

ReelINews

The official newsletter of the
Federation of Victorian
Film Societies

#100

November 2013

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Editor's Desk



It's November! Where I come from that means Thanksgiving. Turkey & dressing & pumpkin pie. But more importantly it means counting our blessings and giving thanks. So, what do we film society folk have to be thankful for this year? Lots!

Here are some of the things that Prodos and I are personally thankful for and often talk about. Perhaps some of it will ring true for you, too.

We're thankful

... For the founders of the film society movement, the volunteers who, over 64 or more years have raised funds, run festivals, expanded the horizons of film culture. ... For our colleagues on the Committee. It's a great committee to be part of. We disagree, we debate, explore, expound. But there's a special chemistry between us that makes everything come right in the end.

... For our readers and their encouragement and appreciation. ... For the incredible knowledge, experience, reliability and hard work of Ian and Susan Davidson and John Turner. For the calming, stabilizing, good-humored style of our president, John Arkins. ... For Australia's British heritage, its diverse migrants, it's freedom, democracy, prosperity and sense of fun, which makes an independent, non-profit, volunteer-run institution such as ours, possible.

And we are delighted to bring you this 100th issue of *ReelNews*. It's a blockbuster -- with a special emphasis on FVFS history. Enjoy! See you again in 2014!

Ready? Lights off! Imaginations ON!

Barboo A H Marinakis
ReelNews@FVFS.org.au

PS: Please share this newsletter with friends and colleagues! Print it out, email it, leave it lying around.

Congratulations to the 34th Annual

Halls Gap Film Festival

This year the festival was held November 8, 9 and 10, organized by **Gang-Gang Arts**.

Screening in both 35mm and digital cinema format, HGFF presented a selection of Australian and International documentaries, dramas, comedies, romances, animations and children's films.

www.hgff.com.au



fvfs.org.au

What's Been Seen

ACROSS THE FILM SOCIETY CIRCUIT

Let ReelNews readers know what you've been screening. Email Susan Davidson: secretary@fvfs.org.au

Arapiles Motion Picture Society

Australian Bing Crosby Society (Film Society Arm)

Each session screens a Bing Crosby film plus supporting feature from the same era.

Ballarat Film Society & Buninyong Film Festival

Night of the Demon, UK, 1959.
Topp Twins: Untouchable Girls, NZ, 2009.

Bannockburn Movies Film Society & Film Festival

Barwon Heads Film Society

The Way, USA, 2010.
The Intouchables, France, 2011.

Beechworth Film Society

Bright Film Society

The Kid with a Bike, Belgium+, 2011.
Caramel, France/Lebanon, 2007.
Where Do We Go Now?, France+, 2011.
Lore, Germany/Australia, 2012.
Silent Souls, Russia, 2010.
Searching for Sugar Man, Sweden/UK/USA, 2012.

British History Film Study Festival

Event: The Scottish Enlightenment

Camberwell Film Society

Amazing Grace, UK, 2006.
In the Good Old Summertime, USA, 1949.
Coco Avant Chanel, France, Belgium, 2009

Celebrate Israel Film Study Festival

Event: Creative centre of the Middle East

Corangamite Film Society

Court Film Society

The Other Son, France, 2012.
No, Chile+, 2012.
Barbara, Germany, 2012.
Rust and Bone, France/Belgium, 2012.
Kon Tiki, UK+, 2012.
In the House, France, 2012.

Croydon Film Society

Toomelah, Australia, 2011.
The Skin I Live In, Spain, 2011.
Damsels in Distress, USA, 2011.
Your Sister's Sister, USA, 2011.
I Wish, Japan, 2011.
The Sapphires, Australia, 2012.

DADo Film Society

F Project Cinema

Far East Film Society

Ferntree Gully Film Society

Hysteria, UK+, 2011.
Le Havre, France, 2011.

Flexible Respite Film Society

Flickside Film Society (Arts Yackandandah)

Geelong Classic Cinema Inc

God Loves Atheists Film Study Festival

Event: Christianity's Greek Heritage.

Goulburn Valley Film Club

Margaret, USA, 2011.
Surprise Christmas screening.

Goulburn Valley U3A Film Group

Grampians Film Society

Brassed Off, UK, 1996.
Asterix and Obelisk in Britain, France+, 2012.

Gusto Film Society

Horsham Film Society

Margin Call, USA, 2012.
Broken, UK, 2012.
Haute Cuisine, France, 2013.

International Film Group

Psycho, USA, 1960.
You Will Be My Son, France, 2011.
The Angels' Share, UK, 2012.

Late Show Film Society

Liberate Education! Film Study Festival

Lounge Lizards Film Society

LV Film Society

Your Sister's Sister, USA, 2012.
Once Upon a Time in Anatolia, Turkey, 2011.
Drift, Australia, 2013.

Macartan Club (Inc) Film Society

The Man from Snowy River, Australia, 1982.
A Musical Comedy (title unknown).

Macedon Ranges Film Society

American Beauty, USA, 1999.
The Court Jester, USA, 1955.

Melbourne Horror Film Society

The Children, UK, 2008.
Devil Times Five, USA, 1974.

Moira Film Group

Moviehouse

Moving Clickers Inc & Lorne Film Festival

You the Living, Sweden, 2007.
Seven Psychopaths, UK, 2012.

Murrindindi Film Society

Ten Canoes, Australia, 2006.
McCabe and Mrs Miller, USA, 1971.

Myrtleford Film Society

Network Film Club

Old Scotch Film Society

Argo, USA, 2012.
Charley Varrick, USA, 1973.
Amazing Grace, UK, 2007.

Phillip Island Film Society

Argo, USA, 2012.
I Am Eleven, Australia, 2013.

Plaza Cinema Group

Port Fairy Film Society

What's Been Seen

ACROSS THE FILM SOCIETY CIRCUIT

Let ReelNews readers know what you've been screening. Email Susan Davidson: secretary@fvfs.org.au

Portarlington Film Society

The Lives of Others, Germany, 2006.
The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel, UK, 2011.

Portland Film Society

Save Your Legs, Australia, 2012.
Chinese Takeaway, Argentina/Spain, 2011.
Barbara, Germany, 2012.
Cloud Atlas, Germany/USA, 2012.
Quartet, UK, 2012.

PRODOS Film Study Group

Margaret Thatcher as Workers Revolutionary
Castro vs the Creative Spirit

Prom Coast Film Society

Notorious, USA, 1946.
Made in Dagenham, UK, 2010.

Queenscliff Film Society

Red Rock Film Society

Red Rum Film Society

Searching for Sugar Man, Sweden/UK, 2012.
Holy Motors, France, 2012.

Science and Technology Film Study Festival

Event: The Scientific Revolution & The
Revolutionary Scientist

Shimmy & Shake Film Society

Smart Girls Film Club

Films featuring amazing women in history and
fiction

St Andrews Film Society

St Dunstan's Hall Film Society

Lincoln, USA, 2012.
The Third Man, UK, 1949.
Charlie & Boots, Australia, 2009.

Sun Country Movie Club

Teddy Bobo Film Club

Short films + lateral thinking exercises. Most
Tuesday nights.

The Impossible Film Club

Studying fantasy, science fiction, heroic
adventure.

Trentham Film Society

Whitehorse Film Society

Salmon Fishing in the Yemen, UK, 2011.
The Edge of Heaven, Ger/Turk, 2007.
The First Grader, UK/USA/Kenya, 2010.
The Sapphires, Australia, 2012.

