

ReelINews

The official newsletter of the
Federation of Victorian
Film Societies

#103

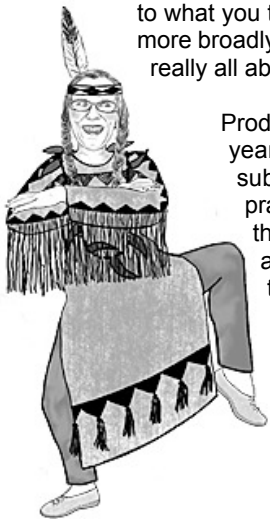
November 2014

In this issue

- **Editor's Desk** by Barboo ... 1
- **David Stratton Retires** by Barboo ... 1
- **What's Being Seen** prepared by Susan Davidson ... 2 - 3
- **Star Box Ratings** prepared by Ian Davidson ... 4
- **Resource Reminders** prepared by Barboo ... 5
- **Mini Movie Reviews** by Ian Davidson, Barboo, Prodos ... 6
- **Obituaries** by John Turner and Trevor Ling ... 7 & 8
- **The Ten Minute Challenge** by Barboo ... 9
- **Never too Young. Never too Old** by Roger Seccombe ... 10
- **An Alternative Perspective** by Barboo ... 11
- **Interview with Filmmaker, John Hughes** by Prodos ... 13



Editor's Desk What makes a good film society Federation newsletter? Well, it goes back to what you think a film society is really all about, and then more broadly, what you think the Film Society Movement is really all about, doesn't it?



Prodos and I have often discussed this over the years. Actually, he's a bit of a fanatic on the subject! I'd say, on the one hand there's the practical/administrative organisational side. Then there's the cultural/intellectual artistic side. Both are important, aren't they? So *Reel/News* tries to serve both of these dimensions.

Ian Davidson, for instance, has written piles and piles of helpful, practical articles on Frequently Asked Questions and together with Susan, we get the StarBox Scores and the "What's Being Seen" listings each issue.

Prodos and I believe it's important to understand and study the rich history, the champions, and the traditions of the Movement. And we have a special interest in encouraging creative thinking and exploring different perspectives. We take films and the Film Society Movement seriously. And we really, really love bringing you the best, most thought-provoking, practical, and fun-loving newsletter we can muster each issue. The best is yet to come!

Wishing you and your family a safe and happy Christmas & New Year. Hope you enjoy this issue! See you in 2015.

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. You'll be glad you did – and so will they! :-)

PPS: All illustrations hand-drawn by yours truly.



The FVFS is proud to have David Stratton as our patron.

David Stratton Retires from 'At the Movies'

On December 9, 2014, our patron, David Stratton, and his partner in film criticism, Margaret Pomeranz, will broadcast their final episode of the ABC's "At the Movies". This dynamic and distinguished film duo have reviewed films together for 28 years! We all wish David well in whatever he does next and greatly appreciate and hope for his continued support as our esteemed patron.



fvfs.org.au

What's Being Seen

Across the Film Society Circuit

Let ReelNews readers know what is being screened. Email Susan Davidson: secretary@fvfs.org.au

Alpine Film Society

Arapiles Motion Picture Society

Beautiful Kate, Australia, 2009.
Raise the Red Lantern, China, 1991.
Chinese Takeaway, Argentina, 2011.

Artist Film Screening Society

Arts Group of Flinders Film 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

The Big Heat, USA, 1953.
No, Chile, 2013.
Soul Kitchen, Germany, 2009.

Bannockburn Movies Film Society & Film Festival

Barwon Heads Film Society

Satellite Boy, Australia, 2013.
Fill the Void, Israel, 2013.
The Rocket, Australia, 2013.

Beechworth Film Society

Big Picture Film Society

Bright Film Society

Captain Phillips, USA, 2013.
Philomena, UK/USA, 2013.
La Cage aux Folles, France/Italy, 1978.
The Hunt, Denmark, 2012.
20 Feet From Stardom, USA, 2013.

British History Film Study Festival

Camberwell Film Society

Stories We Tell, Canada, 2012.
The Intouchables, France, 2011.
Captain Phillips, USA, 2013.
There's No Business Like Show Business, USA, 1954.

Celebrate Israel Film Study Festival

Corangamite Film Society

Tristram Shandy, UK, 2005.
Wadjda, Saudi Arabia, 2013.
Up, USA, 2009.

Court Film Society

Nebraska, USA, 2013.
About Time, UK, 2013.
Inside Llewyn Davis, USA/UK/France, 2013.
Her, USA, 2013.
Around the Block, Australia/USA, 2013.
Before Midnight, USA, 2013.

Croydon Film Society

The Hunt, Denmark, 2012.
Silver Linings Playbook, USA, 2012.
ET, USA, 1982.
Amour, France, 2012.
Stories We Tell, Canada, 2012.
Frances Ha, USA, 2012.
Rust and Bone, France, 2012.
The Angels' Share, UK/Scotland, 2012.

DADo Film Society

Unsung Heroes (Short series).
Great Expectations: A Journey Through the History of Visionary Architecture, 2007.
Local Heroes II (Short series).

F Project Cinema

Far East Film Society

Ferntree Gully Film Society

Beyond the Hills, Romania, 2013.
Satellite Boy, Australia, 2012.
The Hunt, Denmark, 2012.

