the wider application of new “datacines” that scan film at very high resolutions allowing even greater manipulation of images.

Although the software used for feature film effects differs from the software used in web design, they have some common technical elements, enabling operators to transfer skills across mediums. According to Energee Entertainment's executive producer, Gerry Travers, “just different resolutions and frame rates” apply. The graphics composing principles for film, television, video games and web sites “are the same.”

AVID Australia is a key local supplier of computer based design and editing tools for film and television product. Marketing manager Garrick Simeon says “many of AVID's software and hardware products provide convergent possibilities and all current editing equipment can create files for use by web sites”. In June 2000, AVID released a new hardware product globally that facilitates the streaming of video and other high bandwidth content over the internet in real time. AAV Australia offers video streaming to server as part of its corporate services and Cutting Edge post production in Brisbane and recently streamed an outside broadcast live to web site for Queensland’s Remote Medical Association.

Animal logic was an Australian pioneer in computer generated images for film and television and is now one of the largest visual effects providers to local corporate and entertainment sectors. Research and development of digital technologies have enabled the company to diversify into software development and interactive media like www.mysteryclock.com and computer game animation. Early in 2000, the company launched a dedicated interactive arm, Animal Logic Play, under the direction of Andy Polaine, a co-founder of London-based “new media collective” Antirion. Polaine says while Animal Logic considers interactive media a distinctly different medium to film and television, “the consistent use of digital technologies across all our production processes” allows the skills in one area of the business to be “more easily applied to another”. Animal Logic takes the position that the delivery technology is just a tool - whether it is web, net, cinema or television screen. “The real challenge is coming up with creative ideas that utilise those tools,” he says.

The art director of Sydney ad agency Kennedy Rea, Adam McCulloch, has a similar slant: “No matter which technology you choose” he says, “it all comes back to how well you tell your story”.

AAV's John Fleming predicts that interactivity will be one of the largest growth areas for the industry over the next two years. He believes that digital television will figure largely in interactive consumer activities with “pay TV stations already moving towards interactivity in broadcasts”. Andy Polaine concurs “the web is only a slice of the net and the internet is only a slice of interactive media as a whole” and that “interactive TV could have a really rosy future” with the cooperation of relevant corporate and government bodies.

Once film or television product becomes a computer file – or series of files – using digital tools, it can be transported to any compatible portal in the world via the internet. This makes web and internet technology integral to efficient co-productions between local and international agencies, eg, feature film The Matrix which involved three visual effects providers: two in Australia (Animal Logic and D-Film) and Mannix in San Francisco, and much internet circulation of electronic files.

above: Animal Logic is one of the largest visual effects providers and has recently diversified into software development and interactive media like www.mysteryclock.com.

left: AAV is working on Esben Storm's Subterano for Becker films.
At the time of writing, Cutting Edge in Brisbane was shooting live material for the 22-part US TV series *Beastmaster* and transporting the film rushes daily via internet to production partner Alliance Atlantis in Canada where most of the post production is carried out. “We can have material to Canada in a matter of two hours this way,” claims operations manager Michael Burton, but setting up the internet courier facility was involved and expensive. “We worked with engineers six months out before deciding on the Telestream System,” he says, which was chosen because it compresses high quality video into a file format that can be transported via the internet. Burton adds that “the system was brand new and had only been used once by Animal Logic on *The Matrix*”. Access to high bandwidth for the rapid delivery of Telestream generated files to Canada required installation of a fibre optic cable at the Brisbane office. “We paid Telstra AUD$110,000 for set up,” says Burton, “and then around AUD$10,000 a month for bandwidth use”. “Telstra hardly moved at all on their standard price” despite the fact that Cutting Edge used its own interface equipment with the new cable. Burton says Australian telephony costs are “10 times” the cost of equivalent US services and “broadband costs in Australia should be cheaper than the cost of a courier”.

