

# Historical Dictionary of Australian and New Zealand Cinema

Albert Moran  
Errol Vieth

*Historical Dictionaries of  
Literature and the Arts, No. 6*



The Scarecrow Press, Inc.  
Lanham, Maryland • Toronto • Oxford  
2005

Historical Dictionaries of Literature and the Arts  
Jon Woronoff, Series Editor

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## Editor's Foreword

Not so very long ago, it might have seemed odd to start this subseries of volumes on national cinemas with Australia and New Zealand. They were rather dull, peripheral places that did not generate many films and whose topics were not necessarily of interest to outsiders. Although they did entertain the locals, and sometimes showed up in film festivals, that was about it.

Times have changed. In both countries, the film industry has matured impressively and they are now churning out first-rate films, conceived by excellent directors and producers and featuring casts that include local actors and actresses who are so well known abroad that many fans do not even realize where they come from. Some of the more recent films are about the region, but many more are “international,” of interest to a very broad public. Even more extraordinary, films which, earlier, would certainly have been produced in Hollywood are now being filmed in Australia and New Zealand, and not only for cost reasons. This latter phenomenon, by the way, stems partly from the role played by government that, even in this highly entrepreneurial sector, has worked uncommonly well. Thus, in more ways than one, Australia and New Zealand have moved center stage.

This *Historical Dictionary of Australian and New Zealand Cinema* adopts the standard format of other books in the Literature and Arts series with one important variation. The national cinemas of Australia and New Zealand, although increasingly integrated with one another, still have many differences. Some are purely historical, others remain to the present day. Thus, there are two separate parts, although they are cross-referenced to one another. The two chronologies trace their evolution over time. The two dictionary sections include entries on significant actors, directors, producers, and others, as well as on the relevant companies and government or private sector bodies. There are also entries on

major genres and themes and some of the outstanding films. The single bibliography, fairly extensive and broken down by key topics, offers further reading.

This volume was written by two leading scholars living in Australia but with substantial exposure to New Zealand. Dr. Moran is presently senior lecturer at the School of Film, Media and Cultural Studies of Griffith University in Queensland. During more than a quarter century in academia, most of this at Griffith University, he has taught and written about many aspects of the cinema and television. He has written numerous articles and authored, edited, or coedited nearly 20 books on cinema and television. Dr. Vieth is senior lecturer at the School of Contemporary Communication of Central Queensland University. He has also lectured and written widely, much of this related to cinema and in particular science fiction films. Their combined knowledge, and substantial experience in conveying it to others, has resulted in a handy guide that is not only informative but very readable.

Jon Woronoff  
Series Editor

## Preface

This book will assist researchers, students, teachers, and other readers to explore and understand the nature and achievements of the Australian and New Zealand film industries—especially if they have minimal prior knowledge. For that reason, the introduction and chronology sections are quite detailed. In themselves, they are sufficiently extensive to acquaint readers with the breadth of the industry, and provide specific information, which is more readily found in the dictionary section.

The historical dictionary serves as a comprehensive resource. It is not an exhaustive encyclopedia nor is it a record of all films. Rather it contains the films that fared well, both commercially and critically, in Australia or New Zealand, and in the international market. Similarly, we also include films that are otherwise significant as examples of a genre, style, or a particular theme. The general student at this point in time might not be interested in the vast numbers of missing films from the silent era, so those films are only touched on. Actors and actresses are reasonably well represented, but with the space constraints, many worthy players have been omitted. Similar restrictions apply to directors and other crew. Several texts provide exhaustive detail of the Australian and New Zealand industries, but some of those books are now quite old, and they do not offer the coherence of the present volume. This dictionary complements these, rather than replaces them. Readers will learn about the booms and busts of the two industries, as well as the relation of these infrastructures with the rest of the world.

Any reference work that seeks to be compact rather than exhaustive must always face the problem of selection. We are aware that our criteria of inclusion have been that of an informed subjectivity. With a great deal of experience as both teachers and researchers on the subject of this book, we have sought to include whatever we deem necessary to sustain the interest and needs of our students and other

readers, but being careful not to overburden the user with material that is irrelevant or tangential.

The book is comprised of three sections: Australia, New Zealand, and the Bibliography. This sectioning has advantages and disadvantages. It allows a differentiated discussion of the two industries, given that both function in contexts that are different: for example, not only are the government mechanisms different, so too are the subjects of the films. The notion of national identity, for example, brings to mind different ideas and representations. The disadvantage is that the dividing line between the two industries is quite blurred. Cast and crew move freely between the countries, appearing in and making films in both places. Thus, people born in one country, retaining their nationality, work in the other. In this sense, the divide between them is artificial. However, the bibliography is not divided because this would be an artificial divide, given that many books deal with both the Australian and New Zealand industries and the films of both countries.

Many people made this book possible. First, those people who have worked in documenting the film industry; that is, the librarians, archivists and other analysts, critics, and writers in Australia and New Zealand. Second, the researchers associated with this book have contributed immensely. David Adair and Di Oliver assisted Albert Moran with his research, and Christina Hunt assisted Errol Vieth. Geraldine Connor assisted with formatting the bibliography. Third, our families provided the supporting infrastructure for this project and we are forever in their debt. Finally, we would like to thank Jon Woronoff at Scarecrow Press who first suggested the project and has been the soul of advice and patience.

Errol Vieth  
Central Queensland University  
Rockhampton, Queensland, Australia

Albert Moran  
Griffith University  
Brisbane, Queensland, Australia

## Reader's Note

This book is divided into two sections, focusing on Australian and New Zealand cinema, respectively. In each section, references to another entry are indicated in boldface type. In addition, the entries in one section contain references to entries in the other section of the book. Thus, the entry for Jane Campion is in the New Zealand section, and this entry is cross-referenced in the Australian section by an asterisk before the name of Jane Campion. For example, in the Australian section is an entry for the Australian Film Television and Radio School, containing the text, "Directors include \***Jane Campion**, . . . ."

The term "Commonwealth" in the Australia section means the federation of Australian states and territories that exist within the geographical place called Australia. A "state" in Australia refers to the next political level under "Commonwealth." States include Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia, and Western Australia.

The currency used in the Australia section is the Australian dollar, and that in the New Zealand section is the New Zealand dollar. Sometimes, other currencies are used and are indicated by the normal prefix, thus "US\$."



**AUSTRALIA**

## Acronyms and Abbreviations

ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation (formerly, Commission)
ACCC	Australian Competition and Consumer Commission
ACMI	Australian Centre for the Moving Image
ACTF	Australian Children's Television Foundation
AFC	Australian Film Commission
AFDC	Australian Film Development Corporation
AFI	Australian Film Institute
AFPA	Australian Film Producers Association
AFTRS	Australian Film Television and Radio School
AFTS	Australian Film and Television School
ALMA	American Latino Media Arts
ASCAP	American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers
AWU	Australian Workers Union
BAFTA	British Academy of Film and Television Arts
BCC	Birch, Carroll and Coyle
BIFF	Brisbane International Film Festival
BFI	British Film Institute
CFU	Commonwealth Film Unit (when it is used in a British context, however, it stands for Crown Film Unit)
DAT	Digital Audio Tape
FCCA	Film Critics Circle Australia
FFC	Film Finance Corporation Australia
FTPA	Film and Television Producers Association
GUO	Greater Union Organisation
HMAS	His (or Her) Majesty's Australian Ship
IFFPA	Independent Feature Film Producers Association
MGM	Metro Goldwyn Mayer

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MP	Member of Parliament
NIDA	National Institute of Dramatic Art
NSWFTO	New South Wales Film and Television Office
OFLC	Office of Film and Literature Classification
POW	Prisoner of War
PFTC	Pacific Film and Television Commission
SAFC	South Australian Film Corporation
SAG	Screen Actors Guild (United States)
SP	Starting-price (bookmaker)
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WIFT	Women in Film and Television
WWF	Waterside Workers Federation

## Chronology

**1894 30 November:** Five weeks after first being used in London to show films, Thomas Edison's "kinetoscope" 35mm film-viewers seduced Australian audiences into a love affair with cinema that has never paled. The kinetoscope allowed one viewer at a time to watch an endless loop of film, of about 15 minutes in length. Twenty-five thousand Australians saw this exhibition in the first month.

**1895 March:** Charles McMahon, perhaps Australia's first film entrepreneur and producer, opened the "Edison Electric Parlour," showcasing kinetoscopes and gramophones, in Pitt Street, Sydney. **September:** Audiences in the outback mining town of Charters Towers marveled at the Edison "kinetophone" viewers that brought the first sound film to Australia.

**1896 August:** Carl Hertz, an American magician, presented a theatrical screening of moving pictures as part of a variety program in Melbourne. **September:** Maurice Sestier, an employee of the Lumière brothers, arrived with the first motion picture camera to reach Australia and, in a private showing sponsored by Joseph McMahon and Walter Barnett, screened the first films made by the Lumière brothers. In late **September** or early **October**, Sestier made the first Australian film, copying the Lumière film *Photographers Debark at Lyon* (1895) in theme and title: *Passengers Alighting from the Paddle Steamer "Brighton" at Manly*. **5 November:** Sestier followed this with the *1896 Melbourne Cup* capturing on film the horse race that brings the country to a standstill every year.