Flexible Respite Film Society

Flickside Film Society (Arts Yackandandah)

Geelong Classic Cinema Inc

God Loves Atheists Film Study Festival

Goulburn Valley Film Club

The Rocket, Australia/Laos, 2013.
Prisoners, USA, 2013.
I Wish, Japan, 2011.
The Best Offer, Italy, 2013.

Goulburn Valley U3A Film Group

Grampians Film Society

Golden Eye, UK/USA, 1995.
The Lives of Others, Germany, 2006.
The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance, USA, 1962.
The Kite Runner, USA/China, 2007.
Searching for Sugar Man, Sweden/UK, 2012.
The Sapphires, Australia, 2012.

Horsham Film Society

Stoker, UK/USA, 2013.
The Reluctant Infidel, UK, 2010.
Broken, UK, 2012.
Therese, USA, 2013.
A Gun in Each Hand, Spain, 2012.
The Angels' Share, UK, 2012.

Intermittent Cinema Club

International Film Group

42nd Street, USA, 1933.
Sister (L'Enfant d'En Haut), France, 2012.
The Deep Blue Sea, UK, 2011.
Chinese Takeaway, Argentina, 2012.

Liberate Education! Film Study Festival

Lounge Lizards Film Society

LV Film Society

Wadjda, Saudi Arabia, 2014.
Lawrence of Arabia, UK, 1962.
The Lunchbox, India, 2014.
The Best Offer, Italy, 2013.
High Society, USA, 1956.

Macartan Club (Inc) Film Society

Macedon Ranges Film Society

The Third Man, UK/USA, 1949.
The Umbrellas of Cherbourg, France/Germany, 1964.
Never Let Me Go, UK, 2010.
Bill Cunningham New York, USA/France, 2010.
Welcome to the Sticks, France, 2008.

Melbourne Horror Film Society

Invasion of the Body Snatchers, USA, 1978.

Melbourne Zombie Film Society

Moira Film Group

Backyard Ashes, Australia, 2013.
The Englishman Who Went Up a Hill But Came Down a Mountain, UK, 1995.
Saving Mr. Banks, USA/UK/Australia, 2013.

Mount Eliza Fifty-Five Plus Film Group

Moviehouse

On the Waterfront, USA, 1954.
The Brothers McMullen, USA, 1995.
Too Much, Too Soon, USA, 1958.
It's A Wonderful Life, USA, 1946.
All That Heaven Allows, USA, 1955.
The Lady from Shanghai, USA, 1947.

What's Being Seen

Across the Film Society Circuit

Let ReelNews readers know what is being screened. Email Susan Davidson: secretary@fvfs.org.au

Moving Clickers Inc & Lorne Film Festival

Blancanieves, Spain, 2012.
Venus, UK, 2006.
Gloria, Chile, 2013.
Moonrise Kingdom, USA, 2012.
The Lunchbox, India, 2014.
Gentlemen Prefer Blondes, USA, 1953.
Tim's Vermeer, USA, 2013.
Ida, Poland, 2013.
Grendel, Grendel, Grendel, Australia, 1981.

Murrindindi Film Society

Dead Calm, Australia, 1989.
Bran Nue Dae, Australia, 2009.
Adam's Rib, USA, 1949.
All That Jazz, USA, 1979.

Myrtleford Film Society

Network Film Club

Old Scotch Film Society

McLean's Money, Australia, 2013.
Mrs Caldicot's Cabbage War, UK, 2002.
Mohamed Ali's Happy Day Feast, Australia, 1998.
The Yellow Rolls-Royce, UK, 1963.
What Maisie Knew, USA, 2013.
Chicago, USA, 2002.
Storm Boy, Australia, 1976.

Phillip Island Movie Club

Plaza Cinema Group

Port Fairy Film Society

Portarlington Film Society

Amour, France, 2012.
The Sapphires, Australia, 2012.
Japanese Story, Australia, 2003.
Performance (A Late Quartet), USA, 2013.
Conversations with My Gardener, France, 2007.
Chinatown, USA, 1974.
The Artist, France, 2011.

Portland Film Society

Gravity, USA, 2013.
Twenty Feet from Stardom, USA, 2013.
Blue Jasmine, USA, 2013.
Jiro Dreams of Sushi, Japan, 2011.
Mud, USA, 2012.
Lygon Street: Si Parla Italiano, Australia, 2013.
The Grand Budapest Hotel, UK, 2014.
Blindsight, UK, 2006.
Backyard Ashes, Australia, 2013.
Rising from Ashes, Rwanda, 2012.
Wadjda, Saudi Arabia, 2012.
Gardening with Soul, NZ, 2013.
Saving Mr. Banks, USA, 2013.

PRODOS Film Study Group

Prom Coast Film Society

The Reluctant Fundamentalist, USA+, 2012.
Django Unchained, USA, 2012.
The Angels' Share, UK/Scotland, 2012.
Bernie, USA, 2011.

Red Rock Film Society

The Angels' Share, UK/Scotland, 2012.
Brothers, Denmark, 2004.
Tabu, Portugal, 2012.
A Gun in Each Hand, Spain, 2012.
The Rocket, Laos, 2013.

Red Rum Film Society

A Letter to Momo, Japan, 2011.
Frances Ha, USA, 2012.
Rare Exports: A Christmas Tale, Finland, 2010.