**→ LOBBYING FOR MORE FIBRE**

Dominick Case is chairman of FIBRE (Film Industry Broadband Resources Enterprise) - an Australian “screen industry” alliance set up to secure lower broadband costs for local film productions. Case defines broadband as “high speed exchange of screen images or data beyond the capabilities of a standard internet cable connection” and believes that the entire image production industry needs cost effective broadband access in order to advance. According to Case, this view is supported by the Australian Department of Industry who concluded in a year 2000 report on the film industry, “that we are being held back by the costs of broadband within the country and internationally”. FIBRE is not a “closed or exclusive group” and is hoping to broaden its membership across “ad agencies, web and game designers and anyone who has a common interest”, says Case. Larger numbers will help the alliance negotiate lower broadband rates based on volume discounts. FIBRE has also applied for funding from the federal government and had not yet received a response at the time of writing. Case believes “if we open up broadband, it will add to the attractiveness of Australia as an arena for footloose productions, ie, Americans leaving Hollywood to shoot here”. As he points out, Australia also offers the rest of the world. The significant benefit of a different time zone where work can be done in the downtime in another country. “If you involve America, Australia and Europe on a production” says Case, “you can do three eight hour shifts back to back – ‘bring in the sun’ in industry slang”. Despite broadband issues, Brisbane- and Sydney-based visual effects agency Photon has been building a large Los Angeles client base since 1991. “We invented the visual effects industry in this country,” claims managing director Dale Duigan. “There was no industrialisation of the industry ten years ago and it wasn’t user friendly when we started up” he says. First client was Warner Bros who purchased audio visual content for its local theme parks. To date, Photon has created ten thousand visual effects mostly for feature film and TV production. Fourteen hundred of these were produced last year alone - one thousand of which were exported to the US. Photon was also sole visual effects subcontractor on a major US studio blockbuster due for release here in June. Duigan could not reveal any details about the release, but says that “Photon helped create its new technology paradigm”. • MEGAN SLOLEY

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SCREENSOUND AUSTRALIA
NATIONAL FILM AND SOUND ARCHIVE
The basics of animation remain unchanged since Mickey Mouse was created but according to Energee's Gerry Travers, computers, the web and the internet are driving innovation in Australia. The local industry covers both animated effects for film, television, commercials, web sites, web advertising, computer and video games and fully animated products like feature films, television and web series. Most of our major post production and visual effects facilities now have an animation department or animation specialists to handle effects work.

→ AAV Australia-owned lloura Post Production in Melbourne was a traditional post-production agency until it merged with Zephyr Animation in 1999. The merger reflected a computer driven industry evolution where animation would become "an essential tool for post production," according to visual effects supervisor Julian Dimsey.

Although lloura is "capable of creating an animated feature from the ground up", it currently works exclusively on commercials for both the Australian market, (eg, Billabong icecreams and ANA monopoly both feature computer animated effects) and increasingly for Asia.

Animation is now almost exclusively created in 2D and 3D formats using computer hardware and software though "storyboards are one of the most important and creatively dynamic departments," says Gerry Travers.

AVID Australia’s Andre DeAngelis explains traditional cell-based animation which "requires drawings to be scanned into a computer and painted" is being replaced by computer software "which uses 3D to produce a 2D cell animated look". AVID is the local distributor of Softimage XSI, one of "three top of the line software packages for 3D animation composing along with Maya and 3D Studio Max," according to Dimsey.

→ LOCAL INNOVATIONS

Though no local company or individual has developed a comprehensive animation software package, Australian owned Blaze International in Melbourne has developed Famous Faces - a revolutionary 3D animator tool for imbuing computer generated faces with real facial movement. It has particular relevance for animated characters backed by celebrity voices, eg, Dragonheart where Sean Connery’s actual facial expressions were applied to the face of his animated dragon character. The software has sold well both locally and in the United States where Blaze has now set up a subsidiary office. Other local companies like lloura and Animal Logic develop inhouse software "plug-ins" when a project specific special effect is required, eg, a swarm of bees or a hurricane. Dimsey says, plug-ins are sometimes "released and sold over the web" with prices ranging from AUS$600 to $1000.

Blaze recently adapted Famous Faces software into a tool for the web market, which it promotes and sells at famous3D.com as part of its general transition from computer game design to the web design market.

"The skills involved in successful web sites," says Gordon Lescinsky, Director of Research and Development. Blaze is also seeking to specialise within the web design market, "trying to kick start a quality web medium just for faces that can give you instant personality on a web site," explains Lescinsky.