**1897 August:** Under the direction of Major Joseph Perry, the Lime-light Department of the Salvation Army, based in Melbourne, began shooting short (23-minute) motion picture films describing the Army's social and religious work. One of these was a dramatized version of its

“prison-gate” brigade. By 1900, the department was the preeminent filmmaker in Australia. Over the next six years, it was responsible for 80 percent of all film shot in Australia, much of it nonreligious film made under contract to, or commissioned by, state governments and the New Zealand Government. **3 November:** The Sydney Polytechnic embarked on the exhibition of films until September 1898, beginning with the 1897 Melbourne Cup and including many local actuality films.

**1898** Sponsored by Cambridge University, British zoologist Alfred Haddon shot the world’s first film of an anthropological field trip in the Torres Strait Islands, just north of Cape York. **May:** In Melbourne, the Salvation Army premiered its first films, entitled *Our Social Triumphs*. The films toured throughout Australia and New Zealand.

**1899 December:** The Salvation Army’s Limelight Department shot 13 short films (averaging three minutes) on the life and death of Jesus Christ. Called *The Passion Films*, they began touring in 1900.

**1900 January:** The Limelight Department joined with the photographic company Baker and Rouse to cover the inauguration ceremonies of the Commonwealth of Australia. **13 September:** Combining 13 film segments, 200 magic lantern slides, music, and lectures, *Soldier of the Cross* screened in Melbourne to an audience of 4,000. This was the Salvation Army’s most ambitious project.

**1901** University of Melbourne biology professor and ethnographer, Baldwin Spencer, filmed the Aboriginal tribes of the Central Desert in South Australia and the Northern Territory, using 3,000 feet of stock.

**1904 March:** The Tait brothers began exhibiting films with a program of newsreels and music at Melbourne Town Hall.

**1905 1 July:** Cozens Spencer commissioned locally shot actuality material and combined these for a season of films in Sydney.

**1906 March** Thomas J. West signed a long lease on the Palace Theatre, Sydney, showing mainly nonfiction film. He signed the first “city first-run” agreement with Pathé Frères. West owned theaters in the United Kingdom and New Zealand. **26 December:** The first fictional feature film in Australia—and arguably the world—*The Story of the Kelly Gang*, was released in Melbourne and was a huge commercial success. Australian filmmaking declined because of the monopoly prac-

tices of the exhibition conglomerate comprising West, Spencer, Pathé, Tait, Johnson and Gibson, and J.D. Williams. This group favored imported material over locally produced film based on cost criteria, effectively arresting Australian production temporarily.

**1907** The Carroll brothers bought the exhibition rights to *The Story of the Kelly Gang* for Queensland, beginning the enterprises of the Birch, Carroll and Coyle exhibition chain. **December:** The development of permanent cinemas became a reality after T.J. West purchased more long leases for large exhibition theaters in Sydney and Melbourne. Other exhibitors followed.

**1909** Dr. Arthur Russell began showing films every Saturday night in a leased hall in Melbourne, and shortly after founded Hoyts Pictures. Pathe Frères became the first overseas film company to set up a distribution network.

**1910** Concerned by the apparent lack of moral standards in the industry and in films, the Salvation Army closed down its Limelight Department. **12 March:** The premiere of Cozen Spencer's debut production film, *The Life and Adventures of John Vane, the Notorious Australian Bushranger*, marked the start of a three-year "golden age" of Australian filmmaking. Between 1910 and 1912, almost 90 narrative films were made.

**1911** **4 March:** Capitalizing on the growth in the industry, numerous filmmaking companies coalesced. Johnson and Gibson merged to form Amalgamated Pictures Ltd. **24 April:** Raymond Longford directed his first feature, *The Fatal Wedding*, for Cozens Spencer. Longford went on to make 30 features over the next 20 years, making him, arguably, the most prolific director in Australian film history. **September:** Spencer opened a glassed-roof film studio in Sydney, in an attempt to utilize natural light. **6 December:** The first official Commonwealth cinematographer, James Pinkerton Campbell, was appointed.

**1912** Because bushranging films were now banned in New South Wales, production ceased as a large market segment was closed. This popular genre was banned because the films portrayed the police in an unsympathetic light. In a further rationalization of the industry, West's, Spencer's, and Amalgamated Pictures merged and became the General Film Co. The popularity of film promoted theater development, and new luxury cinema "palaces" opened: the Majestic Theatre belonged to

Amalgamated, while the Greater J.D. Williams Amusement Co. opened the Melba and Crystal Palace in Melbourne and Sydney respectively.

**1913** American expansion into the Australian industry effectively strangled local production. **6 January:** The Greater J.D. Williams Amusement Co. combined with the General Film Co. to form Australasian Films Ltd. and Union Theatres, establishing an effective monopoly in the industry. They agreed to cease local production in order to focus on the distribution and exhibition of overseas films. **19 July:** Two significant films were released. The first was Frank Hurley's 1,200m documentary *The Home of the Blizzard*, recording the Douglas Mawson expedition to Antarctica. The second was Raymond Longford's last film for Cozens Spencer, *Australia Calls*. Recycling and therefore strengthening a paranoia theme that was to be utilized by politicians through to the 1960s, the film prophesized an Asian invasion of Australia.

**1914** Two local feature films were the first to dramatize World War I. *A Long, Long Way to Tipperary* was released on 16 November and *The Day* on 23 November. To spur local production, the federal government imposed a tax on imported film, which was reduced in 1918.

**1915** Hoyts Pictures had expanded into Sydney, and Melbourne and its suburbs. World War I momentarily spurred film production focused on wartime exploits. Australasian Films made the recruiting films *Will They Never Come?* and *The Hero of the Dardenelles*. The theater company J.C. Williamson made films about the Dardenelles—signaling the effect that campaign was to have on Australian cultural history—and the naval battle between HMAS *Sydney* and the German cruiser *Emden*.

**1916** State governments appointed censorship boards to classify and regulate films. New South Wales appointed its board in this year, South Australia followed in 1917 and Tasmania joined in 1920.

**1917 June:** Frank Hurley was appointed the first official war cinematographer, serving in France and the Middle East.

**1918** George Birch joined the Carroll brothers, bringing the Earl Court Theatre in Rockhampton into the chain. **11 March:** Popular athlete Reg (Snowy) Baker starred in *The Enemy Within*, about fifth columnists within Australia.

**1919 4 September:** Snowy Baker and E.J. Carroll contracted American filmmakers Wilfred Lucas and Bess Meredyth to make three out-back Westerns starring Baker, all in 1920: *The Man from Kangaroo*, *The Shadow of Lightning*, and *The Jackeroo of Coolabong*. **4 October:** Raymond Longford's *The Sentimental Bloke* was released. Based on the poetry of C.J. Dennis, this film was arguably the most important production of the silent period, earning better returns and critical reviews than any film to that date. The sequel, *Ginger Mick*, was released in 1920. Later in the year, New York-based Fox News appointed Claude Carter as their cameraman and reporter in Australia.

**1920 21 February:** Films about Ned Kelly, and bushrangers, have always fascinated Australians. Harry Southwell's version of *The Kelly Gang* was released and *Robbery under Arms* followed later in the year. **24 July:** Raymond Longford's first adaptation of the Steele Rudd stories was released as *On Our Selection*. The sequel, *Rudd's New Selection*, was released in 1921. **April:** Filmmaker Beaumont Smith returned to Australia to make *The Man from Snowy River*. He had tried to make the film in the United States, but high production costs thwarted him. **19 June:** *The Breaking of the Drought* was released in Australia, but was later banned for export because the realistic scenes of drought in rural areas were considered "harmful to the Commonwealth."

**1920–1929** Union Theatres gradually formed a mutually beneficial relationship with the rapidly expanding Queensland exhibitor Birch, Carroll and Coyle.

**1921** Ronald Davis and George Malcolm experimented with short films synchronized with sound-on-disc, while Sydney engineer Ray Allsop experimented with synchronized sound-on-cylinder. Managing director of Union Theatres, Stuart Doyle, modernized his theater chain in an attempt to attract audiences. **5 November:** Raymond Longford made the last of four films, *The Blue Mountains Mystery*, for the Southern Cross Feature Film Co. **3 December:** Frank Hurley's documentary of two journeys through New Guinea opened to critical and popular acclaim, which was repeated when he took the film to the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada.

**1922** Virgil Coyle added his two theaters in Townsville to the Birch and Carroll chain, forming Birch, Carroll and Coyle. **May:** Lottie



Lyell and Raymond Longford formed Longford-Lyell Australian Productions.

**1922–23** Ninety-four percent of all films screened in Australia were made in the United States, after they achieved dominance during World War I.