Williamstown Film Society

Vertigo, USA, 1958.
Salute, (no details provided)
Solaris, (no details provided)
Tais Toi, France, 2003.
On the Beach, USA, 1959.

Yarra Ranges Film Society

Sarah's Key, France, 2010.
Live and Become, France/Belgium, 2006.
Babette's Feast, Denmark, 1987.

(NPV Cinema)

Leo Baeck Centre

Theme: Films relevant to Judaism

(NPV Film Festival)

Halls Gap Film Festival

(NPV Film Festival)

Port Campbell

Community Film Festival

(NPV Film Festival)

Valhalla Social Cinema

New South Wales

Deniliquin Film Society and Film Festival

Amour, France, 2012.
The Shop Around the Corner, USA, 1940.

South Australia

Adelaide Cinematheque

South Australia

Adelaide Film Study Group

South Australia

Adelaide University Film Society

South Australia

Barossa Film Club

Cries and Whispers, Sweden, 1972.
Kitchen Stories, Norway/Sweden, 2003.

South Australia

Port Lincoln Film Society

South Australia

Reels @ Wehl Film Society

Trishna, UK, 2011.
Country Wedding, Iceland, 2008.
We Have a Pope, Italy, 2011.
Marley, Jamaica, 2012.
Chinese Takeaway, Argentina, 2011.
The Angels' Share, UK, 2012.
A Quiet Life, Italy, 2010.
A Separation, Iran, 2011.
The Sessions, USA, 2012.
Tabu, Portugal, 2012.
Rust and Bone, France/Belgium, 2012.

South Australia

RiAus Film Society

South Australia

Southern Fleurieu Film Society

South Australia

Yankalilla & District Over 50s Film Club

FREE WEBSITE SERVICES FOR FILM SOCIETIES!

Get your Film Society its very own free, beautiful, easy-to-manage website!
Email prodos@prodos.com to find out more. Groups already benefiting from this service include:

International Film Group, Barossa Film Club, Camberwell Film Society, Smart Girls Film Club,
Old Scotch Film Society, Teddy Bobo Film Club, Gold Coast Film Study Group, Ferntree Gully Film
Society, Taree Film Society, Valuers Film Society, Adelaide Film Study Group, and many more!

Brighton Blue Lady



By Anna Blainey Warner

When I was in the famous British seaside town of Brighton a few weeks ago and walking around the gardens of that Saxon landmark, St Ann's Well, I came across a plaque stating that Brighton was the site of the making of the first "blue movie" in history!

This film - *A Woman Undressing* (also known as *A Victorian Lady in her Boudoir* and *A Lady Undressing in Her Boudoir*. - was shot in 1896 by the portrait photographer and one of the earliest moving picture directors, **Arthur Albert "Esmé" Collings** (1859-1936).

Esmé Collings (as he's more commonly known --- "Esmé" being an adopted name) made about two dozen short films through 1896/97, only three of which have survived. He then abruptly stopped and turned his efforts to the art of miniature painting.

A Woman Undressing was a one minute long film featuring a woman retreating to her boudoir and getting ready for rest after an outing.

She begins by taking off her hat, and then sheds each of her outer garments until we see her ... in nothing but her petticoat!!! At this point she reaches for her book to settle down for a relaxing read.

The film was promoted as suitable for showing at gentlemen's smoking parties - venues where men indulged their

dirty masculine habits without polluting the bodies and minds of women. It would have provided the gentlemen with the experience of peering through a keyhole, the forbidden thrill of watching a woman disrobe in an everyday private setting.

Another contender for the title of first "blue movie" - the release in Paris the same year as Collings' piece of Eugene Pirou's *Le Coucher de la Mariée* (*Bedtime for the Bride* in English).

This was also a like a peek through a keyhole - a view of a woman undressing in a bathroom.

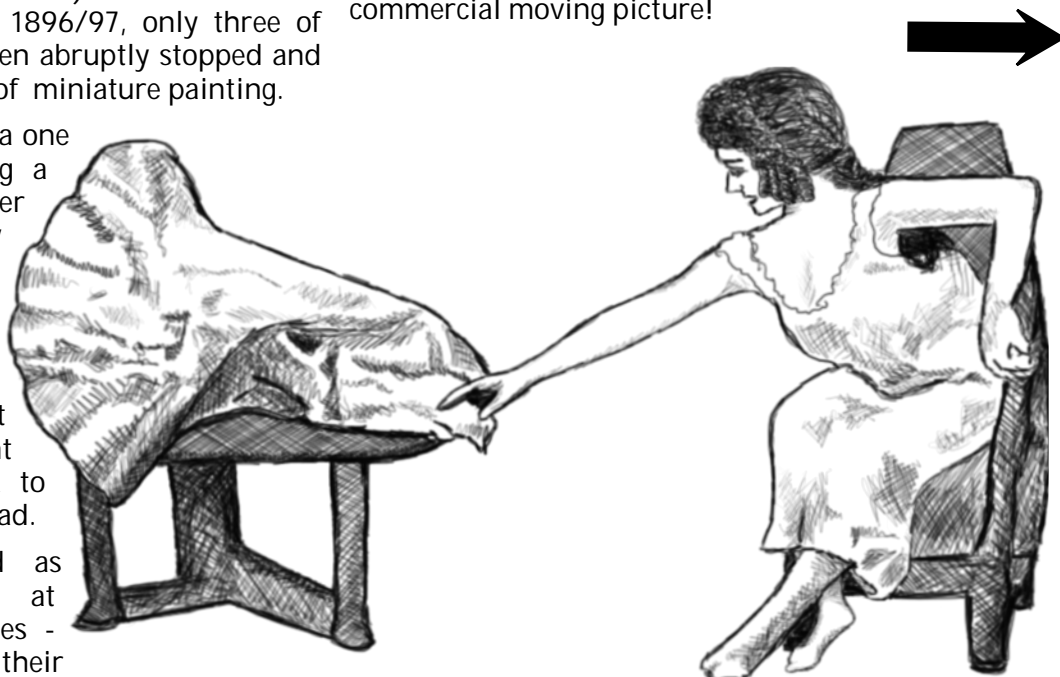
Yet it starred the cabaret performer, Louise Willy, thus the stripping was professional rather than the natural spontaneous strip of a woman in her bathroom. This film had a remake a whole year later with Georges Melies' *Après le Bal* (*After the Ball*), which took the daring step of showing a woman's bare behind.

Another risqué film of that period was Fatima's provocatively titled "*Hoochie Coochie*" Dance ("coochie" being common slang for "vagina") showing the moves of Fatima, the belly dancer.

Like Elvis Presley sixty years later, Fatima's hip movements were considered an affront to decency and in places were actually covered over with white lines.

The first act of censorship occurred before any of the above mentioned creations. That honour fell to *Edison Studios* in 1894 for its 21 second film featuring the Spanish dancer, **Carmencita**, in a routine which showed her legs and undergarments.

She was probably the first woman to ever appear in a commercial moving picture!



XX^{Rated} Edison?

By Prodos

Is it really so surprising that Thomas Edison, the man who brought us the first commercial electric light bulb, also brought us the first commercial screen kiss?

Like *Lady Undressing in Her Boudoir* his company's short film of 47 seconds was also made in 1896 – but wasn't confined to "men's smoking parties". It went out and caused a sensation.