Science and Technology Film Study Festival

Smart Girls Film Club

St Andrews Film Society

St Dunstan's Hall Film Society

The Human Scale, Denmark+, 2012.
Romantics Anonymous, France, 2010.
We of the Never Never, Australia, 1982.
Diary of Anne Frank, UK, 2009.

Sun Country Movie Club

Teddy Bobo Film Club

Eccentric short films + lateral thinking exercises.

The Impossible Film Club

Studying fantasy, science fiction, heroic adventure.

Trentham Film Society

The Rocket, Australia/Laos, 2013.
Lore, Australia/Germany, 2012.

WEAG Film Society

Whitehorse Film Society

The Angels' Share, UK/Scotland, 2012.
Hitchcock, USA, 2012.
Monsieur Lazhar, Canada, 2011.
Performance (A Late Quartet), USA, 2012.
The Hunt, Denmark, 2012.
Behind the Candelabra, USA, 2013.
Rust and Bone, France/Belgium, 2012.
Moonrise Kingdom, USA, 2012.

Williamstown Film Society

Tsotsi, UK/South Africa, 2005.
The Edge of Heaven, Germany +, 2007.
The Sapphires, Australia, 2012.

Yarra Ranges Film Society

Lore, Australia/Germany, 2012.
Match Point, USA/UK, 2005.
Cinema Paradiso, Italy, 1988.

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

South Australia

Adelaide Cinematheque

South Australia

Adelaide Film Study Group

South Australia

Adelaide University Film Society

South Australia

Barossa Film Club

I've Loved You So Long, France, 2008.
Goodbye Lenin, Germany, 2003.
A Separation, Iran, 2012.

South Australia

Flinders FACT Society

South Australia

Port Lincoln Film Society

South Australia

Reels @ Wehl Film Society

South Australia

RiAus Film Society

South Australia

Southern Fleurieu Film Society

The Good, The Bad and the Ugly, Italy/Spain, 1966.
The Intouchables, France, 2011.
The Lives of Others, Germany, 2006.
Duck Soup, USA, 1933.

South Australia

Yankalilla & District Over 50s Film Club

★ StarBox ★ Ratings

StarBox results received since ReelNews Issue 102 - September 2013

Send your StarBox results to starbox@fvfs.org.au

See what others are screening at www.fvfs.org.au/ideas

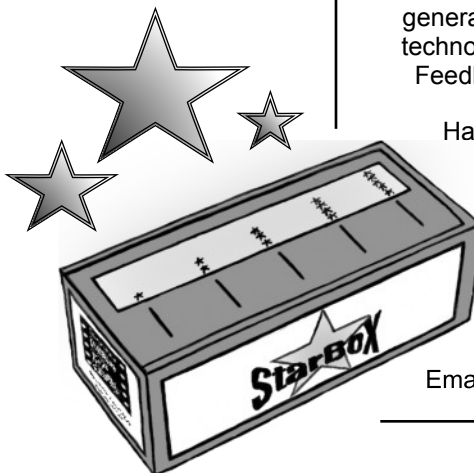
DVD Title	Society	Stars
Wadjda	Corangamite FS	4.8
Beneath Hill 60	Williamstown FS	4.5
Lygon St – Si parla Italiano	Portland FS	4.4
Up	Corangamite FS	4.2
The Hunt	Whitehorse FS	4.2
Performance (Late Quartet)	Whitehorse FS	4.2
Grand Budapest Hotel, The	Portland FS	4.2
All That Jazz	Murrindindi FS	4
Tsotsi	Williamstown FS	4
Silver Linings Playbook	Croydon FS	3.9
Great Gatsby, The (1974)	Williamstown FS	3.9
Volver	Yarra Ranges FS – H'Ville	3.7
Wadjda	Myrtleford FS	3.6
Jiro Dreams of Sushi	Portland FS	3.5
Prisoners	Goulburn Valley FC	3.5
Mud	Portland FS	3.4
Mystic River	St Andrews FS	3.2
Damned, The	Williamstown FS	3.2
Volver	Yarra Ranges FS – Warburton	3.1
Stories we Tell	Camberwell FS	3.1
Bluebird, The	Williamstown FS	3

Christmas Family Comedy Film: Home Alone



Produced by the other John Hughes

Kevin (Macaulay Culkin): This house is so full of people it makes me sick! When I grow up and get married, I'm living alone! Did you hear me? I'm living alone! I'm living alone!



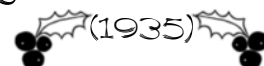
Trivia Alert!

What character has been the most often-portrayed since the advent of the story film? Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes, who has appeared in 225 films made between 1900 and 1999. Eighty-eight actors, including two Chinese and two black actors, have played the role of the iconic detective in that time.

Napoleon Bonaparte is the most often-portrayed historical character in film, having been played at least 206 times.

The leading lady who graced the screen with the biggest freakin' hooters in film was Chesty Morgan, whose 73-inch bust allowed her to wreak revenge in *Deadly Weapons* (US 1975). {Ed. - I saw this film when I was in college. Oh. My. God.]

Marx Brothers Comedy: A Night at the Opera



Chico: What does this say here, this thing?

Groucho: Oh, that? Oh, that's the usual clause. That's in every contract. That just says, uh... it says uh... If any of the parties participating in this contract is shown not to be in their right mind the entire agreement is automatically nullified.