**1924** New picture palaces, offering unrivaled sumptuousness, opened in Brisbane (the Wintergarden), Sydney (the Prince Edward), and Melbourne (the Capitol).

**1925** The Commonwealth Film Laboratories were established, later changing their name to Colorfilm. **24 October:** Australian expatriate actress in Hollywood, Louise Lovely, starred in *Jewelled Nights*, which was released in Australia. At the same time, *The Mystery of the Hansom Cab*—directed by and starring another expatriate, Arthur Shirley—was released. **21 December:** Lottie Lyell, business partner and friend of Raymond Longford, died of tuberculosis at the age of 35. She contributed a vast amount to the early Australian industry, as scriptwriter, actress, producer, director, and editor.

**1926** Hoyts Pictures, Electric Theatres, and Associated Theatres merged to become Hoyts Theatres Ltd. with Frank Thring Sr. as managing director. There were now two cinema chains: Union Theatres and Hoyts Theatres. In Victoria, the Censorship of Films Act stipulated that theaters screen 2,000 feet of Australian film each session. Exhibitors addressed this requirement by screening locally made short films before the feature. **25 January:** Charles Chauvel's first feature, *The Moth of Moombi*, was released. His second feature, *Greenhide*, premiered later in the year. **22 November:** Paulette, Phyllis, and Isobel McDonagh began their career as filmmakers, releasing *Those Who Love*. They made three more films: *The Far Paradise* (1928), *The Cheaters* (1930), and *Two Minutes' Silence* (1934).

**1927 3 March:** A Parliamentary Select Committee was established, to “enquire into and report into the moving-picture industry in Australia.” **May:** The Select Committee was converted into a Royal Commission, effectively enhancing its authority and scope. **9 May:** The American, Dr. Lee De Forest, who had perfected an amplification system for sound-on-film, filmed the visit by the Duke and Duchess of York to Canberra to open the first federal parliament to sit in the federal capital, Canberra. **20 June:** *For the Term of His Natural Life* premiered. Produced by Aus-

tralasian films, its budget and production values were far ahead of any film produced to date, and made a substantial profit in Australia, but lost money overseas because it had to compete with sound productions.

**1928** Union Theatres renovated the magnificent State Theatre in Sydney. **26 April:** The Royal Commission tabled its findings. It recommended cash prizes for best production, and revised censorship legislation. A Federal Board of Censors was established, along with a Censorship Board of Appeal, and a new ratings system was implemented. **March:** In his directorial debut, Ken G. Hall directed the sequences that were added to the film *Unsere Emden* (released as *The Exploits of the Emden*) for its release in Australia. **29 December:** The feature-length sound films, *The Jazz Singer* (1927) and *The Red Dance* (1928), opened in Sydney.

**1929** Ray Allsop built a “Raycophone” sound projector, and filmed four sound-on-disc musical short films. Other inventors experimented with sound-on-film, in an attempt to produce a cheaper technology than that from overseas. **8 August:** Equipment for the local shooting of *Movietone News* arrived, and the first newsreel was shown on **2 November**.

**1930** Radio engineer Arthur Smith and Clive Cross developed a viable optical sound system, used in the feature *On Our Selection* (1932) and, from 1931, the weekly newsreel *Cinesound Review*. **May:** Filming began on the first Australian all-talkie, *Showgirl's Luck*. It was finally released in **December 1931**. **1 September:** In an attempt to cash in on film exhibition in Australia, the Fox Film Corporation bought a controlling interest in Hoyts Theatres. The managing director of Hoyts, Frank. Thring Sr., resigned to form Efftee Film Productions.

**1931** **May:** Efftee Productions, representing Frank Thring Sr.’s ambitious move into film production, released the two short features *A Co-Respondent's Course* and *The Haunted Barn*. **July:** Thring joined Noel Monkman to establish Australian Educational Films, producing five short films on the Great Barrier Reef—pioneering underwater photography—and other wildlife documentaries. These were released through Efftee. **26 September:** Director/producer A.R. Harwood formed A.R. Harwood Talkie Productions, with the aim of making the first Australian sound features. He released *Spur of the Moment* and *Isle of Intrigue*, which were the first Australian feature-length talkies.

**15 October:** Union Theatres, bankrupted during the Great Depression, sold its assets to the newly incorporated Greater Union Theatres. **7 November:** Cinesound began producing newsreels under the generic title *Cinesound Review*.

**1932** The American-owned Fox Film Corporation increased its shareholding in Hoyts Theatres. **26 May:** Eftee released its most expensive feature *The Sentimental Bloke*. The next film, *His Royal Highness*, starred comedian George Wallace in his debut performance. **3 June:** Cinesound Productions was formed to take over filmmaking activities from the failed Australian Educational Films, while British Empire Films took over its distribution. **6 August:** A sound version of *On Our Selection* was released and was immediately successful. Made by Australasian Films under the direction of Ken G. Hall, the film used sound recording equipment developed locally for the company. Hall went on to make 16 profitable features for the production company Cinesound over the next eight years.

**1933 15 March:** Errol Flynn, in his debut role as mutiny leader Fletcher Christian, starred in *In the Wake of the Bounty*, Charles Chauvel's first sound film.

**1934 February:** Because it could not obtain equitable distribution in Australia, Eftee suspended production after making seven features and 80 short films. The founder, Frank Thring Sr. died in 1936, and the company folded. **June:** The question of protection of the local film industry, in the form of a quota system, was the subject of a New South Wales state government enquiry. It reported in this month, recommending a quota for Australian films for five years. **1 June:** Director Raymond Longford's final film, *The Man They Could Not Hang*, was released.

**1935** The industry expressed optimism after the long Depression and because of government intervention. Hoyts and Greater Union expanded their distribution circuits and modernized their cinemas. New cinemas sprang up in the suburbs. **September:** National Studios completed a film complex in Sydney, and National Productions was formed to produce the films. **17 September:** The film industry was granted a lease of life through the passing of the *N.S.W. Cinematograph Films (Australian Quota) Act*. In the first year, at least 5 percent of all films distributed, and 4 percent of films screened, had to be of Australian origin.

**1936 January:** National Productions began shooting its only film, *The Flying Doctors*. **9 May:** The industry decided to be more aggressive in looking to markets outside Australia. Cinesound's Ken Hall attempted to break into the US market with films that dealt with international interests, played in an Australian context. American actress Helen Twelvetrees starred in the first film of this push, *Thoroughbred*.

**1937 30 June:** Norman B. Rydge assumed control of Greater Union Theatres. In one of the longest reigns in media history, he was managing director and chairman for 43 years, until 1980. **December:** Because it had difficulty enforcing the film quota system, New South Wales passed further legislation to scale down the quotas.

**1938** *Dad and Dave Come to Town* was released. **December:** In a different method of support for the local industry, the New South Wales government guaranteed funding for the production of four films: *Dad Rudd* (1940), *Forty Thousand Horseman* (1940), *That Certain Something* (1941), and *The Power and the Glory* (1941).

**1940 February:** Damien Parer, Australia's second war cameraman, was sent to the Middle East, and later served in Papua New Guinea. The 1942 documentary about the war in Papua New Guinea, *Kokoda Front Line*, was edited from Parer's footage, and won an Academy Award for best documentary in 1942. **14 June:** After releasing *Dad Rudd M.P.*, Cinesound postponed features production for the duration of World War II. **26 December:** The first Australian film released on the global market was Charles Chauvel's *Forty Thousand Horsemen*. The film cemented Chauvel's reputation as well as that of actor Chips Rafferty.

**1944** Damien Parer was killed in action.

**1945 26 April:** The Australian National Film Board was established to implement John Grierson's recommendations concerning Australian documentary production. The Board evolved later into the Commonwealth Film Unit and now Film Australia. The production arm was the Films Division, Department of Information.

**1946** The Waterside Workers Federation financed the production of Joris Ivens' *Indonesia Calling*, denoting an emerging interest in the production of left-wing documentaries. Supported by various left-wing trade unions, the noted Dutch documentarist and (briefly) Dutch Film Commissioner

made the polemical documentary under the nose of the Australian police. The film was a strong plea against the attempt to reimpose colonial rule on the Indonesian people. **March:** In an action that evinces the growing multinational nature of the industry, and an international interest in the Australian market, Greater Union Theatres sold a 50 percent interest to the British Rank Organisation. **27 June:** Greater Union Theatres, in partnership with Columbia Pictures and Cinesound, released Ken G. Hall's final feature, *Smithy*. Although it was successful, Greater Union decided not to resume film production in association with Cinesound. **27 September:** Made with the assistance of the wartime Federal Government, *The Overlanders* premiered to critical and audience acclaim in Australia and overseas, and persuaded Ealing, the British production company, to establish a production branch in Australia.

**1947 19 December:** Like Ealing, the overseas company Children's Entertainment Films set up a production unit in Australia that was to operate until 1960. They produced and released on this date the film *Bush Christmas*.

**1949 16 December:** *Sons of Matthew*, Charles Chauvel's pioneering melodrama—an epic in both its production and its story—was released. It was his best film and one of the most significant films in Australian film history.

