

© Advance Australia

Part One

The movies, mate

by Barbara Samuels

That cuddly koala may be Qantas' most famous spokesman, but the airline's corporate logo - a winged kangaroo - is much more to the point. The flight from Los Angeles to Sydney makes a literal quantum leap through time and space; this distance of 14,476 kilometres includes a crossing of the international dateline and a seventeen-hour time difference. You've chased the night across the Pacific and lost a day in the process.

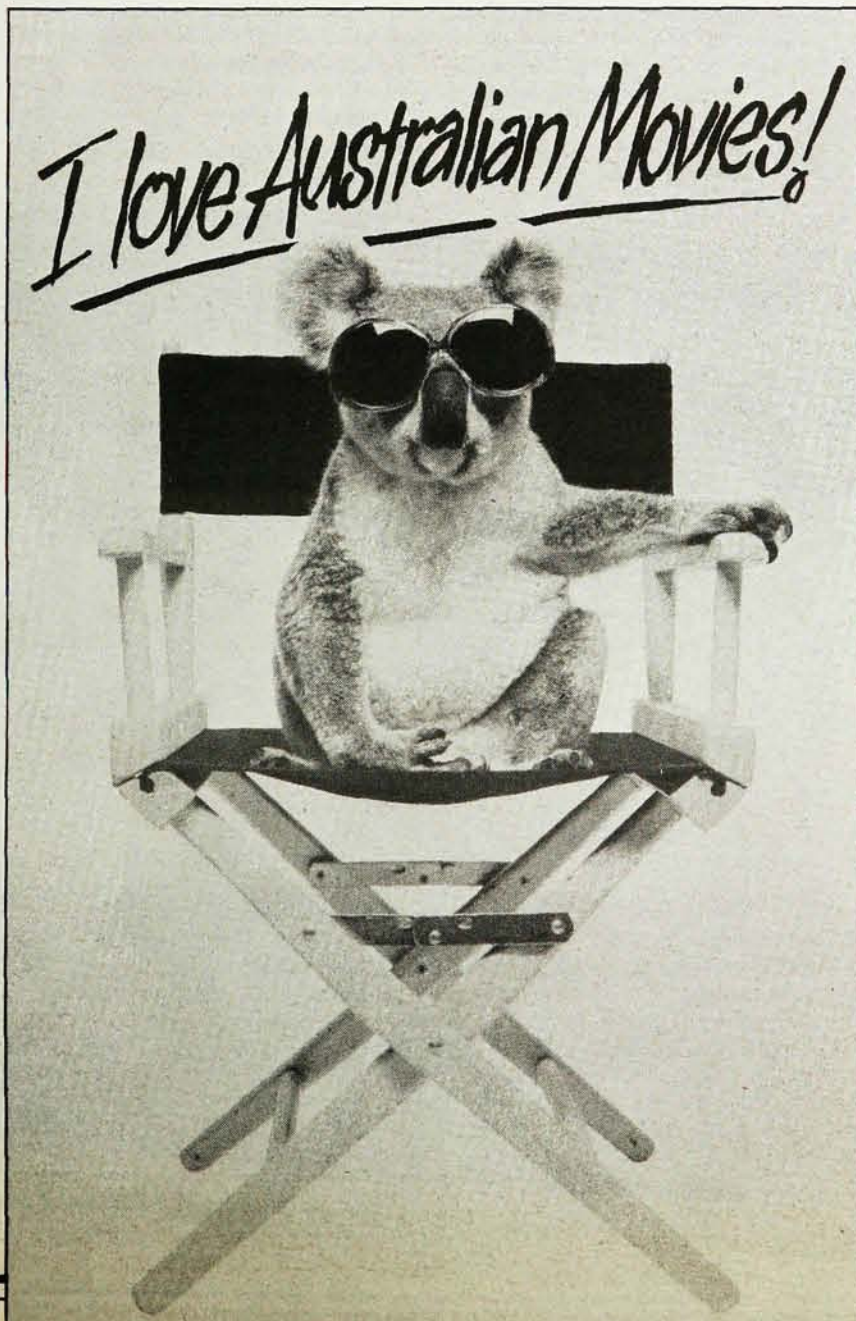
But the first sight of Sydney devours the fatigue. The plane glides in over the city and then turns slightly, as though showing off a precious jewel to a very appreciative audience. We are that, certainly; this vision of bays, inlets and that famous Opera House shimmers in the morning sun with an almost unearthly beauty. Its perch on the edge of what seemed to be endless ocean lends a touch of magic to the place. There is life out here after all.

And with a fiercely nationalistic streak to it, one soon learns. That stylized, tri-coloured "A" is the first giveaway, because it's everywhere - on car bumpers, in bathroom windows, on sweatshirts, electrical goods and candy wrappers. It's the graphic punch for the Advance Australia drive, a campaign launched several years ago that shows no signs of losing momentum. Despite ongoing labour problems, divisive domestic politics and all the other headaches of modern nationhood, the country has embraced this giddy brand of self-promotion with a vengeance. And the timing couldn't have been better.

It's a neat "home version" of that ultra-high international profile Australia's wearing these days. The natives are tickled by their new-found celebrity status abroad, and eager to source back the reasons: the Americas Cup, perhaps? The new music? Aussie comedian Paul Hogan's wildly successful TV spots

Cinema Canada contributor Barbara Samuels was invited to Australia by the Australian Film Commission in preparation for Australia's feature participation at this year's World Film Festival.

A two-part Cinema Canada special report on the Australian film industry today



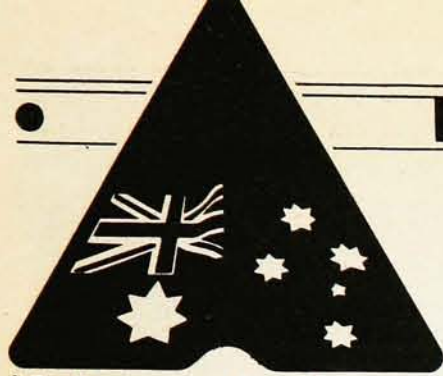
for tourism now broadcast on the American west coast ("So I'll put another shrimp on the barbie for ya, mate"), or *L'Express* magazine's cover story last March that featured Australia as "*le pays de l'année*"? Or does it just come down to the need for a brand-new last frontier?

Well, yes to all of that, but the real catalyst behind this upsurge of interest in all things Australian is finally quite simple. The movies, mate. The seemingly sudden film revival of the 1970s that offered the world its first glimpse of a new terrain and a new sensibility. They are part of modern film history now, and so is what happened afterwards; a 150% tax concession introduced in 1980 presented the Australian industry with an occasion to follow its Canadian cousin down the garden path. What happened to us began to happen to them, and four years later - with a scramble on to undo much of the damage wrought by over-production and a reduction of the incentive to 133% - the Australian film community is facing the moment of truth.

Purchases of home VCR units have reached epidemic proportions and shaken up the theatrical market in the process. Miniseries for television have pushed feature films into second place on production rosters, and presales are all but obligatory for producers who need brokers to sell their investment package. Meanwhile, the debate over the nature and extent of government intervention in the industry remains as unresolved as ever. All these factors have combined with the tax concession story to make fodder for the trade papers, and the international press has compiled quite a scrapbook. To this it adds the list of indigenous filmmakers now working abroad and takes a shot at a quick conclusion: Australia has had its moment of filmic glory, and now it can't hold onto its own.

But headcounts and headlines have traditionally made for lousy source material. The only way to pick up the subtleties is to check out the situation first hand: meet the individuals involved, see the work, try to lock onto the particulars that colour the whole.

And that's what I came here to do.