Energee is also harnessing the unique opportunities of the web environment to extend the distribution channels for existing animated properties, Wicked and The Magic Pudding, and to research and test prospective ideas. Energee currently "screens Wicked and The Magic Pudding "web series" at eKidz.com.au where it "builds an online community of kids by offering them a free email account, chatroom facilities, bulletin boards, animations and games," explains Travers. For Energee, this interactive environment provides information on what kids "want to see, hear and talk about". Travers acknowledges that Energee follows in the footsteps of John Kricfalusi (creator of Ren and Stimpy) who was the first to test a web animation property online.

Though "there aren’t many pure animation companies left in Australia," Travers says, Animation Works in Perth developed a fully animated television sitcom which will debut on SBS around June 2001 in the South Park timeslot. Quadsl! is the name of the 13-part series, which is a co-production with Nelvana - one of the largest animation companies in Canada. The series was created and executive produced by cartoonist John Callahan and is an irreverent take on quadriplegia (John has been quadriplegic since the age of 21) and other physical disabilities. "The entire series was created using web-based Flash software," says Animation Works’ Colin South, "and we scripted three of the 13 episodes; animated eight and completed all the post-production 'out of Perth.'"

In order to work most efficiently with Canada, Animation Works had to set up a high capacity cable connection to send Flash files across the internet. South explains that "we couldn’t get access to the cable in Melbourne due to Telstra’s connection problems", so the production was set up at a Perth location with an existing connection facility. The internet enabled the animators to work day and night across Canada and Australia though the connection would occasionally break down in Sydney or America. South and team knew the exact locations of the breakdowns due to yet another piece of technology, which traces the internet courier signal. "It worked out to be expensive," says South, "because we still send everything by physical courier as well - just in case."

Megan Sloley
Feature Films

In production

→ THE QUIET AMERICAN
Mirage Enterprises/Rumbalara Films

Principal Credits
Director: Philip Noyce
Producers: William Horburg, Stafan Ahrenberg, Sydney Sims
Line producer: Antonia Bernard
Production manager: Cameron McArthur
Scriptwriter: Christopher Hampton

Based on the novel. The Quiet American by Graham Greene
Castron: Michael Caine, Brendan Fraser

Synopsis
Graham Greene’s evocative tale of love and murder in Saigon at the end of the French Indochina war tells the story of an older British journalist covering the conflict, his Vietnamese mistress, and the young American posing as an aid worker but ultimately revealed as a spy, who arrives into their world with dangerous consequences for all.

→ SCOOBY-D-OOO
Atlas Entertainment/Warner Roadshow

Principal Credits
Director: Raja Gosnell
Producer: Charles Roven
Scriptwriter: Craig Titley

Synopsis
The Mystery Ink team break up Beatles-style after solving yet another baffling mystery. The famous five go their separate ways and lose contact, each pursuing their own tentative course. Two years later, Shaggy and Scooby-Doo instigate a reunion to help solve the mystery of a spooky theme park haunted by real-life demons.

→ EQUUS - THE STORY OF THE HORSE
Mullet Creek Productions and Beyond

Principal Credits
Director: Michael Caulfield
Producers: Liz Butler, Michael Caulfield
Scriptwriter: Michael Caulfield

Synopsis
Top Best: Garry Hill
Electricians: Paul Cumming, Joel Lategan
On-set Crew
1st assistant director: Toby Pease
2nd assistant director: Deb Antonschi
3rd assistant director: Matt Harris
Continuity: Kristin Voumard
Boom operator: Gerry Nucifora
Make-up/hair supervisor: Robbie Austin
Make-up/hair artists: Judy Davis, Pamela Roth
Units co-ordinator: Guy Norris
Still photography: Kiren Chang
Art department runner: Louise Sanderson
Set dressers: Beth Garswood, Jan Culverhouse
Draftsmen: Goderic Cole, Station Prop Garry Pease
Art director: Juliet John
Art department runner: Louise Sanderson
Film editor: David South
Production manager: Elisa Cowan
Sound recordist: Ben Osmo
Costume designer: Lisa Morrison
Construction manager: Tim Pease
Production designer: Luigi Abrahamson
Set designer: Eileen van der Heyden
Key Grip: David Nichols
Accounts assistant: Christina Van der Heyden
Insurer: HW Wood Australasia Pty Ltd