That's probably as much because it was one of the first ever films released for a mass audience as for who and what it depicted: Broadway stars, May Irwin and John C. Rice, re-enacting the last scene of Act 1 of their successful comedy Broadway show, *The Widow Jones*.



How wonderful that commercial film was propelled by an affectionate kiss! A veritable cascade of them in fact.

The Edison catalogue described the smoochy flick thusly: "They get ready to kiss, begin to kiss, and kiss and kiss and kiss in a way that **brings down the house** every time."

The other thing this film brought down was the wrath of what Australian producer/writer/director, **Hayden Keenan** refers to in a new documentary as "the middle class cultural authorities" (see page 8)

Their view: "The spectacle of the prolonged pasturing on each other's lips was beastly enough in life size on the stage but magnified to gargantuan proportions and repeated three times over it is **absolutely disgusting**."

Some demanded police action at screenings. The Catholic Church called for **censorship** and moral reform. But before we balk or chortle at all this let's bear in mind this was a time when kissing in public was a prosecutable offence.

1896 was when: The Victorian Football League was formed, the first cinema was started in Australia (Salon Lumiere in Sydney) by the same Frenchman who shot the first publicly screened film in Australia - The Melbourne Cup, by Marius Sestier. An Englishman got fined for exceeding the 2 mph speed limit. The first modern Olympics were held in Athens. The US Supreme Court endorsed the unfortunate "separate

but equal" doctrine which held that segregation was not necessarily inequality before the law.

In 1896, humorous, affectionate smooching raised the hysterical hackles of moral elitists but racist language and laws were uncontroversial. The exact reverse is true today. Consider this excerpt of the popular tune, *The Bully Song*, from *The Widow Jones*, sung by sweet little May Irwin:

*I'm a Tennessee nigger
An' I don't allow
No red-eyed river roust 'bout
Wid me to raise a row*

It's unlikely – even in our Brave Age of Twerking – anyone would today dare to revive this song or its Broadway musical – let alone attempt to explain that maybe (just maybe) it's not actually racist.

The pioneers of commercial film challenged the stultifying laws and the sourpuss elites of their time. Not by undermining morality and customs, but by testing the popular waters – discovering and appealing to the good will, humour and imagination of their fellow citizens.

These pioneers were experimenters and entrepreneurs. But defending Free Speech needs more. It needs men and women who take ideas and principles seriously. This was a job for the Founders of the non-profit, volunteer-run Film Society Movement.

... To be continued ...

Star Box Ratings

StarBox results received since ReelNews Issue 99 - August 2013

Send your StarBox results to starbox@fvfs.org.au - See what others are screening at www.fvfs.org.au/ideas

DVD Title	Society	Stars	DVD Title	Society	Stars
Since Otter Left	Murrindindi FS	4.7	Gaslight	Southern Fleurieu FS	3.9
Life of Pi	Port Fairy FS	4.6	And if We All Lived Together	Horsham FS	3.9
Searching for Sugar Man	Portland FS	4.6	Everlasting Moments	Goulburn Valley FC	3.9
Hugo	Portarlington FS	4.6	Separation, A	Whitehorse FS	3.9
My Afternoons With Marguerite	St Andrews FS	4.5	Kid With A Bike, The	Whitehorse FS	3.9
Incendies	LV FS	4.5	Pather Panchali	Barossa FC	3.9
Women on the Sixth Floor, The	Portarlington FS	4.5	St Kilda Short Film Festival	Port Fairy FS	3.8
Oranges and Sunshine	Portarlington FS	4.5	Time for Drunken Horses, A	Yarra Ranges (Healesville)	3.8
Searching for Sugar Man	Bright FS	4.5	Chinese Takeaway	Portland FS	3.8
Salmon Fishing in the Yemen	Whitehorse FS	4.5	In the Bedroom	Barossa FC	3.8
Separation, A	St Andrews FS	4.4	Edge of Heaven	Whitehorse FS	3.8
Women on the 6th Floor	Whitehorse FS	4.4	Carnage	Yarra Ranges (Healesville)	3.7
Kiss me Kate	Barossa FC	4.4	Separation, A	Croydon FS	3.7
Marley	St Andrews FS	4.3	Descendants, The	Whitehorse FS	3.7
Sum of Us, The	Portarlington FS	4.3	Local Hero	Barossa FC	3.7
Intouchables, The	IFG	4.3	Coco Avant Chanel	Camberwell FS	3.6
Midnight in Paris	Yarra Ranges (Warburton)	4.3	Margin Call	Horsham FS	3.5
Women on the 6th Floor	St Andrews FS	4.3	Save Your Legs	Portland FS	3.5
Sarah's Key	Yarra Ranges (Healesville)	4.3	Midnight in Paris	Yarra Ranges (Healesville)	3.5
Ghost Writer	Portarlington FS	4.2	McCabe	Murrindindi FS	3.5
Salmon Fishing in the Yemen	Portarlington FS	4.2	Hanussen	Barossa FC	3.5
Searching for Sugar Man	LV Film Society	4.2	Time for Drunken Horses, A	Yarra Ranges (Warburton)	3.4
Chinese Takeaway	Horsham FS	4.2	Le Havre	Goulburn Valley FC	3.4
North by Northwest	Barossa FC	4.2	Sightseers	Port Fairy FS	3.3
Midnight in Paris	Croydon FS	4.1	Carnage	Yarra Ranges (Warburton)	3.2
Children of the Revolution	Southern Fleurieu FS	4.1	Separation, A	Bright FS	3.2
Some Like it Hot	Whitehorse FS	4.1	Toomelah	Croydon FS	3.2
Town Like Alice, A	Murrindindi FS	4	Caramel	Bright FS	3
Ten Canoes	Murrindindi FS	4	Where do we go Now?	Bright FS	3
Beautiful Lies	Portarlington FS	4	Beasts of the Southern Wild	Croydon FS	2.9
Sapphires, The	Camberwell FS	4	Kid With a Bike, A	Bright FS	2.9
Romantics Anonymous	Horsham FS	4	Café de Flore	Horsham FS	2.9
Lonely Hearts	Barossa FC	4	Once Upon a Time in Anatolia	LV FS	2.6
Sarah's Key	Yarra Ranges (Warburton)	4	Norwegian Wood	Goulburn Valley FS	2.5
Romantics Anonymous	Croydon FS	3.9	Silent Souls	Bright FS	1.7

"Dress Circle" published by Ross Adams

\$25 per year. Four issues per year.

This "Little Titan" of a magazine in A5 size, comes out absolutely jam-packed with over 70 pages of information, ideas, & resources. Includes articles on: historic cinemas, profiles of film industry personalities, technical how-to articles, reviews of books & films. Features a "Trader" section where you can advertise "for sale" or "wanted" items. Offers an Events Diary, interesting Film Society news, and movie world news. It's gigantic!

To receive a free sample, subscribe or find out more

Phone **02 6353 1897** or Email **lawsonco@vic.chariot.net.au**

Frequently (and Occasionally) Asked Questions

Q

Where can I source DVDs to screen and how do I find the rights holder?