© Advance Australia

**Sydney – June 12-25 :
“They’re getting high-class
Australian product dirt cheap.”**

When visitors talk about this city, there’s an immediate lunge for hyperbole: “A gift of nature... the Stockholm of the Southern Hemisphere... right up there with Rio.” It is no doubt all of those things, and probably more. Whatever your perspective, it’s hard not to get hooked on the place. The flora and fauna are tropically exuberant, the beaches divine and the architecture a delightful jumble of epochs and styles. And even the city streets reflect that intriguing cross between a staid British past and the gleefully Australian present: judging from the way people take the narrow twisting roadways built for right-hand driving, the whole population seems to be out for a role in *Mad Max III*.

Sydney is notorious for its laid-back attitude to just about everything (“The beaches will do that to you,” people say), but it’s midwinter here now, and the film community is anything but cool. The June 30 end of the fiscal year is well in sight, and investor confidence – or lack of same – will soon determine the fate of a myriad feature and television projects.

It’s a delicate moment in time to be bouncing around town with a slate of questions in your hand, but everyone here is surprisingly open. And although the business is full of sore points and hot issues, it is also full of energy, apparently emblematic of that tough Aussie determination to “have a go” even if circumstances are less than ideal. Projects are brewing everywhere, and the people behind them are a fascinating blend of Australia’s “first” and “second wave” creative community; experienced producers, for instance, take on first-time feature directors with less reticence than you’re likely to find almost anywhere else.

A prime example of that is *Silver City*, one of the features slated for screening in Montreal. Producer Joan Long (*The Picture Show Man*, *Puberty Blues*) had for some time been fascinated by the post-Second World War flood of European immigrants to Australia, and unsuccessfully tried to interest Film Australia (their NFB) in the idea back in the early ’70s. Her meeting some years later with a disenchanted high-school teacher named Sophia Turkiewicz proved fateful; Turkiewicz was determined to write a script based on her own experiences as a Polish immigrant, and after a three-year stint at the new Australian Film and Television School, she began to work full time on *Silver City*.

“The film is really a piece of fiction,” Turkiewicz explains, “a love story set within a historical social context that’s now part of Australian history. But up until now, it hasn’t been explored in film. People haven’t looked around them, seen just how diverse Australian culture really is. Now I think there’s a climate for films about migrants.”

Turkiewicz credits Long with ‘getting the picture up’ in a particularly difficult period: “We got sandwiched in with the new legislation, ended up raising money in a very bad year. The work that Joan put into that task was extraordinary, and her determination to keep the budget under \$2 million was very important. You can still recoup domestically with that, and I was a first-time director, so it was a good decision all round.”

The effects of the changing tax laws are something Long has felt personally. “I’ve made three films so far,” she says, “and every one of them has had a different set of ground rules each time I’ve raised the money. And I’m still not terribly happy with the situation. Now brokers insist on presales up to 30% of the budget; these are not film people, and they don’t realize that any presale you make on a film is almost 90% sure to be worse than what you could do when the film is finished. And the kind of films that get presales are generally projects with superficially commercial ingredients. Lots of producers have to fall in line with the brokers, because it’s the difference between making the film and not making it.” Her objections to the presale bind go further: “It’s making the Australian taxpayers subsidize the television stations. The 10BA (tax legislation) money goes into the making of product, and the television stations get them for a fraction of their value because of the presale. They’re essentially getting high-class Australian product dirt cheap.”

And as an independent producer, Long is feeling the squeeze from the vertically-integrated Australian distributors. “We’re subsidizing them as well. They used to invest in films – a \$20,000 or \$50,000 investment – but now they’ve set up their own production companies. So not only are they distributors and exhibitors – the big three own most of the major cinema chains – but they’re

also producers of their own films. Hoyt’s, Edgley and Roadshow have all set up production concerns. They’re dictating which of our films get up on screen, and to a large extent, determining which films even get made. Here we are again under the domination of distributors.”

But with *Silver City* set to open, Long is far from ready to throw in the towel. “Look,” she says. “It’s always been a ghastly business raising money. In the old days, it used to be worse. So I’m not the eternal pessimist.”

At a production facility not far from Long’s office, Henry Crawford takes a break from producing a new series called *Five Mile Creek* and considers the presale situation.

“The only way I could finance the series was to cover it by presales. It’s being produced by the Disney Channel, and this way we’re making it for half the American cost – about \$400,000 an episode.* The Australian network has some money in the first series. In the second and third, there’ll be no Australian money at all; it’s all coming from America. And that’s a significant market opening up for us.”

Crawford is the man behind *A Town Like Alice*, and boasts an extensive background in television production. In his eyes, the facts are quite simple. “The only reason we’ve managed to survive in Australian television is because Australian programmes are very popular. They’ve performed well in the ratings. It’s obviously very tough to convince a TV network to pay even \$100,000 for an hour of Australian drama when they can buy an hour of top-rated American drama for \$10,000.”

* All figures in Australian dollars.

He views the co production route as a viable survival mechanism, relevant to both the Canadian and Australian production scenes. “I would think your economics are similar to ours. We still probably produce a little more cheaply here, but in quality television terms, we can only expect to recoup about 25% of our dough from Australia. Half comes from the U.S. and the remaining quarter from other markets. And I think that if we and you and England are going to survive, we’re going to have to pool our resources and take turns doing projects in each other’s countries.”

As a former AFC commissioner and one of the country’s foremost independent producers, Crawford has seen trends in the industry come and go; as the “father” of some of the first major miniseries, he is distressed by what he perceives as the latest tendency. “Almost all the people who couldn’t make a go of it in feature films are now turning to the Magic Miniseries. They figure they’re easier than features, when in fact they’re harder. You have to hit feature film quality in half the time.”

He shrugs, resigned to the idea. “So now we’ll have a rash of miniseries. I’ve always been crazy about bandwagons.”

The Sydney Film Festival got underway on June 8, and will run until the 24th. The event celebrates its thirty-first anniversary this year, running – as always – in overlap with the slightly older Melbourne Festival. But the setting alone here is worth the price of admission. The State Theatre in “The City” is a monumental relic from an era of blissfully mad picture-show palaces, a grand-



● Chris Haywood and Carol Burns in a scene from Richard Lowenstein’s *Strikebound*



scale museum of restored kitsch where rococo maidens smile down at vaguely Roman busts, and where marble staircases and gold-sprayed *everything* are the order of the day. The festivities are presided over by a bizarre relief of St. George and his fire-breathing sidekick, and the movies are only part of the show: patrons are treated to a pre-screening serenade from an organist who specializes in medleys from *Camelot*. He concludes his nightly performance by disappearing into the stage on what appears to be a hydraulic platform, playing with one hand as he descends, and waving with the other as the crowd cheers him on. If you've braced yourself by sitting down for all this, you're safe enough to really enjoy it.

This year's Festival is a wide-ranging one, and features a particularly delightful selection of animated shorts from Britain's Channel Four. Canada is represented by Jean-Claude Labrecque's *Les Années de rêve*, which elicits a mixed response from Festival-goers; Wim Wenders' *Paris, Texas* is probably the hands-down favourite. The year is also notable as Rod Webb's first in the role of Festival Director. He came to the post after a stint at the National Film Theatre and then the AFC, serving the latter as Cultural Events Officer. Webb replaces David Stratton, who headed the Festival for ten years.

But Stratton's involvement with the event dates back to 1965, a period in which he notes that "there weren't any Australian films to be shown. But there had been a couple of foreign films made in Australia, and these provided employment for people in secondary positions. There was a groundswell of these individuals who had some experience and wanted more. Some of them started making films, and we showed them at

the Festival. There was a movement of students from Sydney and Melbourne universities who started making cheap 16mm films and were looking for outlets, so in 1970 we instituted a competition for Australian short films, which eventually became the Greater Union Award. A lot of major filmmakers emerged out of this: Weir, Beresford, Schepisi, Armstrong, Noyce. It proved an important showcase."