In post-production

→ LANTANA
Beyond Films

Principal Credits
Director: Ray Lawrence
Producers: Jan Chapman
Scriptwriter: Andrew Bolt
Based on the original play: Speaking in Tongues
Production Crew
1st assistant director: Jamie Crofts
DoP: Mandy Walker

Cast
Anthony La Paglia, Geoffrey Rush, Barbara Hershey, Kerry Armstrong, Rachael Blake, Vincent Perez, Sibylla Budd, David Wenham

Synopsis
Crossing the genre boundaries of thriller, mystery and romantic drama, Lantana centres on a number of characters at a crucial time in their lives. They are connected by a series of coincidences involving misperception, indifference and false assumption. The search for meaning by Leon, the main character, drives the narrative and by learning about the pain of others he comes to accept his own.

→ LET’S GET SKASE

Principal Credits
Director: Matthew George
Producers: John Tatoulis, Colin South, Sue Taylor
Scriptwriters: Matthew George, Lacry Hulme
Director of photography: Justin Birdclee
Production designer: Ralph Gaunt
Graphic artist: Michael Wholley
Props buyer: Nicole Palloch
Costume designer: Terri Lamer
Make-up/hair artists: Judy Davis, Pamela Roth
Unit Publicist: Tracy Mair

Synopsis
Anti-hero Peter Dellasandro and his posse of boys become men in the process of bringing Skase back from Majorca. The forces of good overcome all obstacles to triumph over the bad guys and a lot of laughs are had on the way.

→ HILDEGARDE

A Duck Film Pty Ltd
Distribution: Providence Entertainment (US), UIP (Aust)

Principal Credits
Director: Di Drew
Producers: Heather Ogilvie, David Hannay
Associate Producer: Colleen Champ
Scriptwriter: Gabrielle Prewerergast
Producer: Tom Holge

Synopsis
Hildegarde, a much-loved family pet, is kidnapped by native bird smugglers.

→ QUEEN OF THE DAMNED
D2 Productions

Principal Credits
Director: Michael Rymer
Producer: Jorge Saralegui, Su Armstrong
Scriptwriters: Michael Petroni, Stuart Townsend

Synopsis
Based on Anne Rice’s Queen of the Damned – a modern-day vampire thriller tracing the story of Lestat (last seen in Interview With a Vampire) who has reinvented himself as a rock star.

→ THE BANK
Araved Pro Co Ltd

Principal Credits
Director: Robert Connolly
Producer: John Maynard
Scriptwriter: Robert Connolly
Director of Photography: Tristan Milan
Editor: Nick Meyers
Planning and development: Stan Morris
Sound Designer: Sam Petty

Synopsis
Anti-hero Peter Dellasandro and his posse of boys become men in the process of bringing Skase back from Majorca. The forces of good overcome all obstacles to triumph over the bad guys and a lot of laughs are had on the way.
Principal Credits
Director: Murray Fahey
Producers: Chris Brown, David Hannay
Line producer: Tom Hoffie
Executive producers: Gary Hamilton, Mikael Borglund
Scriptwriters: Ian Coughlan, Murray Fahey
Director of photography: Philip M. Cross ACS
Sound: Greg Burgmann
Production Crew
Production designer: Sean Callinan
Onset Crew
Special fx: Greg Burgmann

Synopsis
Based on the diaries of Vaslav Nijinsky, written in 1919 in St Moritz where he had retired, suffering extreme mental agony. The film uses the words of Nijinsky, written in 1919 in St Moritz where he had retired, suffering extreme mental agony.

→ JET SET
Black Frame
Principal Credits
Director: Jonathan Ogilvie
Producer: Helen Bowden
Scriptwriter: Jonathan Ogilvie
Directors of photography: Simon Higgins, Jonathan Ogilvie
Cast
Sam Atwell, Jane Borghesi, Beth Champion
Synopsis
A series of flight delays gives a glimpse into the lives of a group of departing passengers.