To determine who holds the rights you could check the DVD cover or look at any of the following web-sites for the information:

<http://www.classification.gov.au/Pages/Search.aspx>

www.urbancinefile.com.au

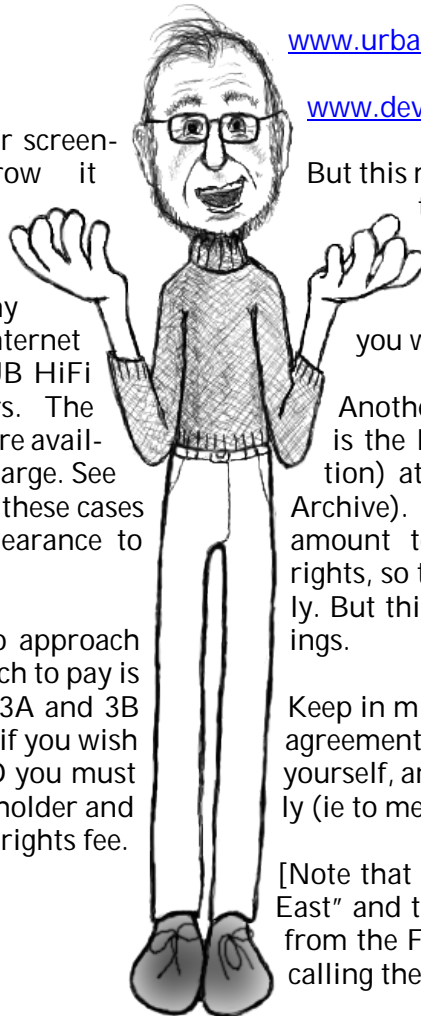
www.devotedDVD.com.au.

A

To obtain a DVD for screening, you could borrow it from one of your members or a friend or purchase it from any

retail or internet shop. Reliable internet sources in Australia are EzyDVD, JB HiFi and DevotedDVD amongst others. The FVFS also holds a few DVDs which are available for members to borrow at no charge. See www.fvfs.org.au/library.html. In all these cases you will need to arrange rights clearance to screen the DVD.

The process of determining who to approach for the screening rights and how much to pay is covered in the ACOFS Fact Sheets 3A and 3B (see www.acofs.org.au). But briefly, if you wish to screen "your own copy" of a DVD you must first get permission from the rights holder and pay them the appropriate screening rights fee.



But this might only provide you with the name of the production studio, in which case ACOFS Fact Sheet 3B will suggest the likely distributors to approach.

The distributor will generally invoice you when you screen the DVD.

Another popular source for borrowing DVDs is the NTLC (Non-Theatrical Lending Collection) at the NFSA (National Film and Sound Archive). The NTLC borrowing fee includes an amount to cover the non-theatrical screening rights, so there is no need to seek rights separately. But this only applies to non-theatrical screenings.

Keep in mind though, that the ACOFS DVD rights agreement applies only to DVDs that you source yourself, and only when you screen non-theatrical-ly (ie to members only).

[Note that the DVD of the film "Pearls of the Far East" and the rights to screen it are only available from the FVFS by emailing admin@fvfs.org.au or calling the secretary at 03 9873 1369.]

Ian Davidson

Update on ACMI Decision to Wind Down Availability of its 16mm Collections

As indicated in the most recent (September 2013) ACOFS Bulletin, **ACMI has decided that memberships will no longer be renewed** as they expire. As things stand currently, ACOFS members will, for the time being, be able to borrow from the ACMI 16 mm Collections -- during ACMI's process of identifying its most valuable films and deciding whether those films will be repatriated to their place of origin, placed with the NFSA, or whether an archive should be created at ACMI. We are unaware if options other than these three have been explored thus far.

ACOFS has been assured it will be consulted when it comes time for a ruling on what will happen to those films deemed to be less significant. Meanwhile, handling charges commensurate with those charged by the NTLC will be instituted. Film societies who wish to be part of the decision-making process or would like further details are invited to:

Contact **John Turner** of ACOFS: john.turner@acofs.org.au

What's Wrong With Australian Films.

By Prodos & Barboo



Tom Cowan
Local Emotion Pictures
"The stranglehold of the bureaucrats has really caused the demise of the film industry."



Benjamin Zeccola
Palace Cinemas
"There's a good chance that any money invested in an Australian film is lost."



Megan Brownlow
PricewaterhouseCoopers
"To say you prefer a non-commercial film is to say you prefer films that you wouldn't pay for."

That's the title of the new one-hour, thought-provoking documentary by Jason Kent of *Pure Independent Pictures* -- available for Film Society screenings in 2014 through the *TYSPOM Film Library*.

Outgoing Chief Executive of *Screen Australia*, Ruth Harley, recently enthused: "We're experiencing a golden age of Australian drama." Really? With at least \$100 million of Federal and State taxpayer money blown year after year to prop up an industry whose proportion of total box office takings has been plummeting, what we can not say is that we have a viable, self-sufficient film industry.

Nor can we seriously claim Australians (or the rest of the world) love watching Australian films. At least not those spearheading Ruth Harley's "Golden Age".

This carefully constructed doco puts aside all hype and invites a "panel" of successful Australian filmmakers and business men and women to examine every excuse for failure and every obstacle to independence. Such as

- Does Australia lack the necessary creative and technical talent?
- Do Australians actually prefer "non-commercial" films?
- Is it pointless to even try competing with the big studios?
- Do we have the marketing savvy needed to sell films?
- Are our costs simply too high?
- Do Australians really *want* to or *need* to make films?
- Is our population big enough to support a commercial film industry?
- Has government funding worked?
- Do we need politicians, bureaucrats and experts to engineer our culture? (I know I do, right?)

Contact Prodos to arrange a screening.

Email: prodos@prodos.com
Phone: 03 9428 1234



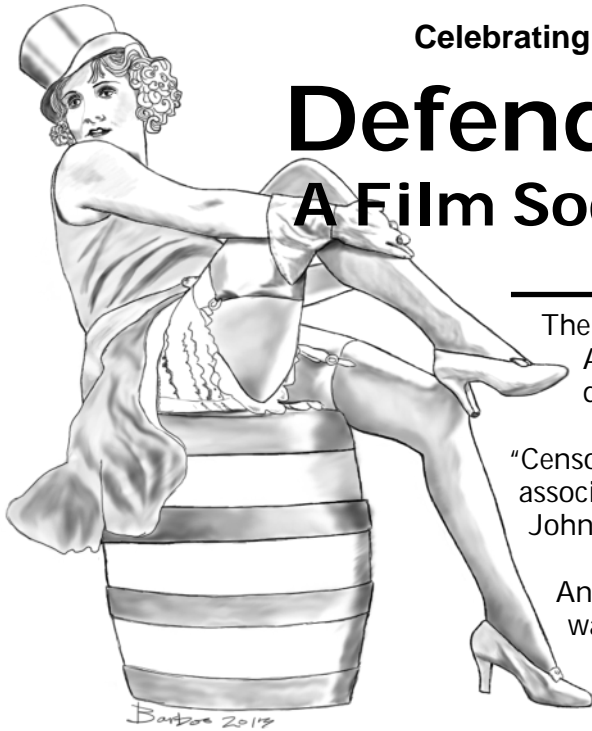
Oliver Howes
Writer/Director
"Subsidising films is a difficult and dangerous game. It may not be the best way to go."



Haydn Keenan
Street Smart Films
"(with govt funding) you ended up with the sorts of films that the middle class cultural authorities would like to see made rather than ones that Australians in general would like to see made."



Kristi Vernon
Media Funds Management
"We have a tendency in the industry to make films that don't connect with the audience."



