The Legend of Reg ‘Snowy’ Baker: An Australian Story with a Hollywood Ending

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Abstract
In the months leading up to the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta, the Daily Telegraph, one of Sydney’s tabloid newspaper, ran a series of advertisements sponsored by Foster’s brewery which focussed on a small number of legendary Australian sporting heroes and heroines. One profile, repeated several times before Atlanta, featured a man unknown to virtually all Australians these days: Reginald Leslie ‘Snowy’ Baker. The first sentence of the advertisement referred to Baker as ‘the greatest sporting all-rounder Australia has ever produced, excelling in an incredible twenty-six different sports’. Sports journalist — and sometime rugby bard — Peter Fenton, anticipated the Olympic tribute in his newspaper column earlier in the same year when he reacted to the ultra-professionalising of sport. ‘Gone,’ he lamented, ‘are the days when a potential champion pursued a host of games, in all of which came similar pleasure. Gone are the great allrounders that were part of our sporting history’ (71). Recalling those ‘great all-rounders’ of yesteryear, Fenton declared that the ‘daddy of all was Reginald “Snowy” Baker’ (71).
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This essay will enlarge on the extraordinary sporting story that is the first twenty-four years in the life of Snowy Baker, highlighting the vast range of sports he played, most of which he played brilliantly. It will touch on his numerous representative successes, especially those in rugby, swimming and diving, and his impressive Olympic performance at the 1908 London Games.

Yet to discuss Snowy only in terms of his sporting feats is seriously to limit both his talents and his impact on Sydney society and, more broadly, on Australian culture in the first decades post-Federation. For Baker was, unlike virtually all of his athletic contemporaries, an extremely astute businessman — a genuinely ‘self-made’ man. Due to his fistic prowess and stature in boxing circles, in December 1912 he bought the Rushcutter’s Bay (Sydney) Stadium. When the sport was effectively put on hold during the World War I years, he showed films at the facility. This led to him meeting many local producers and exhibitors in the industry, and ultimately to him visiting the United States to learn more about the craft and practice of cinema. Snowy returned from the trip much enthused with the infant industry and he would soon star in five Australian films in just three years, between late 1917 and 1920. One of these films, the highly entertaining
The Man from Kangaroo, filmed in Kangaroo Valley near Bundanoon (New South Wales), is now regarded as one of the most significant Australian films of the silent era (not always for the right reasons, as will be discussed). Screensound Australia (the National Film and Sound Archive) fortunately retains a copy of this priceless and provocative gem.

The second part of the essay will address Baker’s five Australian films within their social and cinema industry contexts — from the first, The Enemy Within (1918), to the last, The Jackaroo of Coolabong (1920), with particular attention being paid to The Man from Kangaroo. During these years, Snowy Baker confirmed his business reputation. With two equally canny Queensland entrepreneurial brothers, E.J. and Dan Carroll, Baker tried consciously to introduce a commercially attractive, distinctively Australian mode into his films. Yet, to his ultimate cost, he did so using American expertise and talent. Such a precarious model, formulated in 1919 when the Australian cinema was experiencing boom times, soon and perhaps not unexpectedly, failed. Its fate in some ways anticipated the fate of the industry as a whole at that time as Australian film confidence, at a peak in 1919, deteriorated alarmingly as the 1920s progressed. It was a slide which the highly publicised Royal Commission into the state of the film industry tried to halt in 1927–8. The Commission, too, failed in its aim.

The third and final part of the essay will link Snowy Baker’s commercial and broadly nationalistic vision — his ambitious film blueprint of 1919–20 — with the provocative, and at times revelatory, testimony given at the Royal Commission by early Australian film notables such as Walter Baker (President of the Actor’s Federation), Frederick Phillips (Managing Director, Phillips Film Productions), and directors, Raymond Longford and Charles Chauvel. Witness after Royal Commission witness confirmed that Australian cinema was under siege, threatened with virtually total extinction as the result of what was blisteringly labelled by the Bulletin as ‘the American movie octopus’ (qtd in Lewis, 11). Those with high hopes for the local industry recognised the enormous threat posed by American capital and well-funded American cinema expertise. Their fears were justified.