→ NIJNIJSKI
Illumination Films and MusicAudsDance films
Distribution: Sharmill Films (Aust) and WTV (World & US)
Budget: 1.2 million
Principal Credits
Director: Paul Cox
Producers: Paul Cox, Aanya Whitehead
Executive producers: Kevin Lucas, William Marshall
Scriptwriter: Paul Cox
Based on the diaries of Vaslav Nijinsky
Composer: Paul Grabowsky
Planning and Development
Researchers: Leonie Verhoven, Margot Wirub Dance Consultant: Alida Chase
Shooting schedule by: Aanya Whitehead
Budgeted by: Aanya Whitehead
Production Crew
Director: Paul Cox
Scriptwriter: Jonathan Ogilvie
Principal Credits
Executive producers: Kevin Noble, Mikael Borglund
Scriptwriters: Peter Gawler, Katherine Thomson
Planning and Development
Script editor: Vicki Madden
Budgeted by: Sue Edwards
Production Crew
Production Associate: Andy Walker
Producer’s assistant: Anna Mantzoros
Completion guarantor: Film Finances, Inc
Legal services: Fiona Crago, Beyond International
Travel co-ordinator: Cheryl Hawkins, Stage & Screen
Travel
Freight co-ordinator: Stage & Screen
Freight
Government Agency
Investment
Australian Film Finance Corporation
Marketing
International sales agent: Beyond Distribution
International distributor: Beyond Distribution
Cast
Rebecca Gibney
Synopsis
Jane Halifax is a forensic psychiatrist, a psychological sleuth whose precinct is the dark side of the human mind. Retained by the police and the legal profession, Jane lives in a world of lies and shadows where the truth is never what it seems.

→ L’L’L’ HORRORS
December Films Australia
Distribution: Beyond International
Principal Credits
Directors: Chris Langman,
### THE ROAD FROM COORAIN

**Chapman Pictures Pty Ltd**

**Principal Credits**

*Producers: Penny Chapman, Sue Smith*

**Synopsis**

Based on Jill Ker Conway's celebrated autobiography, this is the story of a childhood. Set mainly on the western plains of NSW, The Road From Coorain is a witness to the relationship between extraordinary women over a lifetime of adversity.

### THE SALT OF THE EARTH

**Mahatma Gandhi**

**Glass Box**

Distribution: Glass Box Box Budget: $250,000

**Principal Credits**

*Producers: David and Sue Flatman*

**Synopsis**

Based on the novel titled: On the Salt of the Earth. This film follows several children who are attending Giant Steps, a special school of holistic on-one therapy for affected children in Sydney, whose progress to communication has defied their initial diagnoses.

### SMALL STEPS, GIANT STEPS

**Emerald Films**

**Synopsis**

Autism is a disorder that affects one in every 1000 children born in Australia. Most children suffering autism are initially categorised as 'unreachable' and until recently institutionalisation was the favoured therapy. The film follows several children who are attending Giant Steps, a special school of holistic on-one therapy for affected children in Sydney, whose progress to communication has defied their initial diagnoses.

### KILLER INSTINCT

**EPIX Pty Ltd**

Distribution: Associated Television International

Duration: 61 hour

**Principal Credits**

*Executive producers: Glenn Avini, Paul Sharratt, David MacKenzie*

Associate producer: Tony Ryan

Scriptwriters: Tony Ryan, Michelle Warner, Charles Boyle, Steven Waller, Gay Reid, Geoff Cooper.

Director of photography: Vic Martin

Editor: Marion Gibson Ross

Composer: Gary Smith

Sound designer: Rod Herbert

Sound recordist: Evan Burrows

Synopsis

Killer Instinct is a six part, one hour television series that takes you to the scene of the stalking and right to the kill. You're up close and personal.
with animals using their power, cunning and special genetic abilities to survive.

→ ANIMAL X - SERIES 2
Storyteller Productions
Duration: 13x30 minutes
Principal Credits
Executive producers: Mike Searle, Jennifer Wilson, Tim Sparkes
Producers: Mike Searle, Nigel Swetnam, Jennifer Wilson, Melanie Ambrose, Linda Searle, Caroline Bertram, Karen Ross, Rebecca Kellsall, Daniel Brown, Denise Blazek, Suzanne Farrow
Synopsis
As with series one, ANIMAL X - SERIES 2 investigates animal stories from around the world. From ghostly phenomena to lake monsters and mysterious sightings to unknown creatures.