Defending Free Speech: A Film Society Movement Tradition

By Prodos

The energetic radicals who founded the Film Society Movement of Australia in the late 1940's and early 1950's were passionate defenders of Free Speech.

"Censorship was one of the three or four hot topics for all those associated with film societies in the early days," wrote Historian, John Turner, in a note to me recently.

And they showed, in my view, considerable political savvy in the way they challenged censorship and in their understanding of the relevant laws and procedures -- not just those of Australia, but of Britain and New Zealand too.

Although steeped in Soviet Marxist theory, the young Ken Coldicutt, as early as 1935, was deeply concerned about Free Speech issues:

"Consideration will show that the object of censorship is not primarily the prevention of 'lascivious' and 'immoral' subjects; but the ruthless suppression of any serious criticism of those mighty bulwarks of bourgeois society: religion, marriage, and the family."

Cinema and capitalism, 1935

Personally, I'm rather fond of those "bulwarks of bourgeois society", but the observation that the same legal instruments introduced to supposedly maintain standards of decency could and would be used to also suppress the exchange and study of new knowledge and ideas is a valid point and backed by much evidence (including attempts in 1948 to outlaw the *Realist Film Unit* of which Coldicutt was secretary).

Oppressors often come dressed as Protectors. Ironically, Ken Coldicutt learned with bitterness later in life, that Oppressors also came dressed as Liberators, as Stalin demonstrated for him.

Let's have a look at some excerpts from an article written in 1950, sent to me by John Turner, that illustrates the way the Film Society Movement tackled Censorship policy. We're not sure of the author, but most likely it was either Alfred Heintz or Betty Lacey (Elizabeth Coldicutt).

Excerpt ...

5. Censorship Appeal Board to comprise one representative each from:

- (i) education authorities;
- (ii) religious groups;
- (iii) the motion picture industry in Australia;
- (iv) a representative appointed by the **Australian Council of Film Societies**, which is the national organisation of the film society movement and represents non-commercial film interests.

Comment ...

Note with item 5 (iv) that the Film Society Movement didn't (and still doesn't) just see itself as merely representing the views of its formal members and affiliates but all "non-commercial film interests". The Film Society Movement is not just about Film Societies. It's about all citizens having access and benefiting from films.

The New Zealanders were also very strong on this, writing: "At present, only the owner of the film can appeal against the censor's decision, and the Institute considers that public interest might warrant an appeal by non-commercial interests against the banning (or approving) of a film."

Excerpt ...

- 6. Banned films to be reviewed every five years.
- 7. A retrospective clause to be introduced to allow the reviewing of the Censor's decisions regarding films banned or cut in years past.

Continued on page 11

16mm Film & The David Bowie Effect

Vinyl records, Australian manufacturing, newspapers, and 16mm film are all passé, if not dead. Gone forever. Superseded.

Victims of the inevitable, unstoppable march of "progress". Or so we're lead to believe.

But as Mark Twain has often been *misquoted* as saying: "Reports of my death have been greatly exaggerated."

That certainly seems to be the case with vinyl records, which this year in Britain are approaching sales of 700,000 units (the highest in 10 years!)

One of Pop Culture's greatest pioneers and innovators, David Bowie, released his latest album as a vinyl LP this year, as have: Daft Punk, Arctic Monkeys, and Black Sabbath. And as plan to do: Paul McCartney, Pearl Jam, and others.

"We're witnessing a renaissance for (vinyl) records – they're ... becoming the format of choice for more and more music fans." Says BPI (British Phonographic Industry).

As for manufacturing, free market/free enterprise economist Dr Sinclair Davidson (Institute of Public Affairs) supports the commonly held myth that advancing societies inevitably progress from agriculture to manufacturing to something called "services". So, he concludes, Australia shouldn't be lamenting the loss of manufacturing. The same sorts of baseless claims prevail about newspapers. And film.

The facts tell a different story.

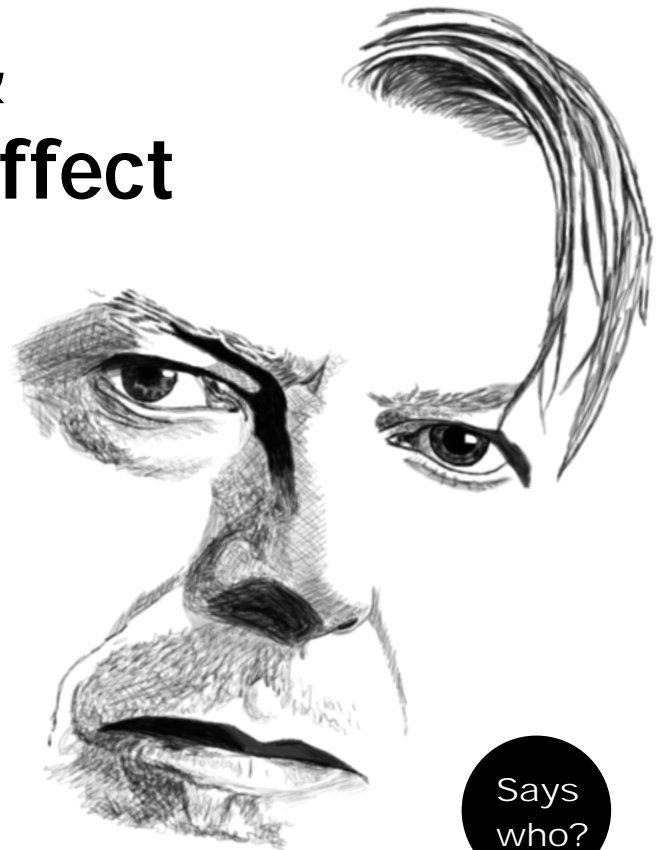
Roger Seccombe of *Plaza Cinema Group* argues that 16mm film is "alive and well". Here are just some of the supporting notes he sent me recently:

Roger Seccombe

Last year *Chapel Distribution* invited us to help check and assess their new acquisition collection of 16mm ex-television prints.

This paragraph has been deleted due to error.

Many of these are essentially 'as-new' prints made years back for distribution by *Television Program Services* to Australian television stations.



Says who?

The idea was that a station would borrow a film to telecine [the process of transferring motion picture film into video] rather than putting the actual 16mm film print to air. The print would then be returned to Sydney.

In practical terms many of these film prints were screened very few times and television stations were, understandably, fussy about print condition.

While the new collection has been described by Chapel as "the RKO Collection" this isn't strictly accurate.

There are also titles from MGM, Universal International, Eagle Lion, United Artists and others. But the really exciting aspect is that, for the first time in so many years, long-forgotten titles are once more available in Australia (including many titles never released on VHS or DVD in this country.)

To whet the appetites of lovers of classic cinema I will merely mention a number of highlights from hundreds of films:

First up, there's quite a selection of Val Lewton gems, including the marvellous "Body Snatcher" (from the Stevenson story), "I Walked with a Zombie", "The Cat People" (and "Curse of the Cat People") and "Bedlam" amongst others. Chapel are suggesting Melbourne's famous Astor Theatre in St Kilda could run a Lewton festival!

(Continued next page)

16mm Film & The David Bowie Effect

(Continued from page 10)

What else?

Laughton's superb "Hunchback of Notre Dame", several rare Fred Astaire musicals, Welles' enigmatic gem "Journey Into Fear", an eclectic collection of early Katharine Hepburn titles and the memorable yet scarifying classic boxing thriller from Robert Wise, "The Set Up."