**1951** Through prohibiting the formation of film production companies with capital in excess of stg£10,000, the Capital Issues Board effectively stopped the work of filmmakers like Ken Hall and Ealing studios.

**1952** The Waterside Worker's Federation Film Unit released the first of its documentaries arguing for social action, *Pensions for Veterans*. **January:** Ealing studios, partly as a result of the ruling of the Capital Issues Board in 1950, decided to end local production. The studio had invested in Australia, producing many films like *The Overlanders*, *Eureka Stockade* (1949), and *Bitter Springs* (1950). The docudrama *Mike and Stefani* was released by the Department of the Interior. The docudrama told of the difficulties faced by immigrants in settling in Australia, bringing to national attention a new dimension of social policy.

**1953** This year marked the beginnings of annual film festivals in both Sydney and Melbourne. **January:** *Captain Thunderbolt* reinvigorated

the market for films about bushrangers, and was Cecil Holmes' directorial debut in feature films. **4 June:** Lee Robinson and Chips Rafferty produced and directed the first of five genre films, *The Phantom Stockman*, based on the Western genre, and making a healthy profit in Australia and overseas.

**1954** John Heyer's documentary depicting life along the Birdsville Track, *The Back of Beyond*, was released, later to win the Grand Prix at the Venice Film Festival. The Department of the Interior produced the first full-length color film of the monarch's visit, *The Queen in Australia*.

**1955 3 January:** Charles Chauvel's *Jedda*, the first Australian color feature, explored the issues of cultural contact between Aboriginal and other Australians, suggesting that such contact might contain the seeds of tragedy.

**1956** The Commonwealth Film Unit (now Film Australia) was reformed out of the Department of the Interior's Film Division. **16 September:** Television broadcasting began, initially with a further depressing effect on the already-depressed feature film production and exhibition sectors.

**1957 March:** Cecil Holmes' *Three in One* was released for limited screenings in Australia. Adapted from Frank Hardy and Henry Lawson stories, the film explored mateship from a left-wing perspective. It won critical acclaim overseas.

**1958** The Australian Film Institute (AFI) was formed to promote "an awareness and appreciation of film" and awarded its first prize to *Grampians Wonderland*.

**1960 8 December:** *The Sundowners* premiered in New York. This film represented a change in the nature of filmmaking, as it was the last of some 14 films since 1944 that were made by overseas corporations primarily for overseas audiences, that were made in Australia, and that capitalized on Australian locations.

**1961** Birch, Carroll and Coyle opened their first drive-in, the Tropicaire, in Mt. Isa, Queensland. **1 January:** The Australian Film Producers Association lobbied the Liberal Government to declare, through the Postmaster-General—the office responsible for regulating the airwaves—

that television advertisements were to be produced in Australia. This was a form of protection of the industry.

**1963 29 October:** The Vincent Committee, set up the previous year as a Senate Select Committee, recommended government aid for the film industry. While these recommendations were not implemented, they highlighted the growing support for some form of government assistance to the industry.

**1966 19 August:** Significantly, a film about immigrant experiences was not only one of the few films made in the period but was also successful. *They're a Weird Mob* was an Anglo-Australian production that opened in Sydney to record box offices, indicating a demand for Australian product.

**1968** Significant relaxation of film censorship occurred under the Minister for Customs, Don Chipp. **November:** The UNESCO committee for Mass Communication joined others in recommending Commonwealth support for the film industry, but went further in recommending the establishment of a film and television school.

**1969 27 March:** Tim Burstall's first feature, *Two Thousand Weeks*, opened in Melbourne. **May:** Another committee, the Film and Television Committee of the Australian Council for the Arts, mirrored the call of the 1968 UNESCO committee for a film and television school and government support for the industry. It also recommended the establishment of a film fund and the purchase of television time to show the films.

**1970 5 March:** Responding to the recommendations of various committees, the federal government established the Australian Film Development Corporation (AFDC) to promote the making of Australian films. **7 July:** The newly established Experimental Film and Television fund made its first loan to filmmakers. Surprisingly, in the light of current events, the first film that was completed was a documentary about the Vietnam moratorium movement, *Or Forever Hold Your Peace*.

**1971 March:** The Australian Film Development Corporation commenced operations. The Commonwealth Film Unit released *Three to Go* for commercial television. Peter Weir, Brian Hannant, and Oliver Howes directed the film, an innovative three-part feature on youth issues. **November:** The Commonwealth film censors introduced the "R"

rating, indicating that entrance to the film was restricted to those over 18. **9 December:** The first feature funded by the AFDC, *Stockade*, was released. **27 December:** Tim Burstall's *Stork*, a sexual, lowbrow, anarchistic comedy, was the first of the "ocker" cycle. Its box office success encouraged wider investment in films.

**1972** Written by Barry Humphries, Bruce Beresford's *The Adventures of Barry Mackenzie*, another in the "ocker" cycle, earned huge returns for its backers, engendering confidence in the industry and confirming the Australian feature film production revival was up and running. **23 March:** The first nondocumentary funded through the Experimental Film and Television Fund, *A City's Child*, was released.

**1973** The Commonwealth Film Unit was renamed Film Australia. **January:** The Australian Film and Television School (later, The Australian Film, Television and Radio School—AFTRS) opened, with an initial intake of 12 students including Gillian Armstrong and Phillip Noyce. **1 February:** Filmmakers, concerned about American domination of the film market, demonstrated during Jack Valenti's visit to Sydney. He was president of the Motion Picture Producers' Association of America. **March:** Tim Burstall's second in the "ocker" cycle, *Alvin Purple*, was released, quickly becoming the most profitable film since *On Our Selection* (1932). **April:** The Labor government of Don Dunstan established the South Australian Film Corporation, the first state corporation of its kind, in an attempt to develop cultural industries, which, it was envisaged, would balance the decline in white goods manufacturing in that state. All other states established similar bodies over the next eight years. **30 June:** The Tariff Board concluded its enquiry into the film and television industry, recommending radical restructuring of the film industry: production, distribution, and exhibition. Apart from the recommendation to replace the Australian Film Development Corporation, the government ignored the report.

**1974** *27A*, one of a series of low-budget, social realist films was released, examining urban alienation. Others included *The Office Picnic* (1973), *Pure S* (1975), and *Mouth to Mouth* (1978). **October:** Filmmaker Peter Weir released *The Cars That Ate Paris*, his first feature.

**1975** Birch, Carroll and Coyle replaced the single screen cinema in Townsville with an air-conditioned, twin cinema complex. Hoyts



opened the first multiplex in Sydney. **March:** The Australian Film Commission (AFC) Act was passed, and the AFC replaced the Australian Film Development Corporation. **May:** The first government-sponsored delegation went to Cannes to promote Australian films. Ken Hannam's *Sunday Too Far Away* received critical acclaim at the festival. **8 August:** Peter Weir's *Picnic at Hanging Rock* was critically and popularly acclaimed, making over four times its costs, a huge return in the industry. The film also indicated the emergence of the period/art film, with its focus on gentler, but not always less menacing times. Both this film and *Sunday Too Far Away* denoted a "new wave" in Australian filmmaking, turning away from the "ocker" films of earlier in the decade. **4 September:** The Greater Union Organisation had not invested in the production of film since *Sons of Matthew* in 1949. Recognizing the profit potential of local production, the company began to invest once again in film, beginning with *The Man from Hong Kong*.

**1975–1977** Color television broadcasting began in Australia, coinciding with a period of unemployment, and inflation, correlating with a slump of 30 percent to 40 percent in cinema attendances.

**1976** Donald Crombie's *Caddie* (**9 April**), Fred Schepisi's *The Devil's Playground* (**12 August**), and Henri Safran's *Storm Boy* (**19 November**)—the third film supported by The South Australian Film Corporation—opened to critical and audience acclaim. The first television presentation of the Australian Film Institute awards took place, and the best film of the year was *The Devil's Playground*.

**1977** Bruce Beresford's *The Getting of Wisdom* and Peter Weir's *The Last Wave* were released. New directors like Gillian Armstrong, Phillip Noyce, and Ken Cameron—later to make their mark on the industry—released short films. Bruce Petty's *Leisure* won the American Academy Award for best animated short. **April:** The AFPA was superseded by the Independent Feature Film Producers Association (IFFPA).

**1978** Recognizing that Australian films could be and had to be successful in a global market, both the Australian Film Corporation and the N.S.W. Film Corporation opened offices in the United States. **24 April:** In a blatant example of censorship in the film industry, Home Affairs Minister Robert Ellicott vetoed funding of *The Unknown Industrial Prisoner*, on the grounds that it was not a commercial venture. **May:**

Fred Schepisi's *The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith* was critically acclaimed at the Cannes Film Festival. The film marked the entry into film production of the Hoyts exhibition chain. **28 July:** Phillip Noyce's *Newsfront* opened to critical and audience acclaim in Sydney. **28 November:** In another gesture of support for the industry, the government again liberalized tax laws allowing for a 100 percent tax write-off over two years—previously this was 15 years—for film investment.