→ INSIDE THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET
East Australian Film Company
Duration: 60min
Principal Credits
Directors: Bob Hardie, Matthew Dow
Producer: Bob Hardie
Co-producer: Matthew Dow
Synopsis
The Australian Ballet Company is recognised as one of the world's best. This series examines the way the ballet company works and the personalities that drive it. One of the highlights is an interview with the world. From ghostly phenomena to lake monsters and mysterious sightings to unknown creatures.

Recent funding decisions

■ Feature Films

→ THE TRACKER
Vertigo Productions Pty Ltd
Producer/director/writer: Rolf de Heer
Distribution: SBSI, PMP, Globe Entertainment, Intra Films
A set of mountain ranges in the outback, 1922... horseback country, and the Fanatic leads the other two white men, the Tracker, in the pursuit of the Fugitive. Through massacre and murder the hunt continues, until the clear-cut notions of truth and justice are subverted and the questions asked. What is black and what is white and who is leading whom?

→ DEADLY, UNNA?
Tidy Town Pictures Pty Ltd
Producer: Mark Lazarus
Director: Paul Goldman
Writers: Phillip Gwynne, Paul Goldman
Synopsis
A fishing village in outback South Australia, Deadly, Unna? is a contemporary story about two communities, the Goonyas (whites) and the Nungas (blacks), and the one thing they have in common - the local Australian Rules football team.

→ MR STREHLOW'S FILMS
Journocam Productions
Budget: SBSI/FCC Accord
Principal Credits
Director: Hart Cohen
Producer: Adrian Herring
Scriptwriter: Hart Cohen
Director of photography: Tony Wilson
Sound recordist: Leo Sullivan
Editor: James Bradley
Synopsis
A documentary about the life and work of pre-eminent and controversial Australian anthropologist and Arrernte linguist TGH Strehlow (1908-1978). Tracks the challenges Strehlow set for himself as anthropologist and filmmaker, and the work currently underway to repatriate his collection to Arrernte communities in Central Australia.

Recent funding decisions

■ Documentary

→ GOING PUBLIC
(4 x 27 minute Accord documentary)
Puzzle Media Pty Ltd
Producers: Nigel Traill, Margie Bryan
Director: Nigel Traill
Presale: ABC TV
They used to be cut-throat competitors, now they want to make each other rich. Going Public is the story of a group of very different people bringing their private businesses together to create a major new public company, Buzzle.

→ CHILD SOLDIERS
(52 minute documentary)
Electric Pictures Pty Ltd
Producer: Andrew O'Glyne
Director: Alan Lindsay
Presale: ABC TV, OPB, RT Hudson, Carlton International
Children are being forced and tricked into becoming soldiers by the thousands in more than 40 countries across the globe. This documentary depicts the lives of children in Africa, Asia and South America who have been through this trauma of child soldiering, or are presently 'child soldiers'.

→ DISTANT ECHOCES
(6 x 30 minute documentary series)
CM Film Productions
Producer: Carlo Burali
Director: Carmelo Musca
Presale: Channel Nine
Distribution: Tachibana Publishing Inc, Daro Film Distribution
DISTANT ECHOES will focus on ceremonial and celebratory traditional music, how culture is shaped by music and the significant similarities and differences that exist between the music from different cultures.

→ SHADOW PLAY:
INDONESIA'S FORGOTTEN HOLocaust
(52 minute documentary)
Shadow Play Productions Pty Ltd
Producers: Sylvie Le Clezio, Chris Hilton
Director/writer: Chris Hilton
Presales: SBSI, NPS, La Sept/Ante, YLE, TV Denmark, Soros Documentary Fund
Publishing Inc, Daro Film Distribution
SHADOW PLAY will be the first full and frank account of what happened in Indonesia in 1945/66 leading up to the incredible slaughter of up to a million Indonesians, and the imprisonment without trial of hundreds of thousands more. This documentary will explore new evidence which implicates the British, American and Australian governments in this terrible campaign orchestrated by Suharto.