Stratton views the Festival as having played an integral role in promoting Australian films "at a time when our audiences didn't want to see them. But the whole thing culminated in 1975, when we decided to launch a big tribute to Australian films, and opened the Festival with *Sunday Too Far Away*. We also did a major retrospective of Australian films that year; showed fifteen features and excerpts from others - representative of the film tradition we had here from the silent era right through the '30s and '40s - and brought whoever was still around onstage to talk about their work. People were just overwhelmed."

Stratton had complemented his Festival tenure with a number of other pursuits, including his work for *Variety* and his authorship of a book on the new Australian cinema entitled *The Last New Wave*. He left the Festival this year to pursue still other interests. "After eighteen years, I decided I needed a change. Maybe the Festival needed one, too. To my surprise, I was invited to become a Commissioner at the AFC, so for the last year, I've been attending numerous meetings, seeing the industry from a slightly different viewpoint." That perspective has left him with definite opinions as to the current state of affairs: "I have strong feelings on the question of a film industry that uses taxpayers' money," he says. "I once got into trouble in Canada for saying that I

would never select any Canadian film for the Sydney Film Festival that featured people driving around with American licence plates on their cars. I feel that, up to 1979, the people who were making films here were the ones who *cared*. But then we experienced the 'Canadianization' of the Australian industry - doctors and lawyers telling you how to make movies." He now declares himself guardedly optimistic about the situation. "The fact that the incentives have been cut back somewhat, and that the AFC has been given more money to directly fund quality projects is a step back in the right direction. There's a greater possibility to help interesting newcomers, rather than support the hackwork that was being done two years ago. The whole thing's still up in the air, but I think the result in the long term will be fewer and better films."

The Sebel Townhouse in Elizabeth Bay is one of life's pleasant rarities: a small, intimate hotel with a big international reputation. The establishment serves as home base and regional watering hole for most of Sydney's visiting celebrities; by mid-June, Arlo Guthrie and Elton John have passed through its doors, and the staff is bracing itself for the arrivals of Boy George and Joe Jackson. But despite the aura of glitter and activity that pervades the guest list, the hotel's ambiance is surprisingly warm and low-key - a perfect setting for a conversation about *Annie's Coming Out*, one of the films set to compete at Montreal.

Gil Brealey settles back over coffee in the Sebel's restaurant and reflects on the process required to get *Annie* on screen. "I was originally asked to produce it," he recalls, "and I approached the director I thought capable of the project, but he wasn't available. I was

producing another film and having a very unhappy experience, so I rang up Film Australia and told them I wanted to direct *Annie*. They decided to let me do it."

No minor item, that; Brealey had last directed a drama in 1968. For the fifteen years preceding the picture, he had been involved with various government bodies as a producer. He began with Film Australia, "which probably marked the three most creative years of my life. We had remarkable people working there - Peter Weir, Don Crombie, Brian Hannant, Bob Ellis. Phil Noyce was a production assistant then. So I took these young people in hand, and was given terrific freedom by the then head of production Dick Mason to make some marvelous films."

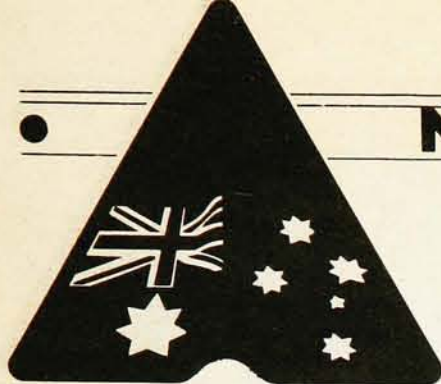
The funds there eventually dried up, and he was approached by current Australian Film Commission chairman Phillip Adams to start the South Australia Film Corporation. The federal Australian Film Development Corporation (the antecedent of the AFC) was already in place when Brealey accepted the post in 1972 as head of the first state film body, and the precedent-setting aspect of the whole deal was quite obvious. "We knew that if the South Australian Film Corporation was successful, then other state corporations would follow. There was a feeling at the time that South Australia was one too many, whereas I felt the more competition, the better." *Picnic at Hanging Rock* was able to go into production because of a SAFC grant, and *Sunday Too Far Away* was the Corporation's first full-fledged production. But his work as producer had moved Brealey far away from his original base, and *Annie's Coming Out* presented a chance to return.

The film details the struggle of a young teacher in an institute for the handicapped to prove that one of her charges - an eighteen-year-old named Annie O'Farrell - is of normal intelligence, despite physical disabilities and doctor's diagnoses to the contrary. Based on the true story of Anne MacDonald and Rosemary Crossley, the film now forms part of an effort to close down such institutions, and to re-examine people who were once "written off" as intellectually handicapped.

"It would have been easy to do it as a dramatized documentary," Brealey notes, "but Rosie Crossley and Annie both wanted a feature. They felt they'd had a lot of exposure on television, but it hadn't paid off as yet. Annie wanted all the brouhaha that surrounded a feature; 'We've tried television,' she told me, 'and the kids still aren't out yet.'" Brealey sees the film's application as both particular and wide-ranging at the same time. "It asks whether an individual has the right to a rich full life. It happens to be about a physically disabled kid stuck in a hospital, but it could be about any number of other situations. As a film it's certainly a piece of entertainment, but I think entertainment should be enriching. Hopefully, *Annie* meets both those criteria."



● Tim McKenzie, Debra Lawrance and Gosia Dobrowolska in *Silver City*



© Advance Australia

June 19-20:
"Survival's been done.
Next please."

David Williamson does a quick addition in his head. "I've done something like twelve screenplays and eleven plays in the last twelve or thirteen years," he calculates. "Until I visited California, I didn't realize that this wasn't considered a normal rate of output. But in Australia — where you have to earn a living from a population of 15 million people — you can't afford to sit around an L.A. pool for a year, thinking."

He has done quite the opposite. As perhaps Australia's best-known playwright/screenwriter, Williamson has been linked to the motion picture boom since its rebirth in the early '70s. Indeed, his first play served as the basis for the first "new wave" film of the crop. "*The Coming of Stork* was made on a glorious budget of \$50,000, and it was the first indigenous film that worked commercially here since the 1930s. It was rough as hell — shot on a soundstage proofed with egg cartons that fell off between takes. But it worked. We proved that Australian audiences would see their own films."

His own career is a kind of mini-progress chart of Australian features, and includes *Don's Party*, *The Club*

(both adapted from his plays), *Gallipoli*, *Year of Living Dangerously* and the recent *Phar Lap*. But Williamson is not terribly happy with the screenwriter's traditional role, and not at all reticent about saying so. "I'll do screenwork because it pays well and sometimes it can be satisfying. But there's a little in it for a writer of quality. The 'auteur' theory has to be the most frustrating thing for a writer, who's often the real creator of the film. He's the expert in structuring the story, creating the characters and supplying the dialogue. But for some reason, directors always assume that's *their* territory." He points out that theatrical tradition allocates the right of narrative creation, character development and story structure to the writer. "But in film, you're often just there as a resource. I think that's pathetic."

Williamson is convinced that the only way out of the bind is the obvious: full control.

"You have to direct your own work. It's what a lot of American and Canadian writers are doing, because they've all run into the same frustration." His chosen vehicle? "It's a translation of one of my plays to film, called *The Perfectionist*. Pat Lovell is producing it, and we're hoping to start later on this year." But he stops to reflect a moment. "You know," he says, "the play has a flawless critical track record, and I'm very happy with the screenplay. But there's chance the film won't happen because it's not about breakdancing, and it involves people over thirty. Hell, it's a commercial industry now; what's being made is determined by how zappy the package sounds. If a tax broker packaged Chekhov's *Three Sisters* as 'the tale of three horny chicks who yearn for the city lights,' he'd probably get the money. So you wonder to yourself: what's the use of being a screenwriter?"