**1979** Hoyts entered the distribution sector. **February:** The Film and Television Producers Association (FTPA) superseded the IFFPA. **April:** George Miller's *Mad Max* earned \$1 million in its first week of release in Australia and, after its international release, became the highest-grossing film up to that time. **17 August:** Gillian Armstrong's *My Brilliant Career* was released. This was one of the few Australian films of the art and period cycle to achieve success at the box office. **October:** The Australian Film Commission changed its focus to a more commercial operation, aiming for self-sufficiency by recovering costs on a global market, rather than funding the development of filmmakers and esoteric films. **November:** Actors Equity and the Film and Television Producers Association negotiated the Film Actors Award. The award was a form of protection for Australian actors, effectively preventing filmmakers hiring cast from overseas for local films and films that government funds supported.

**1980** **May:** Bruce Beresford's *Breaker Morant* was acclaimed at Cannes, winning Jack Thompson a best supporting actor award. American critics applauded this film and *My Brilliant Career*. Rupert Murdoch and Robert Stigwood established R & R Films, which invested \$2.6 million in *Gallipoli*, and planned to invest \$10 million a year in local production. **June–September:** Investment in films slowed to a trickle when the government announced it would tighten the tax laws to prevent investors using film investment as a blatant tax avoidance measure.

**1981** **24 June:** The industry was further promoted through new tax laws that increased the deduction to 150 percent for funds invested in film, but it could be claimed only when the film had earned income. In addition, 50 percent of revenue would be tax free. **7 August:** Peter Weir's *Gallipoli* was released and won immediate critical acclaim. Besides setting records in the Australian box office, it set house records in the United States as well. It was the first Australian film to be distributed

by an American major; namely Paramount. **December:** Dr. George Miller's *Mad Max 2: The Road Warrior* created box office records in Australia and the United States for an Australian film, taking US\$12 million in the first three weeks.

**1982** *Far East*, an Australian remake of the Warner classic *Casablanca*, was released. **20 March:** *The Man from Snowy River* grossed \$8 million in its first eight weeks, beating the record set by *Star Wars* as the quickest-earning film in Australia. **July:** Four Australians bought out the interests of the US company Twentieth Century Fox in the Hoyts conglomerate.

**1983** Victoria introduced a new governing structure for the State Film Centre and recognized emergent new media forms based on digital technology. The tax concession on film production was reduced from 150 percent to 133 percent. Films shown at Australian Film Festivals no longer required clearance or a rating from the Film Censorship Board. American Linda Hunt won an Oscar for best supporting actress for her role in Peter Weir's *The Year of Living Dangerously* (1982). Film Australia released the feature-length spoof documentary *Cane Toads. Good-bye Paradise* transposed the conventions of the Hollywood *film noir* to the Gold Coast.

**1984** Film Australia's first production of a feature film, *Annie's Coming Out*, was based on a true story concerning a disabled girl's struggle for recognition as a human being. The film achieved wide commercial release. The National Film and Sound Archive was established as an organization independent of the National Library. Victoria legislated for X-ratings for sexually explicit, nonviolent videos.

**1985** Leon Fink bought out the other three owners of Hoyts, restructuring and renaming it Hoyts Corporation. Australian-born Rupert Murdoch bought Twentieth Century Fox and the Metromedia Broadcasting Stations. Tax concessions for film investors were reduced from 133 percent to 120 percent. Fifty percent of Australian households owned a videocassette recorder.

**1986** *The Empty Beach* was the first feature based on the Cliff Hardy crime novels written by Peter Corris with actor Bryan Brown appearing as Hardy. Peter Faiman's *Crocodile Dundee* was released to audience acclaim in Australia and overseas. This film had the highest box office

takings in Australia, and remains the most successful Australian film in the United States. At the other end of the spectrum, Jane Campion's *Peel* won the Palme d'Or for best short film at Cannes.

**1987** Tim Burstall directed a remake of *Kangaroo* first made by Lewis Milestone in 1952 and based on the novel by D.H. Lawrence.

**1988** The Film Finance Corporation Australia (FFC) was established to control Federal Government investment in film production and replace the role of 10BA tax incentives, which were reduced to a 100 percent write-off. John Cornell's *Crocodile Dundee II* was the top Australian film by local gross box office (\$24.9 million). The New South Wales government established the N.S.W. Film and Television Office to support local filmmakers with script development, production investment, skill enhancement, policy issues and expert location, and industry advice. The Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS) opened its new facilities at North Ryde, NSW.

**1989** In conjunction with Warners and Village Roadshow, Birch, Carroll and Coyle opened multiplexes in Queensland shopping centers. Yahoo Serious's *Young Einstein* (1988) was the highest ranking Australian film by gross box office (\$10.1 million). Jane Campion made her first feature, *Sweetie*.

**1990** *The Delinquents* was the top Australian film by local gross box office (\$2.6 million). Dean Semler won best cinematography Oscar for *Dances with Wolves*.

**1990–1991** Sound systems changed from analogue to digital, using digital audio tape (DAT) technology.

**1991** Greater Union took over Birch, Carroll and Coyle. Peter Weir's *Green Card*—filmed in America and backed by the Film Finance Corporation—was the top Australian film by local gross box office (\$10.6 million). Jocelyn Moorehouse's first feature *Proof* won a special mention for excellence—the Camera d'Or Jury—at Cannes. The Queensland government established the Pacific Film and Television Commission to work with the Warner Roadshow MovieWorld Studios in attracting film production to Queensland.

**1992** Documentarist Dennis O'Rourke's *The Good Woman of Bangkok* was released. The film proved highly controversial with its depiction of

not only a Thai prostitute, but also the involvement of the filmmaker with the woman. Baz Luhrman's first feature, *Strictly Ballroom*, was the top Australian film by local gross box office (\$18.8 million). Australian Luciana Arrighi shared the best art direction Oscar for *Howard's End* with Ian Whittaker. The inaugural Brisbane International Film Festival (BIFF) was held under the auspices of the Pacific Film and Television Commission. Geoffrey Wright's first feature *Romper Stomper* was the subject of critical controversy for its depiction of racism and violence.

**1993** The new MA film classification was created, requiring children under 15 to be accompanied by an adult. *The Piano* was the top Australian film by local gross box office (\$9.2 million), and the film won prizes worldwide. Jane Campion won the Oscar for best original screenplay, American Holly Hunter won an Oscar for best actress, and New Zealander Anna Paquin won an Oscar for best supporting actress. At Cannes, Campion shared the Palme d'Or and Holly Hunter won the award for best actress in a leading role. The Australian Film Commission had provided script development funding for this film. The Sydney Tropicana Short Film Festival was launched.

**1994** Hoyts Cinemas, now an international company, with 47 percent of the shares held by the American company Hellman and Friedman, owned 1,500 screens in Australia, New Zealand, the United States, Europe, and Mexico. Stephan Elliott's *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* was the top Australian film by local gross box office (\$14.8 million). Lizzie Gardiner and Tim Chappel won the Oscar for best costume design for this film. P.J. Hogan's first feature, *Muriel's Wedding* had a local gross box office of \$14.1 million. The South Australian Film Corporation ceased being a producer and became a film development agency, providing investment, development programs, and training support for film, television, and new media production in South Australia.

**1995** Australian producer Bruce Davey shared the Academy Award for best picture of the year with Mel Gibson and Alan Ladd Jr. and Australians Peter Frampton and Paul Pattison shared the Oscar for best achievement in makeup with Lois Burwell, for *Braveheart*. **December:** Chris Noonan's *Babe* was the top Australian film by local gross box office, taking \$10.9 million in two weeks. Australian John Cox shared the Oscar for best achievement in visual effects for this film.

**1996** Scott Hicks' *Shine* was released to wide critical acclaim and commercial success at the Sundance Film Festival, and won Geoffrey Rush a best actor Academy Award in this year. *Shine* showed that Australian filmmakers could compete on an international market through drawing on global themes.

**1997** Rob Sitch's *The Castle* was the top Australian film by local gross box office (\$10.3 million).

**1998** The rebanning of Pasolini's *Salò* indicated a new regime of repressive censorship regulation. The Seven television network sold its holdings in MGM for US\$389 million. **May:** After many disputes over the site, Fox Studios opened in Sydney, on prime real estate previously used by the Agricultural Society.

**1999** The Packer family, through its company Consolidated Press Holdings, purchased the last parcel of shares of Hoyts Cinemas from the American company Hellman and Friedman, effectively turning Hoyts Cinemas into a private company. The National Film and Sound Archive changed its name to ScreenSound Australia—the National Screen and Sound Archive. John Woo's *Mission Impossible 2* was filmed in Sydney. Australian Steve Courtley shared the Academy Award for best achievement in visual effects for his work on *The Matrix*, while Australian David Lee shared the Academy Award for best achievement in sound.