If your tastes run to Westerns, apart from a plethora of 'B' Westerns from RKO and Republic, there's Norman Foster's memorable "Rachel and the Stranger" or

Barbara Stanwyck as a delightfully gutsy "Annie Oakley."

Of course, there are the more 'mainstream' RKO titles you'd expect: like a very good print of "Citizen Kane" and "The Informer" and "Force of Evil."

But alongside these are rarities like the Ronald Colman Oscar-winning "A Double Life" and the unforgettable Hepburn romantic drama "Alice Adams."

Where do you start ... or stop!?

I've never seen a better 16mm print of "Top Hat" than the one in the Chapel collection.

Craige Blencoe at Chapel is a passionate and committed film man and the ideal person to talk film with (whether 16mm or 35mm.)

To find out more and help support 16mm for the Film Society Movement, visit **16mm.org.au**

Defending Free Speech: A Film Society Movement Tradition

(Continued from page 9)

Comment ...

The NZFI had drawn attention to that fact that:

"There is at least one film banned in the 30's which still cannot be shown in N.Z. because there is no legal provision to allow it. No censor would ban it today."

The idea was to rein in the Censor by removing his power (either by design or by default) to ban material in perpetuity. Implicit in this is that the censor may not act as the absolute, sole, eternal definer of public morality. That the standards of the public at a particular time determine the Censor. He is a servant of the public, not a Moses handing down Commandments on a stone tablet.

Deane Williams, in his book, *Australian Post-war Documentary Film: An Arc of Mirrors*, writes:

[Ken Coldicutt] reported in 1949, in an article entitled "Fine films banned" that "The Commonwealth Film Censor is insisting on cuts" to *The Blue Angel* (1930), *Metropolis* (1926) and Dimitri Kirsanov's French silent, *Menilmontant* (1924) ...

[Ken] Coldicutt points out that *The Blue Angel* and *Metropolis* had already been released -- Lang's film in the silent days, von Sternberg's

in 1932 at the Majestic in Melbourne -- "filmgoers will want to know what has happened to make these films now unfit for Australian audiences"

Excerpt ...

8. The right of appeal against any decision of the censor by others besides the owners of the film.

This last clause is particularly important to film enthusiasts, as it allows public opinion to express itself concretely. For instance, the Australian Council of Film Societies (or, any film society), would have the right to appeal against barbaric cuts in *The Blue Angel*, imported by the National Film Library from the British Film Institute, London, and the restriction on the French avant-garde film *Monilmontant* [sic] (imported from the same source as *Blue Angel*) which can be seen only by travelling to Canberra and arranging a screening at the National Film Library.

Comment ...

We see in this item an important quality of the Australian Film Society Movement: its faith in public opinion, democratic process, accountability and transparency. We see here that Australians in 1950 had no intention of unquestioningly bowing to the verdicts of politicians and bureaucrats.

That's something to be proud of.

Changing from 35mm to Digital Projection

By John Arkins
*Secretary,
Croydon Film Society Inc.*

Nobody likes change.

More especially change to something you may not know a great deal about.

Croydon Film Society has been showing 35mm films for more than 50 years in a variety of locations and we were advised about a year ago that our current location would be transitioning to Digital projection soon!

When is soon?

Well they were not able to be precise but suggested in the second half of 2013.

Now we had a problem.

How do we construct a film schedule where we may be one week on 35mm and the next on Digital? What type of Digital was it going to be? Would we be able to create a Short Film Festival and run these from either BluRay or DVD?

Our Film Officer skillfully organized the films so that only 35mm were at the beginning of the year. The middle of the year contained films that were available in both Digital and 35mm and the end of the year was for those that were only available as Digital Films.

After a number of false alarms, the changeover occurred in early September and our first digital film was shown on September 16th. We were quite amazed by the quality and clarity of the screening. It was as clear, if not clearer than the 35mm film and the end of

reel/start of next reel transitions did not exist.

We are in the very early stages of adaptation to the format and we are learning a whole new set of processes, terms and prices.

CFS screens in two Cinemas (our membership is just slightly greater than the combined seating of the two) and it was unclear, early on, if we had to have two copies of the film and thus two "unlock keys" so that the film could be shown.

"amazed by the quality and clarity"

Previously the projectionists had looped the film in the projection box from one projector to another to show it in the two locations, almost simultaneously. In time this issue was resolved and we can now still have the one film screened in two cinemas at the same time.

Our costs mean that we still have to pay for the hire of the film (mainly the cost of the copyright), the hire of the theatres and, it appears, another charge called the 'Virtual Print Fee'. We are still working out what the latter covers and how much it will be.

What have we learned from this process? Well it helps to know when changes are going to happen well in advance. Because we knew of the possible change, we were able to organize our program in a reasonable manner and when the

change occurred it did not wreck our planned schedule. (We have had to change our schedule for a number of reasons including the change to digital).

We worked with the Distributors from the beginning so that while we may have initially ordered a 35mm print, we now required a digital print and they were happy to accommodate us.

Change will always occur.

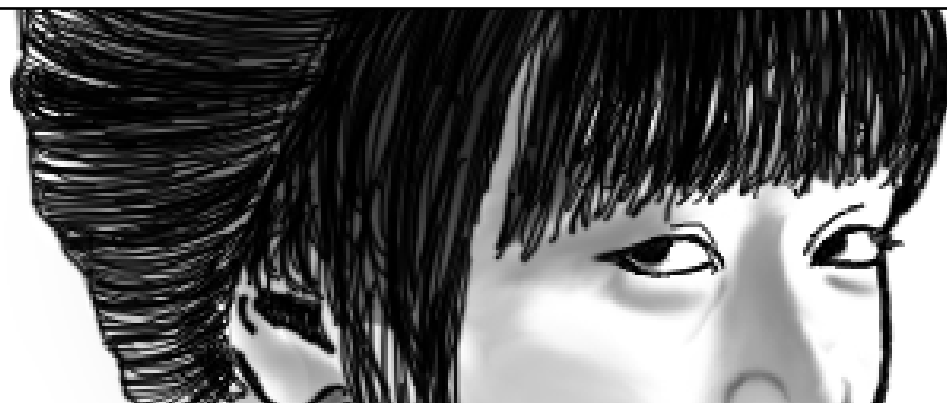
Most commercial theatres will be digital within the next two years, possibly earlier. Digital projection will be available at a very high quality level in most local and community locations quite quickly.

As a film society we either embrace the digital age or find a dwindling supply of films to show to our members, and for some, perhaps another venue in which to hold screenings!



Next instalment in six months.

Available.



Pearls of the Far East

We are pleased to announce that the FVFS has reached an agreement with the producers of "Pearls of the Far East" that FVFS member societies may be granted permission to screen the film at the normal ACOFS DVD rights fee of **\$55** per screening.

As soon as the DVD arrives from Canada we will be able to make it available to film societies – hopefully within a month or so!

Please contact admin@fvfs.org.au for details or to book the DVD and secure the rights.

The DVD will also be available to screen at member NPV Film Festivals, but as small-scale commercial rates apply, the fee will be about \$155 per screening.

"Pearls of the Far East" was previewed by members of the FVFS who gave it an impressive score of 4.7 stars (out of 5). IMDb gives it 8.3 stars (out of 10) from 35 viewers!

"Pearls" was written up in the last issue of ReelNews, and further details and a trailer can be seen on IMDb or the film's website <http://www.youtube.com/user/OrientalPearlsMovie>.