Snowy Baker left for California in August 1920, and was to return home only three times between then and his death in 1953. Refusing to take out American citizenship, he embarked on a successful career in Hollywood, reputedly teaching Rudolph Valentino — and later Elizabeth Taylor and Spencer Tracey — to ride a horse; Douglas Fairbanks Senior to crack a 36-foot stockwhip; and Harold Lloyd how to tell jokes. Reg ‘Snowy’ Baker’s story has a Hollywood ending, but it is the first half of his life — his Australian years — which help us to understand the cultural fragility of this country in the first decades of post-Federation nation-building: with their aspiration and optimism, braggadocio, naivety, and, above all, deep-rooted insecurities.
Snowy Baker (Snowy because of his crop of blond hair) was born in Surrey Hills, Sydney, in 1884, the son of an Irish-born Sydney municipal clerk, George Baker, and his wife, Elizabeth Robertson. He went to Crown Street Public School and, in his formative years, frequented the early morning track gallops at Randwick racecourse. The experience gained at ‘Headquarters’ (as Randwick was routinely called) would stand him in good stead for the rest of his life. By age thirteen, in the late 1890s, he had won state open swimming championships and, in the coming years, he would excel in an array of sports — among them, rugby, diving, boxing, fencing, track sprinting, water polo, wrestling, shooting, tent-pegging and rowing. As the editor of Baker’s book on fitness put it, in 1910, Snowy was ‘altogether a decidedly handy man in the event of a foe descending on our peaceful shores’ (Baker 10). Invasion phobia was a routine part of the early Federation years. Snowy represented the idealised prototype Australian — ready and able to combat any foe.

Between 1904 and 1906, Baker concentrated on two of his favourite sports, rugby (or ‘footer’, as he called it) and boxing. Playing grade for the Easton Suburbs rugby club, he was selected as a halfback in the interstate series against Queensland, and shortly after he played two tests against Great Britain. A few years later, *Melbourne Punch* would say that ‘in the opinion of those who know, there has never been a greater defensive player in the game in Australia. He was ... the idol of the crowds for his gameness and boldness’ (1032).

These resolute qualities no doubt helped Baker in the boxing ring as well. In 1906, he won the New South Wales and Victorian middleweight and heavyweight amateur titles, thus earning an invitation to the English Amateur Boxing Association titles later that year. Bound for Britain, and already with an enthusiastic following in Sydney, Baker was farewelled by over a thousand people including, it was reported, a boatload of twenty women. Ill-health stopped him from participating in the English competition but Baker stayed on in Britain for two years, during which he was feted for his ability in swimming, diving and boxing. Such was his impact and growing British reputation that he was given honorary membership in England of the prestigious National Sporting Club, the Belsize Boxing Club, Cygnus Swimming Club, Richmond Football Club and the Thames Rowing Club; and, in Ireland, of the Shannon Rowing Club (Limerick), Monkstown Football Club (Dublin) and Otter Swimming Club (Belfast). In addition, he gave diving, water polo and swimming exhibitions in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Dumferline, Peerhead, Paisley and Greenock, and boxing and military athletic displays in Belfast and Curragh. Having been persuaded to represent England in swimming and diving, he anchored the team to international titles in Holland, Germany, Finland, Sweden, Denmark and France (Baker 123–24).