**2000** Russell Crowe won the Oscar for best actor for *Gladiator*. George Lucas's *Star Wars: Episode II—Attack of the Clones* was filmed at Fox Studios in Sydney.

**2001** Australian Andrew Lesnie won the Oscar for cinematography for *The Lord of the Rings: Fellowship of the Ring*. Baz Luhrman's *Moulin Rouge*, filmed at Fox Studios in Sydney, opened to popular and critical success. Australian Catherine Martin and Brigitte Broch shared the Oscar for best achievement in art direction for *Moulin Rouge*. Martin also shared the Oscar for best achievement in costume design with fellow Australian Angus Strathie.

**2002** Nicole Kidman won the Academy Award for best actress for the film *The Hours*. Phil Noyce's *Rabbit-Proof Fence* opened to critical acclaim over its treatment of the “stolen” indigenous children issue. Rolf

de Heer's *The Tracker* interrogated other aspects of Aboriginal history.

**1 January:** The Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI), dedicated to all media forms of the moving image, was established by the Victorian government. **17 November:** ACMI cinemas opened at Federation Square.

**2003** Consolidated Press Holdings sold a 60 percent interest in the American operation of Hoyts (554 screens) to Regal Entertainment Group. Glendyn Ivin's *The Cracker Bag* won the Palme d'Or for the best short film at Cannes. P.J. Hogan's much-anticipated *Peter Pan*—filmed at the Warner Bros. studios in Queensland with a US\$100 million budget—opened to mixed reviews and disappointing box office returns. **1 July:** Following a review of cultural agencies the Federal government integrated ScreenSound Australia—the National Screen and Sound Archive into the Australian Film Commission.

**2004 April:** Pioneer filmmaker Tim Burstall died.

# An Introduction to Australian Film

## DEFINING AUSTRALIAN FILM

Why is it important to define Australian film? After all, if one lives in the United States or elsewhere for that matter, defining an American film is never an issue because any film made in the United States falls within that category. Actually, the term “Hollywood” is a broader, if not more precise, umbrella because it encompasses any film that comes out of that vast, nongeographical production conglomeration. But there is no associated definition of the film itself; the term “Hollywood” does not define anything about the film, although it might suggest certain characteristics.

In Australia though, the question of definition is important, if difficult. Unlike the situation in the United States, Australian federal and state government financing has—since the 1970s—supported the Australian film production industry. Such assistance is available only to projects that meet the criteria of an Australian film. For that reason, defining an Australian film is essential. Such a defining process is also necessary in any discussion of the Australian film industry, for without that, there would be no rationale for writing this book.

There is no simple answer to this question. Like ideas of the nation or national character, or a particular genre in film studies, the definition can never be precise. Rather, it is a set of possibilities that are dynamic in a temporal sense. That is, instead of a single sentence definition, Australian film is inferred through a set of criteria, such as content, actors, filmmakers, the element of “creative control,” and so on. At the same time, these criteria change over the course of years. Thus, in the early days of filmmaking in Australia, the subjects were always recognizably Australian, the films were made by Australian filmmakers, with Australian characters. Hence any classification was a simple process. There



is an element of temporality in this argument. As the world has become a smaller place—a global village, perhaps—through new and improving communication technologies, with different business opportunities—arising from an increased agglomeration of assets—added to filmmaking technologies that required larger audiences, then the nature of filmmaking has changed. So, too, have descriptions and definitions of Australian film.

In addition, writers and critics have defined and described Australian film in different ways at different times. Thus, a description is itself a metadefinition, a discussion of how others have talked about films, noting continuities, transformations, and changes, in the significance of the various criteria. These writers and critics have delineated Australian film in particular ways (*see* Moran & O'Regan 1989: xi–xv). An exploration of these definitions not only clarifies the situation, but also explores the nature and history of the industry.

First, all films made in Australia might qualify for the label of Australian film. At one time, this was enough to classify a film. The early silent films, for example, such as *Breakers at Bondi* (1897), *For the Term of His Natural Life* (1908), and Charles Chauvel's *Forty Thousand Horsemen* (1940), clearly were made in Australia. Indeed, all but a few films in this book fit the bill. This is one criterion that a film must meet, it seems, as a precondition for the appellation of "Australian." Some films were shot partly in Australia, with other scenes being shot elsewhere. Jane Campion's *Holy Smoke* (1998), for example, is a story that crosses a number of continents. Yet other films made in Australia do not rate as Australian films. *Mission Impossible 2* (2000) is not an Australian film, even though it was shot in Australia.

Second is the criterion that Australian films are made by Australians. At first glance, it would seem safe to assert this, yet, historically, the notion of "Australian" was ambiguous, as being a Briton was the same as being an Australian. Although director Raymond Longford was born in Australia, many of his contemporaries were born in the United Kingdom and subsequently migrated to Australia. Like many Britons who came to Australia, even up until the last 20 years, becoming an Australian citizen was never an issue because Britain was the "home country," and a British passport was a key to the world, and gave holders the right to vote in Australia. British citizenship meant that the Briton could enjoy all the rights and privileges of Australian citizens, *ex officio*. But

now the idea of “an Australian” is even more ambiguous. Jane Campion, for example, was born and educated in New Zealand, yet was one of the first intake into the Australian Film and Television School (later, Australian Film Television and Radio School). She made many films in Australia and lives in Australia, and is claimed by the Australian industry as an Australian. At the same time, many Australian filmmakers now reside overseas, having all but abandoned the Australian industry. Some return for a time to make films, such as Phillip Noyce and Gillian Armstrong, and such films have a strong claim to be Australian. But even this criterion is difficult. Consider the films of Fred Schepisi. *The Devil's Playground* (1976) and *The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith* (1978) are quite clearly Australian, and *Plenty* (1985) and *Roxanne* (1987) are clearly not. What of *A Cry in the Dark* (also *Evil Angels*) (1988)? Shot in Australia from an Australian story, it stars Meryl Streep and Sam Neill, and was produced by the US companies Warner Bros. and Cannon Entertainment. Increasingly, this is the kind of question that is raised more often as cast and crew move across national borders, as do the companies that make the films and the stories that are the subject of the films. The participation of other significant Australian crew members, such as the writer, cinematographer, or editor, might be enough to suggest a film be designated Australian. Certainly, the globalization of the industry is an interesting and dynamic subject.

Third, it seems reasonable to argue that Australian films need to be about Australia, and, to a very great extent, this was the case. Indeed, they could hardly be about anything else. Yet, to follow this argument to its logical conclusion would be to assert that national films (of any country or nation) would be about that nation or country, leaving films with some kind of international subject to be made elsewhere, which could be taken to be Hollywood. Obviously, this cannot stand up to any kind of examination. The most striking recent example of a “universal” film being made outside Hollywood is the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy (2001–2003). Certainly, the films were not about New Zealand (although New Zealand cleverly reconstructed itself as Middle Earth as a result of the success of the films). An earlier and successful example filmed in Australia was the *Mad Max* trilogy (1979–1985), which, although made in Australia, could have been made in a similar location elsewhere on the globe; certainly, the films were not about Australia.

A fourth category is films made for Australian audiences. Most films made in Australia before the 1970s revival fitted this category, as the marketing networks for such films overseas were not reliable, if they existed at all. However, notable exceptions included those films made for the US market, by American or Australian directors, such as Ken G. Hall, beginning with *Thoroughbred* (1936). Since the revival, films made for Australia have sometimes been popular overseas, if only with the arthouse circuit.

The final category is films that are made by, or involve, Australian actors and other crew working overseas on films that have no immediate relevance to Australia. It would be difficult to argue that films starring Nicole Kidman should be regarded as Australian. Yet films made by Peter Weir might be Australian. *Green Card* (1990) is often mentioned in this regard. Weir wrote the screenplay and directed the film, which was shot in New York City, and which had nothing to do with Australia. Apart from the involvement of a few Australian companies that provided dubbing and postproduction facilities, no other element of the film had Australian input. Yet the Film Finance Corporation of Australia was one of the major funding sources, meaning that the film met the Corporation's requirements for an Australian film. Another example is *Moulin Rouge!* (2001). Made by Australian Baz Luhrmann and starring Australian Nicole Kidman, the story was not Australian, nor did the film receive funding support from the Film Finance Corporation or other Australian support organizations. It was shot primarily in Australia. Yet, for the purposes of Australian Film Institute (AFI) awards, the film was Australian and won AFI awards. For other award-presenting organizations, whether the film was Australian or not seemed irrelevant, as it won Oscars and British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) awards, among others.

According to funding bodies like the Australian Film Commission (AFC), the definition of an Australian film is now quite simple, although riders are attached. Basically, an Australian film is one where the project is under Australian creative control; that is, where the key elements are predominantly Australian and the project was originated and developed by Australians. This includes projects under Australian creative control that are partly foreign-financed. Even that definition is problematic. Take a film like *The Piano* (1993). Director Jane Campion was a New Zealander, living in Australia. The film was shot in New

Zealand, with a New Zealand subject. Yet, for the AFC, it was an Australian film, and that organization provided script development funding. The film won an unprecedented 11 AFI awards. Yet it is also claimed by New Zealand as one of theirs, with good reason. So, the grey areas are quite large. All these definitions are limited in some way. Given the increasing globalization of the industry, barriers of nation and national films can be limiting. On the other hand, such differentiation is necessary to maintain the film industry in countries like Australia.