Chico: Weeell, I don't know...

Groucho: It's alright! That's... that's in every contract! That's.. That's what they call a "sanity clause".

Chico: (Laughs) You can't fool me! There ain't no Sanity Clause!

The scores on this pages were generated using the latest technology in Film Society Feedback mechanisms!

Hand-crafted in Australia.
Order a **StarBox** for your film society now!

Cost? Free of charge for FVFS members!
Order yours now!

Email: starbox@fvfs.org.au

FVFS Resources Galore!

Excerpt from InfoSheet # 14: Other FAQs

Q13. What do I do if I have a dispute with a DVD or film supplier? (July 2009)

A. Check out FEDCAT (Film Exhibition and Distribution Code Administration Committee) who have a website at www.filmcode.info. This website explains your rights and procedures to follow if you have a dispute. "The rules allow an independent person from the secretariat or, where appropriate, the Code Conciliator to take up the complaint in the initial stages with no cost to the Code signatory making the complaint."

See their information sheet on www.filmcode.info/IB_1_01.doc

Find out more. Lots more!

fvfs.org.au/ideas

Need ideas for what to screen?

Have a look at six years of great ideas
in

"Film Lists You Can Download"

View hundreds of films and StarBox scores sent in by
FVFS members over the years.

Browse through Information Sheets 17.1 to 17.9

Designed and guaranteed to get you thinking.

CHECK

Your film society's details at

FVFS.org.au/members

Is everything in order?

For corrections, updates, changes, email

info@fvfs.org.au

HOW?

To obtain your DVDs
and get screening rights...

ACOFS Fact Sheet 3A

Go to ACOFS.org.au
Click "Resources"

How about trying the **FVFS Independent Film Library** for something different?

"Pearls of the Far East" "Sita Sings the Blues" "McLean's Money" "A Day in a Life" "It Gets Better" and more!

<http://fvfs.org.au/indie-films>

Mini Movie Reviews

The Well-Digger's Daughter

Reviewed By Ian Davidson, Whitehorse Film Society

France, 2011, 105 mins. (PG), Romance, Drama.
Directed by and starring Daniel Auteuil.
Also stars Astrid Berges-Frisbey.

Set in 1930's France, a father is torn between his sense of honour and his deep love for his daughter when she gets in trouble with the wealthy son of a shopkeeper.

The story is as compelling as it is heart-warming. This simple story by Marcel Pagnol is set in his beloved south of France near Aubagne which is the setting of many of his stories such as "Manon de Sources", "Jean de Florette", "My Father's Glory" and "My Mothers Castle". The Well Digger's Daughter is more recent, but not as well known and although underrated by many, is equally enchanting.

We all know of Auteuil as an actor but here we see his work as an accomplished director as well.

The Whitehorse Film Society screened this film recently and **scored it 4.2 stars.**

Temple Grandin

Reviewed by Barboo A. H. Marinakis, Smart Girls Film Club

USA, 2010, 222 mins (PG), Biopic
Director: Mick Jackson, Producer: Scott Ferguson

"My name is Temple Grandin. I'm not like other people. I think in pictures and I connect them."

Temple Grandin is a real person who, despite - even because of - her autism was able to achieve extraordinary things in her chosen field of animal husbandry. In this film, Claire Danes gives an award-winning, astonishing performance as this peculiar, original, inventive, ingenious, brilliant young woman. The film gives you entry into the fascinating workings of her unusual mind, and insight into the virtues of intellectual independence and persistence.

One refreshing aspect of this film is that it never falls into the trap of political correctness. Though Temple has autism and faces many trials, she never sees herself as a victim, nor does the film see her that way.

Danes herself was so believably immersed in the unique personality of Ms. Grandin that she won the 2010 Primetime Emmy for Outstanding Lead Actress in a Miniseries or a Movie, and many other major awards. The film itself also won numerous Emmys and other awards. They were all well-deserved.

Cast includes Claire Danes, Julia Ormond, David Strathairn, and Catherine O'Hara.

Goodbye Lenin!

Reviewed by Prodos, PRODOS Film Study Group

Germany, 121 mins, (M), Tragicomedy
Director: Wolfgang Becker, Producer: Stefan Arndt

In communist East Berlin, Christiane, a mother of two young children is abandoned by her husband, who escaped to the West. So she throws herself into the role of a socialist activist, helping neighbours lodge consumer complaints about bad quality state products.

Years later, when her son and daughter are young adults, she suffers a heart attack and falls into a coma for 8 months. During that time, communism falls, East and West Berlin begin the process of unification, capitalism comes to East Germany, and the Berlin Wall comes a-tumblin' down. When Christiane finally wakes up, the doctor warns her children that her heart is very fragile and any emotional shock could bring on a fatal heart attack. But what would be more shocking for their mother, the kids think, than finding out that socialism is dead and capitalism now reigns?

Christiane's son, Alex, embarks on a scheme to keep her away from the fatal truth. What results is hilarious, moving, and surprising, as Alex and friends must cleverly head reality off at every corner, and Christiane finally reveals a secret of her own.

Make Like Stratton!

Are there films you'd like to recommend? Type up a short film review and send it in! Help other film societies find those gems.

You don't have to look up the distributor or other details. We can do that for you. Just tell us what makes your special films special. We'll do the rest.