→ TROUBLED WATERS
(52 minute Accord Documentary)
Resonance Productions
Producer: Jo-anne McGowan
Directors: Ruth Balint, Erika Addis
Writer: Ruth Balint
Presales: SBS
TROUBLED WATERS follows the story of two Indonesian fishermen captured at sea by Australian authorities. It traces the journey from their traditional fishing grounds into the Australian penal system and portrays the poverty treadmill that result from practices of arrest and incarceration.

→ XANANA - THE MAN, THE NATION
(52 minute documentary)
Talking Heads Productions
Producers: Michael Rivette, Tracey Curro
Director: Michael Rivette
Writer: Tracey Curro
Presales: Channel 7
Distribution: TVS Television Distribution
Xanana Gusmao is East Timor's most feted hero, poised to become president, when the nation's first free elections are held. It's freedom with the first democratic elections in its history late next year. By following the developing political and administrative processes through the man at his helm, and personal exploration of the lives and needs of ordinary East Timorese families, this documentary will capture this devastated country's transition from occupied territory to independent, democratic state.

■ Children's Television Drama

→ HIGH 8
(26 x 30 minute mini series)
Blueberry Productions Pty Ltd
Executive Producer: Ewan Burns
Producer: Margot McDonald
Writer: Marieke Hardy
Presales: Network Seven, Disney Channel UK, Disney Channel Australia
Distribution: Entertainment Rights PLC
The video camera can be a tool of expression, exploration and communication. But it can also be an instrument of manipulation, secrecy and lies. High 8 depicts a group of young people facing the near-impossible challenges of growing up, in and out of school, but using a camera in all its functions to learn about their lives.

CINEMA PAPERS' PRODUCTION REPORT IS COMPILED BY TAMI DOWER, EMAIL, TDOWER@MICHE.COM.AU.
The sum of us
The gurus rate recent releases.

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"I CAN SEE A GUY
IN A WHITE SUN HAT,
A RED TOP - HEY
ITS GILLIGAN..."

THE FIRST AND ONLY PERSON
TO RECEIVE DIGITAL T.V
01/01/01

[50] CINEMA PAPERS: FEBRUARY-MARCH 2001
At last, the cast and the crew can join the one super fund

JUST SUPER has been the industry fund for actors for more than ten years. Now, everyone working in Australia’s film, television and multimedia industries can join JUST SUPER. JUST SUPER is now listed as an eligible super fund in the key film and TV production agreements.

JUST SUPER is open to people who are making their own superannuation payments, as well as people receiving employer contributions.

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"As soon as we saw the product at the road show, we ordered it. This is an incredibly exciting product, it has created the biggest buzz in the industry I've ever seen."

"The ability to shoot in HD and finish in SD wide screen makes this a very cost effective product for our clients. The tape stock is inexpensive compared to 35mm film, and yet the HDCAM gives you a highly comparable quality in acquisition."

"The learning curve on the product is short. The lenses, controls and operational methods are essentially the same meaning we can quickly recoup the investment with a minimum of downtime in training."

"The HDCAM integrates incredibly well with our existing Sony systems, and across other platforms as well."

The HDCAM is to be first used filming a documentary for Gulliver Media with the support of the Centenary of Federation Committee. It follows a steam train called Bundy through some of Queensland's most scenic country from Nambour to Mosman. The film has already been pre-sold to the 7 network.

"We already have the product lined up for several jobs, and we haven't even taken delivery of it yet. Everyone wants to work with this new technology!"

"Ten chose to invest in the Sony HDCAM to shoot native HD material in Australia. We want as much HD material as possible, in order to get it on air as soon as possible. Sony HDCAM makes this an affordable reality."

"Network Ten is an avid supporter of Sony, we enjoy an excellent relationship with Sony, who have provided outstanding support for many years. This is why we went with the HDCAM, and why we have just placed an order for another unit!"

"Using the Sony HDCAM will reduce production costs significantly, and will compare favourably to 35mm film for quality."

"Ten has a great history with Sony cameras, all Ten's news facilities and on-road crews are Sony equipped. The HDCAM will be another welcome addition to a long association with Sony technology."