But he has found some measure of fulfillment in a sister medium. As writer and co-producer of one of the biggest new miniseries called *The Last Bastion*, he feels infinitely more comfortable. "It's such a relief to write intelligent stuff and have it done word for word as you set it down. The series deals with the Pacific War from an Australian viewpoint, and I think it will shake up a few skeletons here and abroad. A lot of the miniseries are more complex, hard-hitting and *interesting* than anything happening in features now. I don't know how long this window into exciting television will last, but it's certainly been helped by the extension of the tax concession to miniseries." He is pragmatic about the shift. "Look, at a time when world cinema attendance is declining, it makes sense to put some of your best talent into TV. It's going to get a much wider audience. And there's something else: TV is much more a writer's medium. So the whole move suits me fine."

There's a certain inevitability about government-subsidized film industries: the battle lines are drawn early, and the issues are almost always the same. How much intervention and what kind? The nationalists versus the internationalists, xenophobia versus the sellout artists, cultural integrity versus freedom of international creative expression. The catchphrases are coloured by the positions, and the positions are all hopelessly familiar. What makes the Australian version so intriguing are the subtleties.

Jim and Hall McElroy go back a long way, much of it in tandem with Peter Weir. Together, the brothers produced some of the most inherently "Australian" pictures of the new wave: *The Cars That Ate Paris*, *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (in collaboration with Pat Lovell)

and *The Last Wave*. The poster for their latest Weir vehicle is prominently displayed in their office lobby: that sultry, *Gone with the Wind*-style graphic for *Year of Living Dangerously* all but dominates the wall. And this is where the story takes a twist.

"When we sold *Dangerously* to MGM as a studio picture," Hal McElroy recalls, "it was regarded as a big sellout here. There was a debate as to whether the film was really Australian or not. We paid no attention to that. With the exception of one or two Philipinos playing Indonesians, and some Americans — including Linda Hunt — everyone else was Australian: the director, the producer, the star, the whole crew. A lot of the picture was shot here. It's ludicrous to suggest that it *isn't* Australian, and who gives a damn, anyway? It's just a film made by Australians, and it's either good or bad. Australians are the only ones who ever raised the question, anyway."

He does not apologize for the studio connection, either.

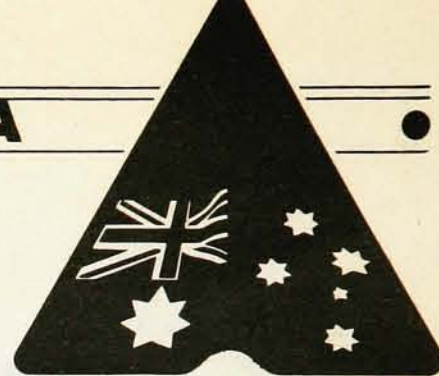
"It was a terrific experience doing a film with MGM, because whether we like it or not, Hollywood is the centre of the filmmaking world. There are people there with enormous experience, and they gave us incredible support while we were making the movie. We learned how to make pictures for a major studio, and I call that learning a lot." McElroy takes great exception to the image of the American majors as corporate rip-off artists: "A lot of people here and abroad have this conspiracy theory in which the Majors are manipulating us poor, simple filmmakers. Well that's all crap. They don't have *time* for that. They're just making movies as fast as they can. And *Dangerously* was small change for MGM — \$5.8 million. The idea's ridiculous."

He is far from happy with the current government stand on Australian content and the regulations that accompany them. "One of the disappointing things about this industry at the moment is the fact that it's so fiercely *Australian*. No one else gets a look in. Jim and I learned basic film education from foreigners working in this country. There was an injection of Americans or Italians every other year, and it didn't really matter if many of the films weren't that good; you learn something even from bad teachers. But at the moment, it's very incestuous. We're all supposedly learning from each other, but I suspect we're also reinforcing prejudices — it's not opening up our minds. With the exception of Herzog's film (*Where the Green Ants Dream*), there hasn't been a foreign picture made here in ten years. And I think that's a pity."

McElroy favours a relaxation of "Australian criteria," believing that the unions and guilds keep a firm enough hand on the entries and exits of foreign talent; "You do not," he insists, "need a government department second-guessing or underlining what the unions are already doing." And he takes great exception to the argument that co-productions are the scourge of the industry. "There is a handful of people in this country who know the economic basis of the film industry: the producers. It's very easy for someone to say that you've got to produce only for Australia, but the harsh economic reality is that it's difficult — if not downright impossible — for films to break even in this territory. It's always been difficult, but now we've compounded the problem with over-



● Steve Bisley and Rod Zuanic in Ken Cameron's second feature *Fast Talking*



© Advance Australia

production and inflation of something like 100%. And this inflation's been created by Australians, because at the moment, you can finance a film that's got no relation to the market, that no one wants to see. But you can do it - you can use taxpayers' money - because you can put out a *prospectus*. Now what's the bigger crime?" He views co-production as "the price you pay for some rational thought entering the process. We choose to look outside Australia for revenue, for talent, for stories... for anything. Because we're part of the world. There used to be a saying in Australia: 'Export or perish.' No industry can sustain itself without it. And if you export, the price you pay is some kind of input from another country."

McElroy's latest production will also play the Montreal festival. *Razorback* marks the feature debut of rock clip director Russell Mulcahy, and represents another tie-up between McElroy & McElroy and an American major.

"The film was 100% financed in Australia, and we presold distribution rights to Warners. The only way to lock in investors is with a presale: they want a guarantee of release, and that's the way to get one. The only way to presell is to have elements in a package that appeal to a distributor. And if you've got \$5 million and you want to guarantee 46% of it (as we did with *Razorback*), the only people who are going to come in with that kind of money is a combination of Greater Union and Warner Bros."

This saga of Man versus a Giant Pig has been locally labelled as "Jaws in the Outback," and McElroy feels the film is nothing if not provocative. "It's a little avant-garde in many ways. On one level, it's a schlocky horror movie, but on another - directorially and photographically - it's twenty miles in front of everything else. People either love it or hate it. It was a challenging production, and I found it exciting to give Russell his first feature and then just watch him work."

Razorback was a departure for Hal in that his primary focus for the last five years has been television; brother Jim has handled theatrical product. He's gone back to TV now, and the return has been anything but low-key.

"I'm doing a miniseries just before Christmas that's gonna cost a million an hour. It's written by the guy who did *Return to Eden* (another McElroy miniseries), and I think it's a wonderful idea that will work internationally. A contemporary western." He glances up at the *Return to Eden* poster above his head, and grimaces slightly. "It's an exciting project, but for four million dollars, it bloody well oughta be."

product will determine its box office potential.

"If you're creative enough," Mason insists, "your films will work here and overseas. *Winter of Our Dreams* was a perfect example of that. It was a film about commitment and human relations, and had the same kind of success elsewhere as it did here. That's my position."

"And it's always been mine," Overton injects. "I've never felt we should do anything else. The most successful films internationally - *Chariots of Fire*, that sort of thing - have a strong sense of themselves as products, and people are either interested or they're not. *Winter* was a story from here, and yet it was totally international at the same time. I think that's all you can do; it's not worth compromising or changing the nature of a film to make a bid for the marketplace."

Astra is currently wrapping post-production on a new film by Stephen Wallace. According to Overton, it's very much in tune with the Astra tradition.

"In some ways, I suppose you could say that *The Boy Who Had Everything* might be considered fairly hard work for the general public. It's not an action-adventure story. By having our stars - Jason Connery and Diane Cilento - we hope that people who wouldn't ordinarily go see this kind of film will go. And I think that's a perfectly valid premise, whether it's a national or international film. You make the picture the way you believe best, trust your own judgement. When you start producing what you think other people want, you're lost."