Ian Davidson

2014

Membership Fees Reduced



Good news for 2014 members

FVFS membership fees will be **reduced** starting January 2014 (although they are still subject to ratification at the 2014 AGM).

Since the current fee structure was established, the executive have managed to reduce several of our ongoing operating costs, so we have decided to pass those savings on to you in the form of membership fee reductions.

Size	Annual fee
1 to 25	\$30
26 to 50	\$45
51 to 100	\$75
101 to 500	\$110
501 +	\$145



International Film Festival at Sea with FVFS patron, David Stratton!

Usually, when you read about an "International" film festival you expect to find films that have come to you *from* around the world. To view, share, enjoy and study.

But this time it's the films themselves that'll be travelling!

On the luxury liner, Celebrity Cruise. From nation to nation, with you on board and that dapper bloke pictured on the left as your cinematic adventure guide! What a fabulous concept!

Here are some details from Travelrite International

Date: July 3 – 21, 2014

Cost: Between \$8,425 and \$18,525

Journeying to:

- England
- Iceland
- Faroe Islands
- Norway

David Stratton, ABC co-presenter of "At the Movies" will lead this unique tour, presenting a film buff's agenda of some of his favourite movies, providing a fascinating insight into his perspective on the history of cinema in the privacy of your on-board theatre.

All film presentations & sightseeing tours (normally an expensive extra) are included in the fare. Gratuities, port taxes and air taxes are included in the package price. There is nothing more to pay!

First up, fly to London and upon arrival visit the London Film Museum to see exhibits on the history of film.

Next day, board the Celebrity Eclipse at Southampton and cruise to the first port of call Reykjavik, the capital of Iceland, to visit the

world famous high temperature geyser geothermal area and the Golden Falls. Then travel to Akureyri, the longest fjord in Iceland.

Next, visit Klaksvik in the Faroe Islands, an area of outstanding natural beauty. Then onto Geiranger, Norway, known for its beautiful Bridal Veil Waterfalls cascading down 1500 meters and one of the most majestic sights in Norway.

Then, to Alesund, probably the most beautiful city in Norway. The next day travel to Olden, where the tour takes you to the Jostedal Glacier, one of the biggest glaciers in Europe. Finally, arrive in Stavanger with its picturesque harbor & Old Town.

If you're passionate about energizing your gray matter, while having fun, discover an assortment of activities designed to spark your intellectual curiosity.

More details online:

travelrite.com.au/film_festival14.shtml

Or phone: **1800 630 343.**



In ReelNews 25 Years Ago

By Ian Davidson

Here are some of the items you would have found in ReelNews from a quarter of a century ago, around the time of the very first issue of ReelNews ...

A report on the Warrnambool Film Festival, where a massive storm caused a black-out five minutes after *La Famiglia* finished. Luckily it was over lunch, and the power was restored before the start of *The Tall Guy*. Thanks went out to all those that loaned heaters for the day!

Reviews of a number of 16mm feature films and shorts as a result of appraisal sessions by FVFS members.

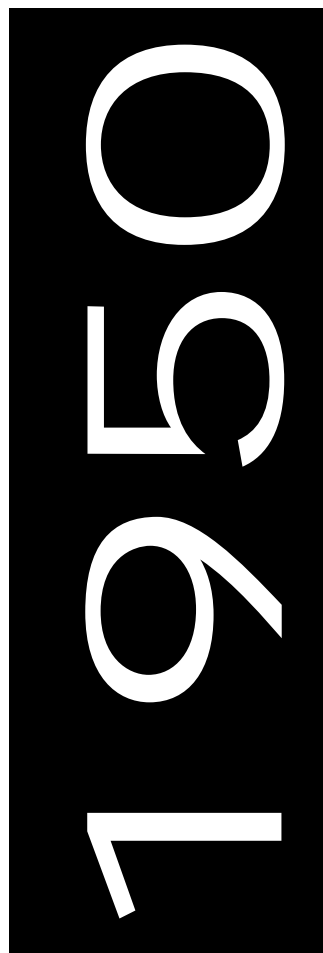
Announcement of four Cinesearch Vouchers available to every member of the FVFS each year to help with film research. Each voucher paid for Cinesearch at the AFI (Australian Film Institute) library to search for and print reviews for one film title. (How much easier it is these days when you just type the title into Google or IMDb and choose between dozens of reviews of each title – and hundreds of photos.)

Announcement of an FVFS "information booklet" detailing the FVFS's role, activities and functions within the Film Society Movement.

Film ratings (as a percentage) provided by Blackburn-Mitcham Film Society from the last 3 years of their screenings. *Madam Souza's* was top of the list with 95% followed by *Rain Man* with 93%.

A feature article consisting of 35 tips called "Let's Put on a Good Show - How to Improve Your Society (Part 2)".

The first FVFS newsletter ...



... that can be found was published in October 1950 – the year after the official formation of the Federation of Victorian Film Societies.

Historian, John Turner, sent us a few notes about it:

So far as I can judge (it) was a one-off.

The editorial is by Alfred Heintz, the very hard working first Secretary of FVFS, but minutes attribute its production to Betty Lacey (Elizabeth Coldicutt as she became) who is still alive but very frail.

The Editorial bemoans the lack of activity on the part of the Federation and lists 13 member societies.

It calls for someone to step up to be President at a General Meeting to be called on 13th October.

There is an announcement for Viewing (Appraisal) Sessions and a list of people willing to instruct budding 16mm projectionists.

There is a short article on the proposed licensing of 16mm Projectionists and other State Government regulations affecting Film Society screenings.

There is a much longer article on **Censorship*** and an extremely pointed article about the withdrawal of the film "WHERE WILL YOU HIDE" from the State Film Centre.

The UNESCO "Free flow of Ideas" scheme receives an airing and the rest of the 13 pages is taken up by ACOFS matters and the Commonwealth Jubilee celebrations to come, Catalogue and book publications and other general information.

** See page 9 for more on Censorship.*

Film Societies 25 Years Ago

By Ian Davidson

It goes without saying that film societies today operate in a different environment from 25 years ago.

But it is only when you open the archives that you realise how much things have changed.

In 1988 there were 48 film society members of the FVFS.

A few screened 35mm but the majority relied on 16mm as DVDs had not yet come of age; The very first DVDs were not released until 1995.

Of these 48 societies only 13 are still operating – if you include the three that have changed their names.

Most of the FVFS and ACOFS activity therefore focused on 16mm film information and supply.

Recent release movies went first to the cinemas and we often saw a delay of up to 12 months before the 16mm version was available through the two main film distributors, 16mm and Roadshow. But even so, these were mostly British and American movies. For film societies looking for foreign or “Art-house” films there were many other sources of 16mm films, includ-

ing the NFL (National Film Library in Canberra), the SFC (State Film Centre in Melbourne), AFI (Australian Film Institute), embassies of France, Germany, China, Japan and Czechoslovakia, as well as several private distributors. The FVFS and ACOFS operated a film distribution service which focussed on the best 16mm films from these sources. ACOFS made life easier for film societies by publishing a “16mm film catalogue” listing all known 16mm films from all known sources.

Because film societies were hungry for information and ideas the FVFS ran 4 General Meetings per year, as well as the AGM, and generally included a workshop, later known as “ReelTalk”. The FVFS also ran “Friday Flicks” at our office/cinema in Collingwood and we had “ReelFriends”.