ReelNews@fvfs.org.au

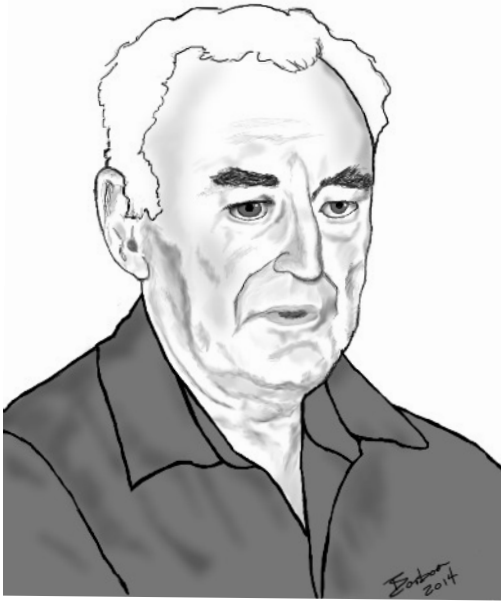
Trivia Alert

The Rogers and Hammerstein musical, *The Sound of Music*, is set in the 1930s, but in one scene a box of oranges is stamped 'Produce of Israel'.

In Kenneth Branagh's *Henry V* (Great Britain 1989), a corpse on the battlefield starts to grin as the camera passes by.

Obituary

ED SCHEFFERLE (“SCHEFF”)



Ed. Schefferle (Scheff), who died on the 22nd October at Westgarth Aged Care, was truly one of the originals of the Film society movement in Australia. He was involved with the inauguration of the Federation of Victorian Film Societies and the Australian Council of Film Societies, both in 1949.

Whilst working as a Research Officer and Instructor at the Gordon Institute of Technology he started the Geelong Film Society and when appointed librarian of the State Film Centre in 1951 he became involved with the Federation and was on the organizing committee for the Olinda Film Festival (forerunner to the Melbourne Film Festival) in 1952. His mentor was John O'Hara who progressed to the National Library of Australia as curator of the fledgling film collection.

He was a great supporter of country film groups and would take programmes out to them by train at the weekend often also taking all the equipment as well in a trailer behind his car. He was aided in this work by Betty Joep who as well

as serving as the FVFS Secretary also worked at the SFC and whose illustrations of Scheff's programme notes were of a very high artistic standard.

Because of his position at the SFC he remained an ex-officio or co-opted member of the Federation executive, raising many pertinent issues, for several decades, especially at General Council meetings. He was, however, a member of the Melbourne Film Festival organising committee from the early 1970's until 1984. Scheff was also involved in the setting up of the Australian Film Institute although never on the Board.

He built up a world class collection of films at the SFC particularly in the areas of documentary, experimental and animated films. Very strong associations with the Canadian Film Board meant that he assembled probably the most complete collection of Norman McLaren animated films outside of Canada. One of Scheff's passions was to get the Federation to appraise new films as they came into the SFC collection and for many years he organized these sessions.

After his retirement from the SFC in 1983, Scheff joined the FVFS Executive and became Secretary in 1992 and President in 1997. Being a tireless worker himself he had little patience when initiatives tabled at Executive meetings were not acted upon immediately and would 'take over' tasks which had been allotted to other people, much to the chagrin of his fellow committee members.

When Scheff retired from the Federation at the end of 1997 he continued to organise Camberwell Film Society for the next decade until his health intervened and he could only advise. Until his death he was organizing a group to view films from his collection at the retirement home where he resided for the last few years.

Certainly a life devoted to spreading the wonders of film in all its many iterations.

John Turner

Federation of Victorian Film Societies

FREE WEBSITE SERVICES FOR FILM SOCIETIES!

Get your Film Society its very own free, beautiful, easy-to-manage and maintain website!

Email
prodos@fismotron.education
to find out more.

HAVING 16MM ISSUES?

Contact :

John Arkins at the FVFS
john.arkins@gmail.com

or

Roger Seccombe at "16mm Australia"
info@16mm.org.au

Obituary

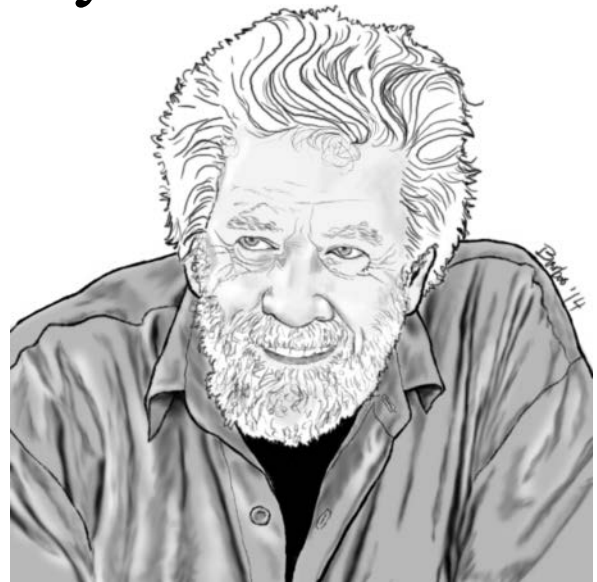
IAN BRUCE McKENZIE, OAM

At the Moving Clickers Film Society we all know Ian firstly as a good friend but also of course as a long standing committee member and, for the last five years, as our Treasurer. Sadly he died on October 5 this year.