Astra was caught in a nasty case of bad timing with the release of *One Night Stand* in Australia when the film was buried by the press stampede surrounding *The Day After*. To their surprise, the producers found little remaining interest in their picture's nuclear theme after the American media blitz had passed.

"It all evolved from a desire to make a film on the nuclear issue," Mason explains, "and we didn't know about *The Day After*. Poor old *Testament* and *One Night Stand* suffered similar fates. The general consensus is that *The Day After* is the least effective of the three films, but it was released first - on TV in America, and as a feature in Australia. It'll also have a television run here."

"That sort of thing makes you cynical," Overton remarks. "Here you are making a film about the most important issue - survival - and the distributors and exhibitors say, 'Oh, survival's been done. Next, please.' That's when you wonder if you're really in the right business."

In the face of all these things, Astra holds to its philosophy: keep the budgets down and produce what you believe in.

"People often ask us how we make low-budget films," says Mason. "I tell them that you travel in a bus. There's no other way, because one of the keys to the whole thing is the producer's approach. So that means an ostentatious lifestyle is out of the question. We share whatever profits we make with the leading creative people; all department heads have a percentage."

Overton gestures towards an adjoining room and flashes a naughty grin. "Our share of the profits bought us the orange juice maker in there. So does this mean we've hit the big time?"

June 21-24:
"We might as well be making shoes."

It's back to the Sebel some days later for the official announcement of the Docu-

mentary Fellowship Awards. A special advisory panel headed by filmmaker Tom Haydon has reviewed fifty-four applications for the \$75,000 grant, awarded to finance both living and production expenses on the winners' next projects. The first set of fellowships was expanded from two grants to three, and AFC Chairman Phillip Adams begins the presentation by explaining the added award as a "recognition of the backlog of excellent candidates whose body of work deserved immediate recognition."

In announcing the winners - Sydney's Gary Kildea and Tom Zubrycki and Melbourne's Brian McKenzie - Haydon stops to pay tribute to (National Film Board of Canada documentarian) Mike Rubbo, "who came back here at a significant moment in time to open our eyes to the kind of documentary work being done internationally. We owe him a great debt of gratitude."

Rubbo's trips home to give documentary courses at the Film and Television School have become a tradition of late, and there are many here who hope his next Montreal-Sydney flight will be made on a one-way ticket.

"If we get really lucky," someone told me, "Mike soon won't go back to Canada at all."

We're going to begrudge them that.



● Tina Arhondis recreates Annie O'Farrell's fight for recognition in *Annie's Coming Out*

The other side of the issue is ensconced across town at the offices of Dick Mason and Julia Overton. Astra Film Productions is the company behind the better-known work of director John Duigan (*Winter of Our Dreams*, *Far East*) as well as his newest film - *One Night Stand* - which has also been selected for the Montreal tribute.

Astra's premises are as basic and down to earth as its two producers. At a time of rocketing budgets, *One Night Stand's* price tag (a little over a million) holds firm to the corporate line; both Mason and Overton are committed to the concept of a national cinema, and believe it to be linked to low budgets. In their eyes, the inherent nature of the



© Advance Australia

As the crowd around the winners begins to break up, I manage to corner panel member Ken Cameron and whisk him away for a chat. Cameron's got a film coming to Montreal – the smooth, explosive *Fast Talking* – and an intriguing position on the Australian film scene. He's an intense, political filmmaker who specializes in very human dramas: the controversial *Monkey Grip* of a few years ago, and now this portrait of a working class waif who just can't live by the rules. *Fast Talking's* principal location is a modern high school, and that's "home turf" for Ken Cameron. He spent some time in those institutions as a teacher, but never quite reconciled himself to the role, or to the whole setup. And this is not his first filmic exploration of the subject; a dramatic short early on in his career detailed the frustrations of a student teacher who can't handle the system and gets himself fired.

"All my films are basically about the same things," he reflects. "About outsiders who are locked in some kind of struggle with Australian authoritarianism. *Monkey Grip* is the exception, because I adapted it from someone else's novel. But I think we're one of the most bureaucratized nations in the modern world. I've always been interested in characters who rebel against that, and in *Fast Talking*, the kid is being pursued from all sides: the teachers, the senior kids, his father and older brother at home. He's fighting all of them."

The performances of the film's young leads are outstanding, and Cameron puts it down to astute casting. "I was looking for people who knew what that kind of life was like," he explains. "The lead (Rod Zuanic) is a guy who lives very much the kind of life his character does. He contributed to the script enormously; most of the dialogue is his reworking of what I wrote. I got all the kids to do that. One of the most awful things about teenage drama is watching the actors struggle with words that aren't theirs."

The director believes that *Fast Talking* is a "quintessentially Australian picture," and has no interest in making any other kind. "I've made my decision," he says. "I don't want to play to the world market. I'll just tell what I know about Australia. I think it's redundant for us to do anything else, and it's politically repugnant to me as well. We're trying to carve out an idea of who we are, apart from the U.S. influence." He feels that *Fast Talking* expresses something unique about his country, as do other recent films: "There's a thread in this movie – and many others – that captures the knowledge that we're different from everyone else. There's a special Australian sensibility, a self-deprecating humour that's shared by the kids in the film. It's not the American hero model at all. We've a sense here that we're just getting through by the seat of our pants."

"We have to reflect that," he says finally. "If there's no future in making films about Australia, then I don't see

the point of an industry. We might as well be making shoes."

One weekday afternoon in late June, the Valhalla Cinema in Paddington opens its doors to an exclusive audience of men. The group sits in concentrated silence as a film called *Strikebound* unspools before them, and the picture has probably never played to such a critical crowd. But these men are neither reviewers nor producers – they are miners, for whom this remarkable movie has a very special significance.

Strikebound is based on events that took place in 1936 on the Gippsland coalfields in the state of Victoria, when a small group of miners and their wives organized Australia's first successful "stay-in" strike. The event is a landmark in the history of the Australian labour movement, and the picture is rapidly winning its own place of honour both here and abroad: stark and brilliantly dramatic, it marks the feature debut of writer-director Richard Lowenstein,

exciting theatre companies in the country; Sydney's Nimrod Theatre has become legendary as a launching pad for some of Australia's hottest talent. He also made a heavy impact in domestic television, specializing in "nasties." "I got roles in cop shows playing baddies, rapists and robbers. Died about twenty times the first year. But the typecasting didn't bother me; I was working, which a lot of people were not." He is blithely pragmatic about his screen image as it has evolved. Apart from some notable exceptions (*Strikebound*, Phil Noyce's *Newsfront* and David Steven's *The Clinic* among them), he has generally specialized in the brutal and psychotic. *Razorback* features star turns by Haywood and an equally mad David Argue as a pair of degenerate brothers, and in Paul Cox's sensitive, quirky *Man of Flowers* (a possibility for Montreal as we went to press), he plays a violent, minimally-talented painter who beats up on his girlfriend. But the weirdo tag doesn't worry him.

"To me, acting is a job. I look at myself as a service company; acting's my main form of cash flow. Now I get offered

often supercedes the actor's traditional role; he was integral to the conception of *Man of Flowers*, and actually helped raise the financing. Having just finished a role in Yugoslav director Dusan Makavejev's Australian film *The Coca Cola Kid*, Haywood is trying on a brand new part for size: he's producing a documentary on koalas and preparing his own telemovie. "Producing is very beneficial to an actor," he says. "It helps you understand producers as a breed. I've always found them to be my main source of problems on a set, and maybe this will help me sort that out."