In 1988 the FVFS also reached a peak in running country film festivals, bringing “Art-house” films to people without access to such titles. This included Halls Gap, Warburton, Nepean, Phillip Island, Warrnambool, Wangaratta, Mildura and Benalla. The FVFS also ran an Australia Day festival at the SFC to screen titles newly available to film societies.

In those days the President was Norm Phillips, the Secretary was Joy Durston and the Treasurer, John Turner.

In 1988, information was harder to obtain as there was no Internet, so societies relied on magazines, word of mouth, meetings and newsletters. Our long standing magazine FilmViews, had just completed its run and the casual newsletter HITN (Here Is The News) was replaced with the quarterly ReelNews.

The focus on insurance cover was not yet an issue so there was no FVFS Umbrella Public Liability insurance policy.

In many ways, today's film society committees have more business type things to consider such as insurance, incorporation, rights, etc., but the availability of film titles is much greater and thanks to the work of ACOFS, the rights are easy to obtain within a few months of release in the cinemas.

But reliable information is still essential for film societies, so ReelNews, the ACOFS Bulletin and our website aim to keep all societies up to date with the latest news and ideas.

By the Numbers (A brief aside for the record)

By Prodos

As well as ReelNews there has been ...

- ReelNewsLetter (approx. 6 issues). Before that,
- Here is the News (about 8 issues), before that,
- FilmViews (123 issues), and before that, where it all began, published in 1950, we had
- Federation News (102 issues).

In total, that adds up to this current, 100th issue of ReelNews, being the 339th newsletter/journal issued by FVFS. Except for one thing ...

Reliable but unnamed sources inform us that due either to excessive numerical enthusiasm or a plain, old-fashioned boo-boo, ReelNews 7 was followed by ReelNews 10, i.e., issues 8 and 9 were skipped.

So the current issue of ReelNews is officially #100. But actually it's the 98th issue.

[Sound of Barboo slapping her forehead can be heard across the room.]

Underlying Principles of FVFS Monetary Projects

At a special workshop for FVFS Executive Committee members, six broad "Underlying Principles" were identified to guide responsible, long-term, sustainable policy regarding FVFS funds.

Here is a summary of the **Discussion Paper** that resulted. Your comments are welcome through the FVFS Secretary, Susan Davidson: secretary@fvfs.org.au

1

What We Ain't

The Federation is not a business.

It is not a small business. It is not a medium sized business. It is not a big business. It is not any kind of business. The money it has is not private profit. It never was and never will be.

The Federation is not a department or arm or agency of government.

The money it has was not extracted through the power of taxation. It was raised by voluntary means.

When we look at the principles that should guide the use of the Federation's funds we need to be careful *not* to apply rules and principles that rightly belong to business or to government enterprises but are *inappropriate* for independent, non-profit, volunteer-run organizations such as ours.

The FVFS was set up to serve its members and to serve a Cause. Its members are Film Societies. Its Cause is the Film Society Movement.

Film Societies who join the Federation are assumed to be interested in benefiting themselves. And benefiting all fellow members. And in the advancement of the Movement -- including the promotion of film art, culture and education.

2

Other People's Money

Money! It's the most controversial stuff on the planet.

The New Testament (1 Timothy 6:10) does not say, as many claim, that "money is the root of all evil".

What it actually warns against is (in the original Greek) *φιλαργυρία* (philargyria) which is often loosely translated as "love of money" but more accurately means something between *avarice* ("obsession with money") and *covetousness* ("excessively and culpably desirous of *the possessions of another*")

An obsession with spending **other people's money** -- to spend it for the sake of spending it -- is itself a form of avarice and covetousness -- of *φιλαργυρία* (philargyria).

"Money ... is a frozen form of productive energy," wrote one philosopher.

It is the result of human efforts: Specific individuals doing specific things are the origin of specific amounts of money.

To treat money frivolously is to treat human effort callously.

All the more so, when we are frivolous with **other people's money**.

3

Respect the Source

Regarding FVFS funds, it's important to ask: *Where did the money come from?*

Different portions of our current funds have come from different types of sources.

Where possible and relevant, it's important to try to identify each broad type of source. Why?

Because the source of the funds may determine what is an appropriate or inappropriate use of those funds.

If, for instance, \$20,000 was raised by volunteers to pay off debts and to keep the rest aside for a rainy day -- in other words in the event of a crisis or emergency, it would probably be inappropriate to spend it, say, on marketing.

In the same way, it is also important to identify sources of **savings** and the motives and intentions of those who have helped bring about those savings.

So, respect the source: of **funds** and of **savings**.

Underlying Principles of Monetary Projects

4

Learn (thoughtfully) from History

For the kind of organisation we are, the FVFS has a long history.

From 1949 until the present we have all the experiences and experiments, and all the combined human wisdom and human foolishness that 64 years of operation makes available ... and from which -- if we are wise -- we can learn. But to which we should not be dogmatically bound.

It's important that we make a point of learning from past experiences while at the same time being cautious not to be trapped by those past experiences.

5

We Always Need All Three Kinds of Monetary Ideas

The Federation **always** welcomes and seeks ideas in **all three** of these areas:

1. **Spending** money on worthwhile things, and
2. **Saving** money (i.e. cutting costs), and
3. **Raising** money.

Even while we keep the door open for those who might propose worthwhile *spending* ideas, we can and should still be inviting ideas and initiatives on *saving* money and on *raising* money.

We should not ever be focused on just one of these kinds of monetary ideas.

5a The Reinforcement Effect

In fact these 3 monetary areas all *reinforce* each other.

For example: The more ideas on how money can be saved, the more money there is available for spending, and the more careful we'll be when evaluating spending proposals since the "*saving* money" mentality that is fostered is extra scrupulous in evaluating *spending* proposals.

For example: Coming up with ideas for raising money is a great way to develop creative thinking and a sense of community and collective achievement. And people who have put work into raising funds, tend to be more careful about not squandering those funds.

5b Spending: The self-funded way

Ian Davidson: "At all times one objective of the FVFS should be to ensure that any project undertaken should be self-funded and not be a drain on resources."

A project that gets back what it spends is better than one that doesn't.

5c "What I will do" (The Championed Project)

John Turner: "the common denominator (of successful projects) was usually energetic input from one or two individuals."

A project that is energetically driven by an individual is more likely to be successful and more likely to get funded than one without such a champion.

Conversely, an otherwise excellent idea proposed for "others" to carry out is less likely to be supported by the Committee.

6

Beware

6a Spending money to play the hero

Politicians do this all the time. They're Big Shots. They take **Other People's Money**. Spend it. Make themselves look good for a while. And by the time things go bad, they've moved on and the mess has become someone else's problem.

The FVFS needs to avoid (like the plague) supporting projects that make us look good, make us look like we're "doing something" but in the end amount to nothing.

It's better to be accused of spending too little, than to be guilty of squandering our funds and thereby diminishing what can be done in the future.

6b Being under the thumb of the rule of thumb

There are all sorts of "rules of thumb" that people may put forward about how organisations should be run. These are based on how "everyone else" does things.

Even if there is a generally established or widely accepted way of doing things, we are not bound to it unless it applies to us and makes sense to us. There is nothing wrong with questioning such established rules and practices and not accepting them if they don't make sense or don't apply.

Next issue we'll present some historic examples of successful FVFS monetary projects that illustrate many of these principles.