It was not until I attended the celebration of his life however, that I became aware of the full extent of Ian's achievements. He was involved in all things film and was an eminent professional photographer. As a Past President and Life Member of the Australian Institute of Professional Photography he inaugurated a mentoring program for young photographers both in Australia and in New Zealand. This was typical of Ian's attitude to life.

At Foundation House (Victorian Foundation for the Survivors of Torture) he worked tirelessly to help the dispossessed and the damaged of this world. His 'Service to the Arts as a Photographer and to the Community' was recognised this year and Ian received the Medal of the Order of Australia shortly before he died. Naturally Ian tried to keep the honour under wraps.

He loved rallying in his MG TF so never shirking involvement Ian became President of the MG Car Club of Victoria. Ocean racing? certainly. As owner/skipper of Supertramp he raced competitively in all weathers and of course became Commodore of the Ocean Racing Club of Victoria. Ian's idea of relaxation was



to work his goat farm near Kyneton, but he found a lot of joy in the country life and spent many happy times there with his wife Louise and the last of his ever-faithful four legged friends Jack.

How he ever found the time to fit in his Treasurer duties to our film society I'll never know but generous as always, Ian did fit it in and we benefited greatly from it. Thank you Ian. He was a big man with big enthusiasms, strong opinions and boundless energy, a man of great principle with a wonderful passion for life which he lived to the full. We all miss his booming laugh, his forthrightness and the ever welcoming glass of good red wine always at hand.

Trevor Ling

Moving Clickers Film Society

ReelNews is published by the
Federation Of Victorian Film Societies Inc.
No. A0028942B ABN: 62 373 979 409

Editor: **Barboo A H Marinakis**
SubEditor: **Prodos**

Items for possible publication are welcome, including
your StarBox results, info about your Film Society's
activities & any ideas!

Email: **ReelNews@fvfs.org.au**
Phone: **(03) 9428 1234**
PO Box 125, Mitcham Vic 3132

The FVFS does not necessarily endorse
the statements or views contained in
any personal statements in articles,
letters to the editor, films, etc.,
mentioned in this newsletter.

"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 subscribe or find out more
Phone **02 6353 1897** or Email
lawsonco@vic.chariot.net.au

The Ten Minute Challenge!

By Barboo A. H. Marinakis

“For how many films can you find the distributor in *ten* minutes?”

One of the most common queries the FVFS gets is:

“How do I find the distributor of film “X”?”

So Prodos **challenged me** to see how many distributors of specific films (chosen randomly by him) I could find in just ten minutes.

Before this newsletter, I'd actually never looked up distributors, since the film society I formed, *Smart Girls Film Club*, gets its screening rights through [FiSMoTron](#), run by Prodos, so he's always taken care of all that stuff.

Here's how I prepared for the challenge -- the set-up moves given to me by Prodos (which are in fact based on instructions available in *Fact Sheet 3a* at [ACOFs.org.au](#))

Step One: Go to [ACOFs.org.au](#)

Step Two: Click “Resources” tab at the top of the page

Step Three: Go to *Fact Sheet 3a*. Click! Open the PDF.

Step Four: Scroll down to page 3 of this Fact Sheet.

Find and click on <http://www.classification.gov.au>

Step Five: When web page opens go back to ACOFS “Resources” tab and click on *Fact Sheet 3b*. Open PDF.

Step Six: Scroll down to page 2 of Fact Sheet 3b to the section that says “Find the distributor first”.

So, the two things I need to have at my fingertips for this challenge are:

1. The **Australian Classification** website site and
2. Fact Sheet 3b (DVD Distributor Contacts)

(Close anything else that's open as it will only confuse you and trip you up if you're trying to beat me at this *Ten Minute Challenge*!)

Prodos first gets me to do a test run.

Film: **Driving Miss Daisy**. As follows ...

At the top of the **Australian Classification** website there is a search box. Type the name of the film whose distributor I want to find into that little box. Click. This opens a page with a number of entries for that film title.

Notice that beside the movie title in each entry is the film's *format* designation, such as “DVD” or “VHS” or “35mm”, etc. (If you don't see the format you want, just click the film title with one of the *other* formats. There's a strong possibility that whoever owns the rights to one format will be able to tell you who owns the rights to the format you're actually looking for.)

After clicking, you'll see a list of facts about the film, and toward the end of the list you'll see the category called **“Applicant”**. Copy the *one* key word in the Applicant name. For instance, if it says “WARNER HOME VIDEO PTY LTD” just copy “WARNER”.

Now go back to **Fact Sheet 3b**. Using the “search box” in the PDF page, paste in (or type in) the “key word” and click. It will find the distributor on the page who handles films from that company, complete with contact details. Hooray!

In my test-run, the distributor was *not* on the list for the DVD, *but* the distributor for the *videotape* was. Namely:

Roadshow: Chrystal Remington, (02) 9552 8685, chrystal_remington@roadshow.com.au
I could contact Ms Remington as she's very likely to be able to speak on behalf or know of the rights owner.

TEN MINUTE CHALLENGE COMMENCES

Here we go! Prodos gives me movie after movie and I go through the above process. To score, I need to end up with the name and contact info of the distributor of each film each written down.