One of the hottest wrangles in the community over the last two years has raged between the producers' association and Actors' Equity. The union's stand on the importation of foreign talent has been firm and – in the eyes of many producers – unrelenting. Haywood does not apologize for it.

"As far as our Defense of Employment Policy goes, I feel that if the industry supported Australian actors more, and better utilized us as marketing tools, we'd become valuable commodities. The use of foreign talent is a difficult



● Umbrellas against nuclear fallout: Jay Hackett, Cassandra Delaney, Tyler Coppin and Saskia Post in John Duigan's *One Night Stand*

who was all of twenty-two when the film was produced. Lowenstein followed an auspicious period at the Swinburne Institute of Technology in Melbourne by garnering himself a reputation as the maker of flashy rock clips. None of this seemed to prepare anyone for the austere intensity of *Strikebound*, which will play the Montreal festival.

One of the most fascinating elements in the movie is its use of actors, and Lowenstein's canny choice for the lead role of striker Wattie Doig has much to do with the picture's impact. Chris Haywood has been a fixture on the Australian film scene for a good ten years; by some estimates, he's appeared in more Australian movies than any other actor in the country. His own tally comes to thirty-three. Interestingly enough, Haywood is an Englishman who emigrated to this country in 1970 – when it still cost a Brit a mere 10 pounds to make the flight over.

"All I knew about Australia," he recalls, "was that there were kangaroos here. I took riding lessons in case there weren't any cars."

He got involved with one of the most

enough to be choosy, but I've never been over-selective about what I've done, because I consider myself a performer first and foremost. I think that entertainment is an actor's primary job."

He describes the making of *Strikebound* as an intense, difficult experience: "There were probably three people on that film who'd ever done a feature before. Most of them were fresh out of film school. Richard Lowenstein wanted a theatre actor to play the lead, but the producers insisted on someone with film experience, so he chose me. It was one of the lowest-budgeted films I'd ever worked on – they even opened a condemned boarding house for us to stay in. And we were working underground for longer hours and in a more dangerous situation than did the people we were portraying."

His feelings about the finished product? "I'm happy with the film. My objective was to find a lightness, a warmth and humour in the part. I don't know if I succeeded. I do think it's an entertaining film that gets its story across, and that's the main point."

Haywood's implication in a project

issue, because in some ways, I think there should be total freedom of movement. But on the other hand, why shouldn't we have Defense of Employment if the States has got it? I can't go over there and get a job, so why should they come here?" He shakes his head in bewilderment. "I dunno. This place is beginning to feel like Open City, mate. Some of the blokes we've had coming in from overseas I've never seen in my life."

Drive out of Sydney for a few kilometres and you're in the middle of rain forest. A few more up a series of narrow, twisting roads and the topography changes again; at intervals along the highway, the sea begins to make sudden surprise appearances below you with breathtaking regularity. Forty kilometres of this visual splendour will land you in Palm Beach, an exclusive seaside community with a fair number of industry residents. In symbolic value, the place is vaguely analogous to Malibu Colony; in terms of



© Advance Australia

physical layout and overall ambiance, it's as far from the cluttered hype of the L.A. enclave as you can imagine.

Australians may bitch about the coldness of a 17° C winter day, but the "surfies" aren't having any of it. Out beyond the beach, they ride the waves in shiny wetsuits that catch the sunlight and flash the rays back to shore. From his home well above the water, David Elfick stands on his new patio and gazes down at the tiny figures on surfboards.

"Best place to be," he remarks suddenly. "And if the bloody painter doesn't turn up soon, it's exactly where I will be."

He's in the middle of additions to his beachfront home, an erstwhile dance hall that now fronts new living quarters on the hill behind it. He is also – though not at this precise moment – in the midst of efforts to finance a new movie. Elfick is one of the "first wave's" premier producers; he oversaw Phil Noyce's first major feature (*Heatwave*), Gillian Armstrong's second (*Starstruck*), and David Stevens' recent *Undercover*. The new project is entitled *Emoh Ruo* – mirror writing for "Our Home" – and

associated tension is working on his nerves.

"I dunno," he says, sweeping wood chips off the patio. "I sometimes think I'd like to get rid of my place in Sydney. Move out here full time. It'd be so easy to forget the bloody film industry... I mean, who actually *needs* the aggravation?" He leans on the broom for a moment, gazes out at the ocean. "A life of full-time surfing," he muses. "Now that's something we could discuss."

But the painter finally turns up, and we never get round to it.

Melbourne – June 25: "Co-productions are freeways into our tax schemes."

This is a colder, greyer city. The winter rains here are frequent and chilly, and Sydney's glittering connection with the ocean finds no echo in the narrow,

zines, he currently pens regular columns for a handful of them. Add to this his title as chairman of the Victorian Arts Council, his AFC posting and his impressive credentials as a film producer (*The Adventures of Barry McKenzie*, *Don's Party*, *The Getting of Wisdom*, *Grendel*, *Grendel*, *Grendel*, *We of the Never Never*, *Lonely Hearts*, *Kitty and the Bagman*, *Fighting Back*), and the picture is positively scary.

So less surprise is in order when people trace much of the film industry's beginnings back to Melbourne's intense, sophisticated arts community, and place most of the political credit for its birth at Phil Adams' doorstep. He is used to that by now.

"It basically goes back to 1969, when Barry Jones – who's now the minister of Science and Technology – and I grabbed one of our rapid succession of prime ministers and persuaded him that we should have a film industry. We got him very excited, and the two of us charged all around the world on a study trip. I came back and wrote a one-page report to the Prime Minister, suggesting we start an industry here. We worked out a

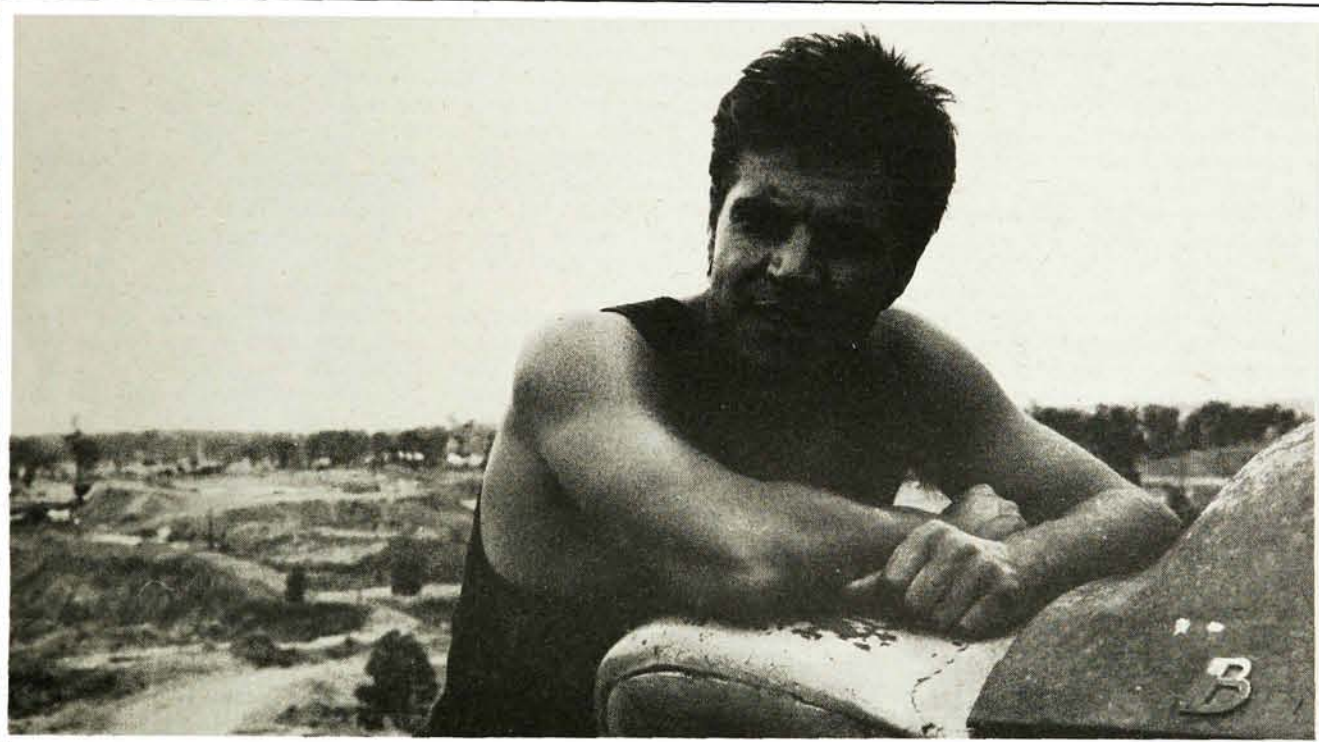
filmmakers more than the international one. In my view, the internationals can be funded by the Americans. We're the fifth market on earth for America, and by our estimations, they'll repatriate one billion dollars from Australia in the next decade. I'm talking to the American majors now and suggesting that they spend some money here on the sort of films they want. Which means that the taxpayers' money will be left for work of a more nationalist ethos. It's much easier for a film to get up if the Commission invests in it, particularly since the investment often falls in the non-deductible areas. But we're unashamedly xenophobic in the way we allocate that money."