In this book, Australian film has been defined quite broadly, but generally within the bounds of the definitions funding bodies use. The film has to have some element that is recognizably Australian and that plays some part in Australian film culture. Thus, the narrative should have some essentially Australian motifs, or concern itself with an Australian identity, or be peopled by Australian cast and/or significant Australian crew. The film might be supported by Australian funding, either in the form of government assistance or through its production in an Australian or New Zealand studio. Thus, *The Matrix* (1998) and *Holy Smoke* fall into the Australian category; *The Lord of the Rings* is a New Zealand film, as is *The Piano*.

## HOLLYWOOD AND AUSTRALIA

Cinema is of great significance in Australian culture. Australians have always enjoyed an outing to the “pictures,” as cinema was called from the earliest days up to the 1960s. As in the United States and New Zealand, the heyday of the cinema—in terms of frequency of attendances—was in the 1940s, when, on average, Australians went to the cinema twice each week. Before the 1980s, the lowest wage that could be paid to a worker was the basic wage, and unlike the minimum wage concept, the basic wage was determined on the basis of its capacity to feed, house, clothe, and generally maintain a family. The significance of the cinema in Australian life is attested to by the fact that one of the elements in determining the basic wage was the price of cinema attendance.

Although cinema is significant, it is dominated by the United States. In 2002, Australia had a population of just under 20,000,000. There were 1,872 cinema screens across the country, with a gross box office in 2002 of \$844,000,000 derived from 93 million admissions. In comparison

with the figures from either the United States or the United Kingdom, the Australian industry is in a different, much smaller, league, yet the market is still important to profit margins and shareholder returns. The statistics from 2002 are representative of the degree of domination. A total of 258 films were released, of which 22 were Australian (19 features and three documentaries), which is just 8.5 percent of all films released. On the other hand, two-thirds of this total—172 films—were from the United States. The total budgets of Australian films represented just 1 percent of the total budgets of American films released in Australia in that year. The share of box office revenue for Australian productions was 4.9 percent, or \$41.8 million, but that for the United States was 80 percent of the gross annual box office.

Revenue from Australian films in the Australian market is minimal compared with Hollywood films. Films that make over \$1 million are considered successful, and in 2002 there were 10 such films, ranging from \$7.7 million to \$1.3 million. In contrast, the average budget for a major American studio film (for example, Disney, Warner Bros., Universal) in 2001 was US\$47.7 million and the average for a minor studio (for example, Miramax, New Line) was US\$32.5 million. Thus, in terms of the overall market, the Australian film industry plays only a small part, but, in terms of its place in the cultural life, the industry is of great importance.

The domination of the industry by the United States began early, but it was not necessarily a case of American interests simply taking over. In 1906, Australian filmmaking declined because an exhibition monopoly, which was Australian based, favored imported film because it was cheaper. In 1913, a similar rationale on the part of the exhibition and distribution monopoly effectively destroyed production in Australia. In order to redress the balance, the federal government imposed a tax on imported film in 1914, but this was reduced in 1918. By 1923, the domination was almost complete: 94 percent of all films screened in Australia were made in the United States. Although various attempts were made to address this problem, the most successful were those taken since the 1970s, when state and federal governments supported the production of films.

However, there is another side to this matter. First, many Hollywood studios are owned by non-American companies, such as Sony and News Corp., which tends to qualify ideas of American imperialism through films, although clearly, many of the values, ideas, and subjects exported in American films are American-centered. (In the reverse of this argument, News

Corp is, at the time of writing, applying to move its headquarters from Australia to Delaware.) Today, non-American actors play Hollywood characters, and non-American filmmakers direct Hollywood films. For example, at the 2004 Academy Awards, three of the best director nominations were not American, and New Zealander Peter Jackson won the award. The best film Oscar was won by his film, *The Lord of the Rings: Return of the King*, which was clearly a New Zealand film, but appropriated by Hollywood. The Oscar for best actress was won by South African Charlize Theron. And there is some dissatisfaction in Hollywood over the perception that production had moved overseas: Tim Robbins, winner of the Oscar for best supporting actor, urged filmmakers to bring productions back to the United States, as local actors were suffering from a lack of work.

Other characteristics of the industry differentiate it from that in other countries. One of the most significant elements of the industry in comparison with the United States is the lack of studios. Australia has no tradition of large corporations making films in their own studios. But in the last 30 years, it has developed a number of state and federal studios. For example, state film organizations support film development and production in a number of ways: through the provision of script development support, location advice, production financing and facilities, and postproduction facilities. That is, these state industries offer the same kind of infrastructure that a Hollywood studio might offer. Of course, the details vary. In Queensland, for example, the studios are owned by private interests, but the films shot in them are supported in the ways mentioned previously. The distribution and exhibition elements of the film industry have yet to be documented in a comprehensive way. Some work has been done on various sectors, but a complete history is lacking (*see*, for example, Brand 1983; Collins 1987). Ownership of Australian theater chains is in an ongoing state of flux, and, as the chronology indicates, discovering who owns what at any one moment in time is a problem of unraveling cross-ownership details.

## THE STORY OF AUSTRALIAN CINEMA

To understand Australian cinema, it is essential to understand something of its history. In the early part of the 20th century, Australians embraced not only going to the cinema, but also making films, beginning

in about 1896. Following the model of the earliest Mèliés' films—and the limitations of technology—these short, unedited documentaries focused on the lives and events of Australia, and important among these were the horse races, capturing a national pastime for posterity. One of the most interesting linkages of this Australian film history was that between the industry and the Salvation Army, which seized on the new media as an appropriate tool for its work. From 1897 to 1910, the Army's Limelight Department made religious films but, because it had such extensive knowledge and experience, it was commissioned by government and others to produce secular films, including the inauguration ceremonies of the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901.

In the first decade of the 20th century, Australia was the largest film-producing country in the world. Between 1910 and 1912, almost 90 narrative films were made; looking wider, between 1906 and 1928, 150 narrative films were made. From 1906 to 1911, the Australian industry made more of these films than anywhere else. Included in this is arguably the world's first feature film, *The Story of the Kelly Gang* (1906). As would be expected, these films reflected Australian life, interests, and history, such as horse racing, convict life, gold mining, and the perennial favorite, bushranging, and films on this subject often viewed the bushrangers sympathetically, to the chagrin of the constabulary. Few of these films have survived, but *The Sentimental Bloke* (1910) has. The foundations of a filmmaking tradition were laid, because of the efforts of filmmakers like Raymond Longford, and actors like Lottie Lyell, Louise Lovely, and Bert Bailey. This golden age was not to last. Rationalization of the industry followed in 1913, in a classic case of the accountants taking over the business, and of the expansion of American interests. The various small production houses and theaters amalgamated to form a vertically integrated company called Australasian Films and Union Theatres, which controlled production, distribution, and exhibition. This combine decided to cease local production and focus on the distribution and exhibition of overseas films. This effectively curtailed investment in the local industry, although films were still made.

After World War I, the industry revived somewhat, although it never returned to the levels reached in the first decade of the century. The US domination of the industry was complete, as in 1922 and 1923, 94 percent of all films screened in Australia were made in the United States.

Nevertheless, while the features of Raymond Longford, Charles Chauvel, the McDonagh sisters, and Beaumont Smith were significant achievements in this period, so too were the documentaries of Frank Hurley. On the other side of the camera, Australian Louise Lovely worked in the Hollywood industry in films like *Jewelled Nights* (1925), and in the 1930s, Errol Flynn acted in films in Australia before moving to Hollywood. The exhibition sector continued to expand and restructure, so that two cinema chains, Union and Hoyts—with substantial shareholding from the United Kingdom and the United States respectively—became dominant. “Talkies,” such as *The Jazz Singer* (1927), required sophisticated and expensive sound recording equipment, making the production of local films even more costly, and financially risky. Fewer films were made at this time, although some companies, notably Frank Thring Sr.’s Eftee Film Productions but also A.R. Harwood’s Talkie Productions, continued to pursue profits in filmmaking. However, while the market for homegrown features was limited, another market for newsreels opened, as theaters began to screen newsreels before the feature film, and the Cinesound company filled this niche market. Cinesound also made features, and Ken G. Hall, one of the most successful filmmakers of the time, made 16 features for the company, up to World War II when it ceased making features for the war’s duration, and never restarted these operations.

The period between the wars was marked by renewed government interest in the industry. A Royal Commission was established in 1927 to enquire into the industry and reported in 1928, but did not propose a firm agenda for supporting local production, apart from the recommendation that cash prizes be given to Australian films. In 1934, the New South Wales government established an inquiry into the industry, with the aim of protecting it. The recommendation was a quota system, materializing in the 1935 law that required that 5 percent of all films distributed within the state had to be of Australian origin. If anything, this law shows the extent to which overseas films dominated the market. However, the legislation was doomed to failure for various reasons—it applied in only one state, for example—and the quotas were gradually removed from 1937. Yet, the New South Wales government did continue to support the industry through cash grants.