(tick, tick, tick, tick) Ten minutes later, here's how I went:

1) **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles** - DVD - Roadshow:

Chrystal Remington, (02) 9552 8685,
chrystal_remington@roadshow.com.au
www.roadshow.com.au

2) **Cinema Paradiso** - DVD - Umbrella Entertainment:

Achala Datar. achala@umbrellaent.com.au Richard Moore Richard@umbrellaent.com.au Unit 19/79-83 High Street Kew, Victoria, 3101, Ph (03) 9020 5157
www.umbrellaent.com.au

3) **Strictly Ballroom** – VHS for DVD - Roadshow:

Chrystal Remington, (02) 9552 8685,
chrystal_remington@roadshow.com.au
www.roadshow.com.au

4) **The Intouchables** – DVD for Blu-Ray - Roadshow:

Chrystal Remington, (02) 9552 8685,
chrystal_remington@roadshow.com.au
www.roadshow.com.au

5) **The Fountainhead** - VHS - Roadshow: Chrystal

Remington, (02) 9552 8685,
chrystal_remington@roadshow.com.au
www.roadshow.com.au

6) **On the Waterfront** – DVD - Amalgamated Movies,

Can also supply a copy if required.
Steven Snell, (07) 4787 1086.

I started at 10:44 PM and finished at 10:54 PM with slow internet connection and slow reflexes (I've been working on *ReelNews* for hours this evening). Nevertheless, I found the distributors or leads for distributors for **six** films in **ten** minutes. That's a distributor every 100 seconds!

Hey! Not bad! :-)

Think you can beat me? Write in and let us know your experiences with finding screening rights!

With the passing away of two respected veterans of the Film Society Movement – see pgs 7 & 8 – ReelNews was very pleased to receive the following uplifting article by **Roger Seccombe** (edited by Prodos) which, among other things, for us very nicely demonstrates that the Film Society Movement is ...

Never too Young. Never too Old. The Film Till Now: The View from Fifteen.

I made my first acquaintance with the Film Society Movement (about 60 years ago) when I was *fifteen* – I suspect the Realist Film Association at New Theatre in the city was rather eager to encourage the view that theirs was a film society with a decidedly youthful leaning! Not that the rest of the committee were really *that* old: they just *seemed* old to a fifteen year old! Probably not much more, on average, than forty or so, I guess.

The average age of members at my second film society – Melbourne University Film Society – would have been around twenty!

Early film society stalwart Ross Campbell once admitted to me that the sixteen-year-old school boy the “Age” film critic Colin Bennett wrote about in 1962 was actually him. This “school boy” had written to Bennett about his passion for the film “Citizen Kane” (which he’d seen on television). This had mightily impressed Bennett and had reaffirmed in the critic’s mind that the young *cineastes* were still very much alive at the heart of the sixties despite the rise of television.

Ironically, I too had first seen “Kane” in 1962 – in November of that year on HSV-7 in Melbourne. But I was significantly older than Ross ... at twenty-three!

So many of the “old” films shown in those first years of television were from RKO. You see, back then the major film studios had placed embargoes on each other not to sell their early films to that villain, television. But, in the case of RKO, the company had closed and an intermediary had flouted the ban and sold off the studio’s output, which

naturally included classics like “Citizen Kane”.

It never seemed to me that fifteen years of age was rather early to be studying the cinema. I’d borrowed from the Kew Library, Paul Rotha’s famous cinema history, “The Film Till Now: A Survey of World Cinema”. This had been published in 1930 when Paul Rotha (1907 - 1984) was *scarcely twenty-three!* My history master at school was, I suspected, every bit twice that age so how could Paul Rotha write a definitive history of the cinema when he was less than ten years older than I?

“The Film Till Now” became one of my chief early primers on the cinema while still a school student, joining an equal passion for Dr. Roger Manvell’s “Film” and C.A. Lejeune’s “Cinema”. You see, they were all writing about the roots of cinema which, for me as a fifteen-year-old, didn’t seem really to be that many years before.

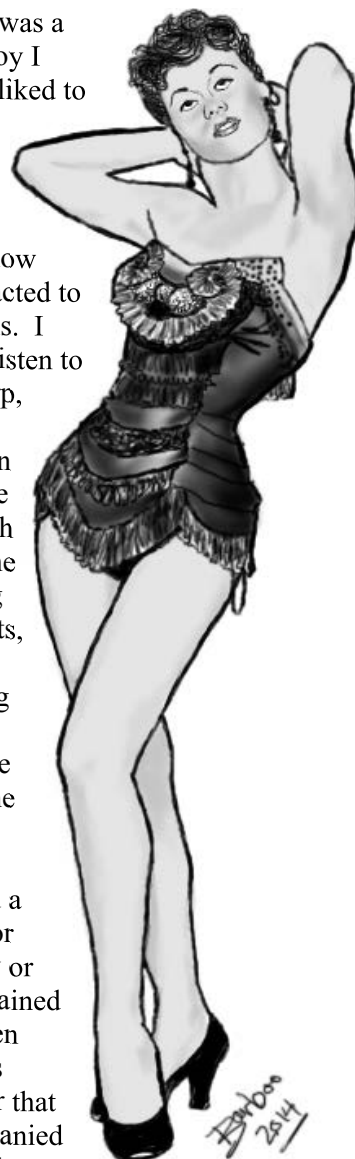
I’d seen my first movies at around five years old when the cinema was little more than forty years of age and the silent cinema was still very much alive less than twenty years before. I’d grown up with early Charlie Chaplin shorts like “Easy Street” and “The Tramp” screened at school and church fetes, and the “silents” (with appropriate musical accompaniments) quite readily appealed to me (and still do!)