Interestingly enough, the aspect of the AFC so admired by the Canadian community – the involvement of leading industry figures in the Commission itself – is something Adams now views as undesirable. "The industry has been controlled by the filmmakers up till now. We all fought at the barricades together, and the government gave us money which we divided among ourselves and went off to make our movies. We didn't have an infrastructure; there was no 'management class.' In this light, the appointment of Kim Williams as Chief Executive is an intriguing one. He doesn't come from the film world, although his father happened to be the chief exec of Greater Union. But Kim ran a chamber music organization called Musica Viva. He was hired because I thought he was far and away the most exciting applicant we interviewed. I liked him for two reasons: he's an exceptionally skillful manager, and he doesn't owe anybody anything. He hasn't come into the job too close to the industry. We have to grow out of that now, because there's been too many conflicts of interest; every second AFC meeting sees one or more of the members leaving the room every agenda item. I hope the new class of people coming through will be able to contribute without being hampered by these conflicts."

The subject of co-production treaties has hung heavy in the air for some time now; this includes the issue of a Canada-Australia accord. Adams' response is short and simple.

"We're loathe to sign any agreements now because we don't want to open up a fragile industry to American intervention. We view the agreements as free-ways into our tax incentive schemes. On a project-to-project basis, though, we'll deal with anyone."

He is concerned about the major problems facing the theatrical market – "We're looking at some kind of legislation to control the video situation, since we've got the highest percentage of video penetration in the world: 50% by the end of next year. It's having an appalling effect on cinemas" – but regards the *angst* over the departure of name directors as a little overblown. "Look," he says, "the whole thing took off here because we were denied a voice for thirty years. There was an enormous



● Colin Friels in John Dingwall's *Buddies*, shot in the Queensland outback

Elfick would love to see it fly.

"It's a great story, a comedy about two people who live in a caravan park – or trailer park, as North Americans would call it. They attempt to buy a house because they're seduced by the advertising, the term payments... all the things that make you think you can have the home of your dreams. It turns out to be a nightmare."

True to form, he has again tied up with a relatively new director, and he's happy with the choice. "Denny Lawrence will handle the film," he says. "He's a very talented guy, one of those intriguing personalities who've come on the scene. He related better to the material than anyone else we showed it to, and he was our first choice. I don't mind working with less experienced directors, because they've often got the energy and fire and enthusiasm that you need. We work together, and the end result is a real producer/director team."

What stands between the present moment and the bliss of production is painfully simple: the June 30 cutoff date. Elfick is still waiting to find out if the money will come together, and the

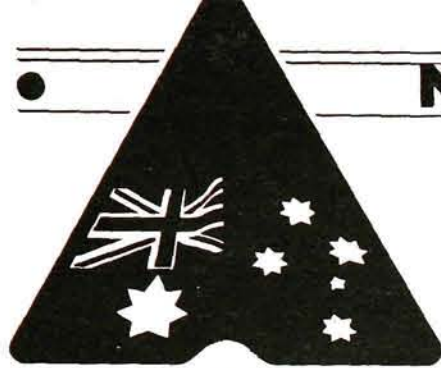
brownish Yarra River that winds its way through the Victorian capital. The antipathy between the two cities is legendary, and glumly familiar to anyone acquainted with the Montreal-Toronto tradition of mutual loathing. But there are people who swear by this place, who regard its northern sister as a kind of urban paean to the superficial: "Beaches are more important than books in Sydney," they'll tell you. "Who needs it?"

Phillip Adams certainly doesn't. It's rumoured that day trips to Sydney are generally all he can tolerate, no doubt making for a scheduling nightmare of sizeable proportions since his appointment last year as AFC chairman. But Adams doesn't run on normal schedules. It's also rumoured that he doesn't take time off to sleep, and a glance at his weighty résumé would seem to back that premise up. Besides his pivotal involvement in the country's largest domestically-owned advertising agency, he is also Australia's most widely-published "journo," having written extensively for a variety of national and international newspapers and maga-

structure that involved an experimental film fund which gave away money – \$500 to \$1000 – to almost anyone with something to say, a national film school and the AFDC, which metamorphosed into the AFC. We set the whole thing up, and to our astonishment, it worked."

He went on to function as advisor on the establishment of the South Australian Film Corporation, thus initiating the trend toward state film bodies. Adams feels the move was something of a mixed blessing. "We went from being the toughest country in which to make films to a place where it was too easy. I sometimes regret that we were quite so successful in creating a plethora of bureaucracies. If a filmmaker couldn't get his project through the AFDC or the AFC, he'd take it round to the states and someone would eventually make it. A lot of the pictures were pretty pathetic. I think filmmaking ought to be tough, and it's getting that way again."

He also admits to mixed feelings on the issue of tax concessions, but very basic ones as regards the role of the AFC in the whole debate. "The Commission's job is to serve the nationalist stream of



© Advance Australia

includes the taking of editorial positions," he says. "It really is a forum for debate and discussion, not a podium for its editors' points of view. And one of the most interesting things about Tony Giannane is the fact that he was always regarded as a money-oriented internationalist who didn't give a damn about anything connected with the domestic industry. When *Cinema Papers* folded, he was one of the strongest voices out there battling to bring us back. So things are never black and white."

Murray has been with the magazine since its beginnings, and this has provided him with plenty of time to formulate some strong opinions about the state of the industry. "The producers' response to the tax concession cutback is rather ridiculous. Two years ago, they were predicting the death of the industry when the 150% incentive came in. When the reduction happened last year, they claimed the cutback would kill them. Making movies is a hard-edged, entrepreneurial business that demands terrific determination. It should not be an easy process."

Neither does he hold great faith in the concept of government intervention.

"I don't think any government body should propose to determine what kind of product should or should not be produced with taxpayers' money. The AFC refused to invest in *Mad Max I*, and later congratulated themselves for the decision. Well, they can't sense what the public wants. George Miller can; let people like him determine what gets made."

Murray also views the exodus of superstar directors as less of a problem than the international press has done of late: "I believe," he says, "that a filmmaker's best work is invariably their first. So instead of wringing our hands over the departure of the big names, we should be looking to the crop of new talent for work, people like Richard Lowenstein. That's where the future is."