Other concerns besides filmmaking held the attention of Australians during World War II, but soon after the Australian government moved



into documentary production with the establishment of the Australian Film Board and the subsequent making of important documentaries like *Mike and Stefani* (1950) and *The Back of Beyond* (1954). On the other hand, the feature film industry languished from World War II to the end of the 1960s. Greater Union and Cinesound did not resume filmmaking after they had postponed such production during World War II. Only one or two features were made each year; nevertheless, some of them are noteworthy. The English company, Ealing, set up a production facility after the war, making *The Overlanders* (1949), *Eureka Stockade* (1949), and *Bitter Springs* (1950). Ken Hall's final feature, *Smithy* (1946) was released, along with Charles Chauvel's significant *Sons of Matthew* (1949) and *Jedda* (1955), and Cecil Holmes' *Captain Thunderbolt* (1953). The participation of Ealing in the Australian industry ceased when Prime Minister Robert Menzies legislated financial restrictions through the Capital Issues Board, which also stopped the projects of Ken Hall.

By the 1960s, feature film production had almost ceased, in part because of the challenge of television, and because distributors and exhibitors were not interested in supporting local production. Yet other developments suggested a slowly awakening industry. In 1958, the Australian Film Institute was established to promote an awareness and appreciation of film. Commercials were regulated to protect the local industry, to the extent that they had to be shot in Australia using Australian personnel. In addition, the Vincent Committee recommended in 1966 some form of government aid for the industry. Some film workers could also find work in coproductions, such as those of Southern International, a joining of the talents of Lee Robinson and Chips Rafferty. Their first film, *The Phantom Stockman* (1953), made a healthy profit at home and overseas. Later, in 1966, the Anglo-Australian coproduction *They're a Weird Mob*—which focused on some idiosyncrasies of the Australian character—was released to popular acclaim, and contained the seeds of the ocker cycle that was to follow.

The 1970s were the first decade of the Australian film revival. Financial assistance for the production of films was to be expedited through the newly established Australian Film Development Corporation (AFDC). The first film of the ocker cycle, Tim Burstall's *Stork*, was released in 1971, and his second film, *Alvin Purple* (1973), became the most profitable film at the box office since *On Our Selection* (1932). The ocker films showed that Australians would watch films about Aus-

traliens, especially those that exaggerated the comic elements of character. State governments, beginning with South Australia, recognized the cultural and employment potential of a film industry and established their own funding offices over an eight-year period. In 1975, the Australian Film Commission (AFC) replaced the AFDC, paralleling the demise of the ocker films and the rise of the art and period genre, beginning with Peter Weir's *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975). Other films of the same genre—known as the “AFC genre” because such films were favored by the AFC for funding—followed, such as Donald Crombie's *Caddie* (1976) and Fred Schepisi's *The Devil's Playground* (1976). Yet these directors and other crew were assisted by the Australian Film and Television School, which was established in 1973. Gillian Armstrong, Jane Campion, and Phillip Noyce were among the first intake.

Although the ocker style and art/period genre were significant during this period, other films of various styles and genres were also released. On the one hand, Peter Weir's *The Cars That Ate Paris* (1974) and Sandy Harbutt's *Stone* (1974) were examples of popular if not critically acclaimed films that contrasted with the two genres of film that dominated contemporary film output. On the other, a series of low-budget, social-realist films were released between 1974 (27A) and 1978 (*Mouth to Mouth*). However, both of these were overwhelmed by the new Australian blockbusters, which not only found large audiences at home, but achieved significant overseas box office success as well. Dr. George Miller's *Mad Max* (1979) ushered in this new success, which was followed by the even more successful *Mad Max 2* (1981), and another action/adventure film, *The Man from Snowy River* (1982), directed by a different George Miller. *Crocodile Dundee* (1986) and *Crocodile Dundee II* (1988) continued the blockbuster tradition.

Other aspects of the industry changed as well with this revival. In 1975, the Greater Union theater chain resumed investment in film production, and the second chain, Hoyts, followed in 1978. In the same year, the government liberalized tax laws to allow a 100 percent write off for investment in film, and reduced the time over which the deduction could be spread from 15 to two years. In 1981, the 10BA tax regulations changed this to a 150 percent deduction, with an additional clause that 50 percent of returns were to be tax free. After some years, this deduction was reduced to 133 percent—with 30 percent tax free—and further reduced to 100 percent in 1988. The result of this tax liberalization was,

of course, greatly increased film production. In the 1970s, the average number of films made each year was 15; this rose to 27 in the 1980s, as did production budgets. A great number of these films were simply tax-minimization projects, but even those films were the training ground for performers and crew who went on to greater things. Although the AFC was charged with funding film development, the Film Finance Corporation was established in 1988 to provide finance, generally in the form of equity, for film projects, replacing the 10BA schemes with direct funding. In the exhibition sector, the first multiplexes built in suburban shopping complexes began exhibiting in the late 1980s.

In the 1990s and the early 21st century, Australians have taken their talents to Hollywood and elsewhere and succeeded, both in films that are Australian and in more general, international films. At the same time, some Australian films have been widely acclaimed within this globalized industry.

## PROBABILITIES AND POSSIBILITIES

The Australian industry might appear to have a secure future. It has, after all, been in a continuous state of production on a reasonable scale since the revival, that is, for at least 30 years. It boasts two studio complexes, one on the Gold Coast and one in Sydney, with two major American corporations owning significant stakes. The Australian government supports the industry through the Australian Film Commission and the Film Finance Corporation, and filmmakers can often gain additional funding for development and production from one or more of the state funding organizations. Investors in films have tax concessions accorded them, which, although not as generous as the 150 percent deduction that once existed, is still significant at 100 percent. Filmmakers have honed their skills and many have achieved critical and popular success at home and abroad, as have actors and other crew. American filmmakers and companies have found it cheaper to make films in Australia because wages and salaries are lower, and the expertise in most areas of filmmaking is comparable to that of anywhere in the world. At the same time, Australian audiences still enjoy watching Australian films, making the films profitable, even if this is a small profit. Overseas audiences sometimes respond favorably to these films. The new technology of

DVDs has created a new market, as more people watch films at home. Thus, it might appear that the industry is secure.

Yet a number of elements in the equation are not secure. One is the variable of government support. This is never certain. For example, a free-trade agreement between Australia and the United States might stipulate that the Australian government stop supporting, or subsidizing, the industry, in order to allow the free market to determine what Australians watch on television and in the cinema. If this situation recurred, the industry would be in a similar situation to some time in the past. A second variable is the value of the Australian dollar in relation to the US dollar; that is, the exchange rate. While the US dollar is high in value, then it makes sense for American companies to make films in Australia. However, when the dollar drops in value, the economic advantage reduces, and when added to the logistics of transferring cast and crew to Australia, the advantage disappears. In addition, American film becomes cheaper to exhibit, and Australian film becomes more expensive in the United States, while American returns are less. A third variable is the decisions by organizations, such as the American Screen Actors Guild (SAG). In May 2002, the SAG ordered its 98,000 members to refuse to work anywhere in the world unless they are offered SAG contracts, which stipulates minimum rates in US dollars that many Australian projects running on tight budgets could not afford.

Despite these reasons for a future downturn in the local industry, downturns in recent years have occurred even though it seemed that the industry was on a stable footing. One such downturn occurred in the 2002/2003 financial year when feature film and TV drama production activity dropped for the first time in eight years. Total expenditure fell 23 percent from \$663 million to \$514 million. Twenty-six feature films were made, compared with 39 in the previous year. However, the downturn in economic terms was even more pronounced. The value of feature film production fell by 63 percent from \$131 million to \$49 million, due largely to a lack of foreign-financed local features. In addition, there were no Australian features with budgets over \$10 million, compared with three the previous year; only one film budget was in the \$6–\$10 million range, compared with three in the previous year.

One of the economic models used to characterize the Australian film industry is “boom and bust.” In the past, this has been a reasonably accurate description of the production aspect of Australian cinema; that is,

filmmaking has been subject to the various and changing government policies, business plans, vertical integration, and other economic factors that pervade the industry, with the result that filmmaking has sometimes boomed, but, just as often, the bubble burst. The bubble has been expanding now since the 1970s, and although there is some hope that the industry is now on a secure footing, providing a consistent film output, recent downturns suggest that the bubble might be slowly contracting. Certainly, without government support—public financing—of the industry, it would collapse, as it has in the past. The possibility of a free-trade agreement between the United States and Australia is a threat to this public funding, and to the filmmaking industry. At the same time, the success of films in holding up a mirror to Australians—however distorted—would seem to guarantee a future. These narratives of Australia, the stories that are essential for any culture to establish a history, must continue.