The 1908 Olympic Games in London gave Baker the chance to represent his own country in swimming and boxing, and to showcase his talents on a global
stage. Fighting as a middleweight, he eventually won the silver medal. Baker might have felt himself hard done by since the gold medal winner, J.W.H.T. Douglas (later England’s cricket captain) had, at the very least, a measure of questionable assistance in his triumph. With the entire tournament taking place in just one day, Snowy fought three opponents, knocking out two men on his way to the gold medal round. Despite the fact that local hero Douglas received a bye on his way to the final, the contest was still a desperately close thing. It ended in a split decision, with the referee’s judgement breaking the deadlock. He awarded the fight to the Englishman. History records that the referee, from the National Sporting Club in London, was also a Mr Douglas. He was the father of J.W.H.T. Contemporary newspaper accounts confirm that Baker accepted the loss gracefully. When he returned to Australia, in December 1908, Snowy Baker was accorded a hero’s welcome, with an estimated ten thousand people attending a reception at Rushcutter’s Bay. He sought to build on this opportunity. Having observed the popularity in England of physical fitness courses run by a man called Eugene Sandow, Baker successfully adapted the model once back in Australia — consciously and creatively exploiting his prominent public image. Melbourne Punch would later say that ‘when at length he came back to this country he came back a polished cosmopolitan, determined to use his brains and his abilities to carry him higher up the ladder than the rung occupied by a mere champion athlete’ (1032). Baker opened a physical culture centre in Sydney almost immediately, sponsored an athlete’s linament, ran a series of mail order fitness courses, began work as a journalist and even turned book writer/editor with a popular work, published in 1910 by George Robertson, called General Physical Culture. While ostensibly a book on fitness and health, General Physical Culture does take time out to portray its twenty-five year old principal author as a decidedly superior human specimen, a man, we are informed in the Editorial Foreword, ‘in the prime of his powers’ (9). It is likely that Baker had an active role in the formulation of the nineteen sections of the book attributed to him. These included topics such as ‘Correct Breathing’, ‘Diving’, ‘Marquis of Queensberry Rules’, ‘Ball-Punching’, ‘Diet’ and ‘Preparing for “Footer”’. In particular, two later sections in the book catch the eye: Snowy’s ‘General Hints’ and his section intriguingly entitled ‘Of Interest to the Ladies’. In the former, Baker berates the lazy citizens of his era, admonishing them with dictums such as ‘Let the sun shine on your body whenever you have the chance’, ‘Strong-drink makes weak men’ and ‘Cultivate the faculty of observation’. Some advice is decidedly eccentric, including the suggestion that one should ‘Accustom yourself to going about bareheaded, except in the hottest weather. Baldness and nervous headaches are encouraged by too constant use of the hat’. His advice to the ladies is equally contentious: such as, ‘Ball-punching is a splendid exercise for developing the bust’; or, ‘The languid, anaemic type of maiden is common in Australia…. She is not attractive to men, but if she does manage to secure one, she turns out to be an
indifferent wife, and an unsatisfactory mother'; or, ‘Scraggy necks are the bane and nightmare of many women who are otherwise pleasingly rounded. The condition arises from wearing high and tight-fitting collars’ (114–19).

Such advice appears bizarre today but, judging by contemporary sales of the book, this was not the case at the time. Furthermore, in the period between 1912 and 1914 Baker published a magazine (Snowy Baker’s Magazine) which had a prodigious circulation. These were also the years when he could pay £30,000 to buy the Sydney Stadium from the high-flying entrepreneur H.D. McIntosh, in addition to establishing Baker boxing stadiums in Melbourne, Adelaide and Brisbane, controlling a number of fights for the great Les Darcy, and getting actively involved in the development of local cinema. Having tried three times to enlist in the Australian Imperial Force and been rejected because of a spinal injury, Baker devoted the later years of World War I to fund raising concerts, film nights and, not least, paying attention to business. He also visited California, both to line up better fights for Les Darcy and to see first-hand how the Americans were handling the new technology required to make feature films.

Though now in his mid-30s, and well over ten years after the peak period of his sporting achievements, Snowy Baker shrewdly decided that his popularity, which was shaped around his sporting profile and canny marketing, could
Snowy routinely performs his own stunt in his first Australian film, *The Enemy Within*.

potentially convert into serious financial gain through the new technology of film. He was no actor but, despite continuing problems with his spine caused by complications following a car crash, he was able to finesse athletic ability into a screen presence, initially in two films screened in 1918. The first one, entitled *The Enemy Within*, portrays Snowy as Australian secret agent, Jack Airlie, an adventurer extraordinaire who exposes 'the Kaiser's spies in Australia', a mob of working class agitators led and exploited by monied Palm Beach-based types.2 The other film, *The Lure of the Bush*, sends Snowy's character to England to be educated. He returns an English gentleman in plus-fours, re-discovers the bush, and eventually batters the obnoxious local gun-shearer. The shearer is a massive man, but of course no match for our hero — our sporting hero and patriot.

The advertisements for both films not surprisingly emphasised the star's popularity and physical attributes. In *The Enemy Within*, according to the Strand Theatre flyer, Snowy 'performs stunts which other actors can only fake. See his terrific fight against four men, his 80-feet dive into the harbour, his leap from the
flying cars' (Reade 100). One poster advertising *The Lure of the Bush* drew attention to Snowy's 'newest drama that is full of typical Australian recklessness' (Reade 103–05). Another poster, the Globe Theatre's, trumpeted: "Let 'er buck!" The station hands hopped up on the rails, while the worst brumby in the yards rooted, and snorted, and kicked, to get rid of the jackeroo on his back. But that jackeroo rode him to a standstill. Just see him do it! There is thrill in Australia's bush.... Enjoy it all in the great Australian drama at the Globe Theatre". The significance of *The Lure of the Bush* was certainly not its imaginative or original plot, or the calibre of the acting. It lay in the facts that, one, the film was distributed by Queensland entrepreneur E.J. Carroll — bringing Snowy for the first time into contact with the marketing skill of E.J. and his brother, Dan Carroll — and, two, while the interior scenes of the film were being shot, Snowy once again headed across the Pacific to expand his understanding of Hollywood production techniques and industry advances. He returned smitten by the notion of 'type' characters in American films — the 'vamp', the 'tramp', and the 'scoundrel' among them — and determined to apply this 'type' model to an Australian context. He was beginning to develop a more serious and more culturally engaged vision for his films. As he put it in *Green Room* magazine in February 1919:

We could weave a romance about the bush that would make Australian bush films sought after just as eagerly as the pictures dealing with Western life in America. We can stamp out our type the same as the Western type. (qtd in Shirley and Adams, 64)

Obviously aware of the way indigenous Indian groups were being used by Hollywood, he added: 'Even our Aborigines have not yet been exploited as they should. The field is vast'. It was an attitude not so much consciously racist, as unconsciously triumphalist.

These were exciting, bullish months to be making films in Australia and many of the trade journalists did their bit to generate optimism, especially those in *Picture Show* magazine. Its editorial of 26 April 1919 reflected the prevailing mood:

Motion-Picture Australia is looking for a man! He must be strong. He must be a fighter. He must have imagination. His business ability must be sound, and, withal, he must have Australia always uppermost in his heart and emblazoned upon his coat of arms. That man is to be champion of our big dreams of a picture-producing land of the wattle.... Australia is looking for the man. (qtd in Tulloch, 70)

The editorial was entitled: 'Will "Snowy" Get There?'. The *Picture Show* people certainly thought so. So did Snowy. Most importantly, so too did the Carroll brothers, E.J. and Dan, who were prepared to back their opinion with hard cash.

Carroll-Baker Picture Productions began in a vigorous film-making climate in Sydney with capital of £25,000. For their part, the Carrolls aimed principally at making a profit. They were sceptical of the overseas sales prospects of recent homegrown films such as Raymond Longford's *The Sentimental Bloke* and *Ginger*
Mick, despite being involved in their distribution locally. For the potentially lucrative foreign (especially American) market, they wished to associate with films, as Dan Carroll would years later put it. that were “entirely cosmopolitan in their appeal” (qtd in Shirely and Adams, 65). At the height of the optimism in 1919, older brother
E.J. took out an advertisement outlining his ‘Intentions’ for the whole Australian film industry to peruse. These aims included:

- to send film footage out of Australia as against the foreign film mileage that now comes in;
- to Australianise motion pictures as against the avowed Americanisation of the industry;
- to make Australia realise that we, too, have sufficient romance in this country to entertain ourselves and the world. (qtd in Long and Long, 68)

The Carrolls’ philosophy, one conscious of the potential for financial gains through patriotic cinema offerings, matched precisely that of Reg Baker. It was a partnership of promise, possibility and like-minded pragmatism.

Carroll-Baker Picture Productions, however, eventually made only three films: The Man from Kangaroo, The Shadow of Lightning Ridge and The Jackaroo of Coolabong. The films were made in just twelve months using throughout largely the same production outfit, including an American husband/wife, director/writer team, Wilfred Lucas and Bess Meredyth, an American cinematographer and an American production assistant. Shooting of The Man from Kangaroo took place through September-October 1919, during which time Picture Show took the opportunity to promote the film as enthusiastically as possible. On location with Snowy in Kangaroo Valley, the house journalist responded with a mixture of iconoclasm and unabashed nationalistic fervour:

> Australians are too modest, yet we have more to be proud of than nations of braggarts.... Messrs. Carroll and Baker are not overawed by the deeds of the great corporations in other countries. They say, ‘We can do as well here. Australia shall be a great motion picture centre’.... Patriotic enterprise such as activates the promoters of this new Australian industry will find echo in the heart of every true Australian. (qtd in Tulloch, 74)

This was stirring stuff. Snowy and the Carrolls responded in kind with a paid advertisement entitled ‘Snowy Baker Gives an Account of Himself’; the testimony of a local boy made good. It was a calculated pitch:

> We are in the throes of producing the greatest Motion Picture that has yet been credited to Australian brains and effort.... Mr Lucas says I am a better Stunt Actor than anyone living. He ought to know.... This is going to be a great big winner. (qtd in Tulloch, 72)

The film was a commercial success locally, and it got an American release under the inferior title The Better Man. However, in Australia local critics were not convinced by the finished product. Most felt that Snowy and the Carrolls had not sufficiently ‘Australianised’ their film, despite their much-publicised aims. Far from it. After the film’s release on 24 January 1920, the Sydney Mail commented that ‘It seems a pity that so much Americanism should be injected
"Bai Jove! Perfectly Topping!"