If so, no better place to start looking than across town at the Swinburne Institute of Technology. Lowenstein's *alma mater* has recently become something of a *cause célèbre* for many members of the Australian film community, who feel that the College's Film and Television Department is woefully underfunded in view of the budget accorded the Sydney-based Film and Television School. And while Department head Brian Robinson prefaces a tour of the facilities with a warning that "there's not much to show," he also acknowledges that the school's lack of physical resources is apparently more than compensated for by a wealth of energy and a strong creative environment. "We generally turn out top-grade people every year," he says, "and this year's been no exception. A student in the one-year program named Cathy Mueller has made a documentary called *Every Day, Every Night* (set for the Montreal festival), and it's really made an impact wherever it's been shown."

Robinson agrees that Swinburne puts the emphasis on ideas over technique, and he's well aware of the outrage over the current paucity of funds. "It's inevitable that the two institutions would be compared, and I'm not sure if that's right or wrong," he says. But then sighs deeply. "One thing I do know: we really could use some extra money."

June 27 : "Things might not be so bad after all."

"Here come the investors," says Jane North over breakfast at the Regency Hotel. "It always happens like this: everything gets resolved in the last week of June."

As executive director of the Film and Television Production Association of Australia (their producers' group), North has been through this before. The Association has monitored events over the last two years with mixed – and often angry – emotions. And as this fiscal year crawls to a close, everyone is sitting on their hands. "It's starting to look as though things might not be so bad after all," she says, "but the cutback has made people less willing to take risks."

What would the FTPAA have liked? "The government to have kept its election promise," she replies. "They said they'd hold onto the 150, and the cutback came as a terrible blow. I don't think the concessions alone brought the sharks into the business. For the first time, there was real money out there. People who'd been waiting years to make a film suddenly could, and good and bad pictures will always come out of that. The tax money doesn't make the difference."

The role of the AFC in this scheme has also come under FTPAA scrutiny. "Their power seems to have increased dramatically," says North. "I think they play a fantastic role in development in terms of money and advice, and they should continue in that vein. They must get stronger in marketing advice, especially foreign marketing, because a lot of producers find that difficult. They have offices in London and L.A. and a marketing department in Sydney, and that's where they've been strongest. I think they should be 'facilitators,' not 'deciders.'"

Labour relations in the recent past have also been a source of unhappiness for the Association, and North is working to change that; the traditionally bitter confrontations with Actors' Equity have been tempered for the moment with an interim accord. "We'll be negotiating a new feature film award (collective agreement) with them in the next six months. In the meantime, we've got an agreement for no industrial action for twelve months, which I'm very happy about. And when there are disputes, whether with the actors or the technicians, we take them straight to the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission." She is convinced this route is more productive: "There's no better way to go. We're all learning to talk it out, rather than just shout at each other. We're moving toward the kind of co-operative relationship this industry is supposed to be all about."

The base for John Duigan's body of work has been equally split between Sydney and Melbourne, but he began here in Victoria, and you can catch a reflexion of this city's heightened political sensibilities in all his films. He feels this factor separates him somewhat from the mainstream; "Generally," he says, "Australian society is very apathetic politically. You only have to look at the films to see that."

Duigan became active in the Melbourne arts community during his university days, where he plunged into experimental theatre as an actor, director and writer. By 1973, he'd decided that the wide audience he wanted to reach would never be touched through stage work, and turned his attention to film. A series of features (*The Trespassers*, *Mouth to Mouth* and *Dimboola*) preceded the 1980 *Winter of Our Dreams*, which garnered Duigan his biggest international audience to date, and won Judy Davis half the Best Actress Award at the 1983 Moscow Film Festival – the prize was shared by Marilyn Lightstone for *The Tin Flute*.

His next feature was *Far East*, a political thriller with an Asian setting that reunited Bryan Brown and Helen Morse of *A Town Like Alice*. Legal disputes over a piece of music used on the soundtrack have delayed its release in North America, and *One Night Stand* will likely open before it. He began work on the new film six years ago, when he was struck by the central image of four young people caught in a claustrophobic situation on the night of World War III.

"As a kid in England, I lived at an air-force base in the North of England – my father was an officer. Nuclear-carrying bombers operated from there, and I sensed their enormous power even then. I always wanted to make a film about the situation, and the decision to develop the Cruise and Pershing II missiles was the catalyst."

Duigan was distressed by criticism of the film's comic element – "some people asked how such a serious subject could be treated so flippantly, and I thought this was absurd; the film's serious intentions are quite obvious" – but his hopes for the film supercede the strictly commercial. "I think it will be an on-going, operative picture here in Australia. It looks as though it'll be picked up for school syllabuses as a starting point for discussion of the nuclear issue. That's very important to me. We've got to work toward raising the temperature of this whole nuclear debate."

When I'm ready to leave Melbourne, I decide to ring my AFC contact in Sydney, Cultural Events Officer Mike Lynskey. He has news.

John Dingwall has written and produced a picture called *Buddies*, shot on location in central Queensland; he's now tearing around up there with a can of film under his arm, screening the movie for the locals. *Buddies* is entered in competition in Montreal, and John Dingwall wouldn't mind if I moseyed on up and had a look in.

I tell Mike I only have one question. "Is John Dingwall off his head?"

"Possibly," Lynskey says. "But he's a wonderful character."

Something is said about mining towns, "gemfields," the middle of nowhere.

"Where am I going, Mike?"

"Emerald," he tells me. "And don't ask me where that is, because I haven't got a clue."

Fair enough. If I don't come back, they can tell everyone I went walkabout. ●

NEXT MONTH: *Into the outback (sort of), and inside Kennedy Miller.*

frustration to work off, an explosion of activity, just as there was in China after the Cultural Revolution. And obviously you're bound to run out of your first 'puff.' So a lot of our filmmakers are working in the States. But I think these departures free the system up for the next wave of people, and they're an exciting bunch. You couldn't ask for more than that."

Talk about rapid transit: I haven't gone near an airport, and suddenly I'm home again. The Melbourne offices of *Cinema Papers* bear more than a passing resemblance to this publication's Montreal headquarters, and the magazine itself – in format, at least – has got to be *Cinema Canada's* kissing cousin. Not surprisingly, *Cinema Papers* fulfills a similar function on the Australian film scene, but has only resumed doing so since April of this year; an AFC decision last year to withdraw its annual subsidy to the journal effectively shut down operations midway through 1983.

Now that a new funding arrangement between the Commission and Film Victoria has put the magazine back into gear, *Cinema Papers* has resumed its role as a forum for conflicting viewpoints and trade news updates. And the April issue – the tenth anniversary edition, in fact – contains a strangely relevant face-off between AFC chairman Phillip Adams and independent producer Antony Giannane on the "nationalists vs. internationalists" debate; Giannane has chosen to make his case for the internationalists by submitting the CFDC's "McCabe era" as a role model for the AFC. "An enormous amount of ill-informed comment has appeared in the Australian media as to the success or failure of the years 1979 to '80 in Canada," he writes, "... the facts are that during this period, a number of Canadian films became huge, worldwide box office successes... most of them were criticized by purists for being set in Midville, U.S.A. rather than Midville, Canada, but they provided a real industry in Toronto with worldwide recognition for producers, technicians and facilities, and in my view, were just as representative of Canadian culture as low-budget, indigenous, financially-disastrous productions such as Don Shebib's *Goin' Down the Road*... what caused the boom to bust in 1982 was not the lack of worldwide positive box office to Canadian product, but the decision by the Revenue Department to switch the capital cost allowance writeoff from twelve months to two years."

Giannane's piece – actually the transcript of a speech delivered at a university seminar in 1983 – is the subject of some conversation during my stay in Australia, and this is very much in keeping with the kind of provocative publication that editor Scott Murray believes *Cinema Papers* should be.

"I don't feel the magazine's function