"Course, ya' know, you priceless old bean. 'twas a little wuff t' start with on that bally old station—but I conquered 'em! Why I handed out a positively ripping hiding to half a dozen or so. Oh, I had a delightful time for a while, and I gave those perfectly charmin' blighters something to show their marters!"

Here are some of the biggest scenes:

A whirlwind kangaroo drive right up into the camera lenses, with dozens of 'coos and hundreds of stockmen in full flight.

A death encounter with wild aboriginals and their amazing Devil Dance.

A 60ft dive into the harbour—a fight for liberty in Sydney's under world.

Industry advertisement for The Jackeroo of Coolabong which instances scenes which, as you can see, 'make you feel it's good to be an Australian'!

into films that are advertised as purely Australian. In The Man from Kangaroo... for instance, apart from the fact that the scenes have been taken on Australian soil and that the leading man, "Snowy" Baker, is an Australian, there is nothing in it that is not steeped in Americanism" (13). The Bulletin was equally blunt: 'Uncle
Sam soon gets in his dirty work, and the Australian story becomes starred and striped.... It simply couldn't happen in Australia' (qtd in Shirely and Adams, 66).

Viewing the film today, it is clear that the criticisms have validity. While the film opens with the characters exposed to ‘the pungent perfume of Blue Gum and Wattle...in the drowsy valley of Kangaroo’ and, later, Snowy as the Rev. John Harland can no longer ignore the ‘Call of the Great Outback’, most of the purportedly Australian elements bear the uncertain hand of an American screen-writer (Bess Meredyth). She does produce the odd appropriate line such as when the Rev. Harland, realising his spiritual shortcomings, writes to the Bishop that ‘I preach peace, I think fight’, but such moments are the exception rather than the rule.

The American element of visible in The Man from Kangaroo also undermined The Shadow of Lighting Ridge and The Jackeroo of Coolabong. Again, both films did respectably well at the local box office; again critics remained unconvinced of their ‘Australian’ credentials. Smith’s Weekly declared Lightning Ridge to be, despite its ‘Made in Australia’ label, almost ‘pure Yankee. The entire population of the country town “tote guns” and wear cowboy hats. A foreigner, seeing this film, would picture Australia as a sort of Bill Hart’s backyard’ (20). The Bulletin continued its attack on the Baker-Carroll ‘type’, suggesting that both films represented ‘Young Australia’ in American clothes (20). Thus, despite Baker’s undeniable box office appeal as the stuntman ‘in excelsis’, and despite the Carroll’s demonstrated commitment to home output, the Carroll-Baker Picture Productions venture which had promised so much, collapsed. It appears that even before The Jackaroo of Coolabong opened, Snowy had anticipated the critics’ response and headed off for Hollywood with Lucas and Meredyth. The 1 September 1920 issue of Picture Show wistfully recorded that the ‘experiment of using Americans with moving picture knowledge may not have succeeded, but the [Carrolls’] company will still make entirely Australian films’ (qtd in Tulloch, 105). Barely a year after the fizz and bubble of commencing The Man from Kangaroo shoot near beautiful Bundanoon, the ambitious experiment to promote a distinctively Australian heroic type was over. For the first of many times to come, the Australian industry found itself undermined by American ideas that would not travel Down Under.

In his book Legends on the Screen (1981), John Tulloch suggests a few reasons for the collapse: the Hollywood notion of character ‘types’ did not adapt to the Australian situation; the American imports could not adjust to this fact; Hollywood genres like the Western did not work here; and, finally, the melodramatic acting conventions of Australia’s theatrical past were still influential in, yet inappropriate to, Australia post-war. Tulloch, however, fails to include one additional, more practical reason that might have been the most important explanation of the company’s demise. The Carrolls observed with alarm Wilfred Lucas’ capacity to spend money as if he were still in Hollywood. Closing down the company operation
was principally an economic decision. Behind it, though, lay clear cultural differences — even cultural antipathy.

The fortunes of the Australian film industry in the years from Snowy Baker’s departure for Hollywood up to the Royal Commission of 1927–8 went into sharp decline. As Diane Collins puts it in *Cinema in Australia: A Documentary History* (1989): ‘By 1926 the buoyant hopes of the immediate post-war period were shattered’ (72). Purposeful action was required to resist this alarming trend, and it appeared to materialise when the Australian Federal Government in 1927 commenced the Royal Commission on the Moving Picture Industry in Australia (which ran from 2 June 1927 to 16 February 1928). Several issues dominate the Royal Commission transcripts, either through the testimony of the 253 witnesses, or through the doggedly repetitive questions of the commissioners. Principal among these issues were the need for censorship: the climate of fear created by the authoritarian distribution and exhibition methods of the infamous Australasian Films Union theatres ‘combine’; the need for a legislated quota of Australian films; and the seemingly unstoppable Americanising of Australian films. films shown in Australia and, in turn, Australian society and culture. While each of these issues is dealt with in extraordinary detail in the 1,007 pages of Royal Commission transcripts, we need to concentrate here only on the latter.

Numerous witnesses commented on the pervasive effects of American global strategies, especially the wholesale dumping of cheap films on the Australian (and European) markets. Many Commission witnesses endorsed the arguments of company managing director Frederick Phillips, who lamented the fact the ‘intelligent Australian people should be compelled to see nothing but American pictures showing in our theatres night after night’. This, for Phillips, was ‘a crying shame’ (666). Others who provided testimony, like Walter Baker, President of The Actors’ Federation of Australasia, portrayed the issue in more sinister terms. They sensed a conspiracy against determined — and prolific — Australian directors such as Raymond Longford and John Gavin.

Two of the witnesses called, a young Charles Chauvel and Longford himself, when discussing the details of the perceived American invasion, referred specifically to the disintegration of the Snowy Baker–Carroll Brothers Production company. The Chairman of the Commission at one point appeared, with his question, to tease the desired response from Chauvel: ‘We have been given to understand that the trouble with those Americans [referring to Lucas and Meredith] was that they Americanised the pictures that they made in Australia. There were too many red handkerchiefs and revolvers, and so the pictures were a colossal failure?’ Chauvel simply and sardonically replied: ‘Unfortunately they were neither Australian nor American’ (198). Longford, with good reason to be forthright and far more exact, accused Australian ‘distributors and a number of exhibitors’ of being ‘pro-American’ and indirectly ‘trying to kill the local industry’ (922). He was no admirer of the American ‘blow-ins’, maintaining that the only thing he
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The American visitors learned how to spend money when you had it (160). When asked to comment whether 'American stuff', as it was termed, had 'spoilt one or two Australian pictures', Longford replied by recalling Wilfred Lucas' attitude to making pictures Down Under:

he [Lucas] did not want to worry about maintaining the Australian setting. He said something like this: 'If I want to get one of your aboriginals or a native in the picture, I am going to get him; and if I care to stick a few feathers on him that is my business.... We are working for America, and we must satisfy our home market'. (156–57)

One can almost hear the gasps of dismay and disgust seventy years later. Lucas' stated position, if remembered faithfully by Longford, was not one likely to realise Picture Show magazine's 'big dreams of a picture-producing land of the wattle' (qtd in Tulloch, 70).

In fact, the Australian film industry, throughout the 1920s and for many decades to follow, maintained a precarious existence. Snowy Baker, ever the astute businessman, saw the writing on the wall, carefully nurtured his American contacts and, like many Australians before him and even more after him, headed for Hollywood. He was able to continue his acting career there and then go on to become an athletic instructor to the stars through his Riviera Club in Santa Monica, California. His is a story with a real Hollywood ending.

Yet even in an essay on Snowy Baker, I cannot resist giving the last word to Raymond Longford. Unlike Snowy, Longford stayed on for the long haul. Bravely, throughout his career he retained a vision of what Australian cinema might be — a dream sparked the moment of greatest resonance in all the 1,007 pages of Royal Commission transcripts when, half way through his testimony, he declared:

I will not Americanise Australia in the pictures that I produce. I do not care what any of them think; if they say they want to make pictures after the style of the Wild West American pictures I shall absolutely refuse to do it. (151)

In an increasingly Darwinian cinema landscape, where only the fittest would survive, Snowy Baker was ideally suited. Raymond Longford died in 1959, thirty three years after directing his last film in 1926.

NOTES
1 See, for example, General Physical Culture, pp. 124–25.
2 See advertisement reproduced in Eric Reade, Australian Silent Film — A Pictorial History of Silent Films for 1896 to 1929, p. 100.
3 Document in author's possession.
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FILMS