When I first stepped through that rather down-beat entrance into New Theatre in Flinders Street I **stepped into a magical world which has really never left me**. Apart from a deluge of early Russian silent classics

like “Potemkin”, “Mother”, and “October”, I was soon blown away by the marvellous musical score by Prokofiev for “Alexander Nevsky” and the simpler charm of Australia’s own “The Sentimental Bloke”. I came to realise that Realist’s programming favoured a mix of Russian ideology, coupled with anti-Nazi propaganda and a dose of the good old Aussie worker!

But when you’re fifteen a lot of this goes right over your head (the political stuff, that is) and all I could sense then was an incredible excitement in discovering everything I could about this marvellous new Art of Cinema!

Since I was a small boy I always liked to study cinema audiences and watch how they reacted to the films. I would listen to the sharp, short, communal intake of breath at the the exciting moments, the cheering and applause when the patrons really enjoyed a drama or comedy or the sustained and often helpless laughter that accompanied slapstick fun. And, waiting in the foyer for a session to



In 1962, stunning Irish beauty, Constance Smith, stabbed filmmaker/historian, Paul Rotha (“The Film Till Now”). She did it again in 1964. They married in 1974.

commence, I'd look at the patrons emerging from the earlier session (especially at the old Metro in Malvern after an Intermediate Session with revivals of famous MGM 'weepies' like "Mrs. Miniver" or "The Mortal Storm" or "Goodbye Mr. Chips"). The tears on middle-aged female patrons would often still be flowing down their cheeks and they'd make no attempt to hide their emotions, either!

After some *eight* film societies over the intervening years, I *still* watch audience reactions! Is there really now a reluctance to express emotions? When famous comedy favourites fail to arouse reactions is it the problem of the film ... or the audience? What are audiences telling you? That they only want to see "the latest and the greatest"? That they "only want to see what young people are watching"? That "old films are only for the oldies"? (And, naturally, they're *not* oldies yet, thank you very much!)

Do audiences get up and storm out of *live* theatres while they're watching theatrical classics written hundreds of years ago, or operas composed centuries before, or art objects in

museums of equal or greater antiquity? Of course not!

So, I do wonder why so many film societies "*rarely screen the landmark films of the past and concentrate almost entirely on ... current or recent-release films*" as we noted in our book "The Haunted Palace".

Is it that today's audiences find it *easier* to respond to the often in-your-face style of modern film-making: excesses of violence, sex, horror, unsubtle and vulgar humour, gee-whizz digital effects and plots that could often be written on the back of a matchbox (and presumably were) as today's mainline cinema is usually directed at younger or even teenage audiences who seem to find difficulty in following storylines or analysing characters? (Is excessive video game-watching doubtless a contributing factor?)

With the recorded decline in the teaching of any significant and in-depth history subjects in schools, a likely outcome is that young people will find it harder to appreciate the importance of historical studies and to see that the way we *are* today is a

direct result of the way we *were* in the past. With technological changes occurring at an ever-more cataclysmic rate, even the mature person is more likely to think the past is less relevant in today's world and that proof of one's ability to "keep up with the latest" is a sign of our remaining relevant.

The Film Society Movement has so much to offer individuals of all ages. Like all the great arts, cinema has its timeless classics. Screen them! Study them! Embrace and enjoy the full scope of film art and culture! I encourage you to include some **historic** masterpieces and experiments in your next programme and rediscover that magic world of cinema.

"A generation which ignores history has no past — and no future." Robert A Heinlein

Roger Seccombe runs the Plaza Cinema Group (film society), is co-founder of 16mm Australia and co-author with his wife, Barbara, of: *The Haunted Palace, Camberwell at the Movies, Two Seats in the Circle* (book & DVD), and other books on Australian cinema history.

Where have serious plot and character development gone? I think I know!

An Alternative Perspective.

By Barboo A. H. Marinakis
Smart Girls Film Club

When a sneeze was a hi-tech special effect

Roger Seccombe makes some valuable observations (pgs 10 - 11) about the modern cinema and its shift into spectacle.

He writes of "the often in-your-face style of modern film-making: excesses of violence, sex, horror, unsubtle and vulgar humour, gee-whizz digital effects and

plots that could often be written on the back of a matchbox (and presumably were)"

And he criticises modern audiences, whom he says "seem to find difficulty in following storylines or analysing characters ..."

Yes, there does seem to be an enormous emphasis on special effect and pure spectacle in mainstream cinema today. But what I'd like to suggest is that, in a way, it's as if the motion picture industry has returned to the Edison/Biograph era of the late 19th and very early 20th Century, when the film medium was a novel and sensational new thing, used purely for entertainment.

That early era – like now -- was also focused on spectacle, entertainment, and titillation, with almost zero interest in story-telling. How peculiar that after all this time, with all our

modern technology, we've returned to the gee-whiz-bang of the very early days of motion pictures!

Or is it really so peculiar?

Fred Ott's Sneeze (1894, 5 secs) and *The May Irwin Kiss* (1896, 20 secs) were sensations!

When technologies are new, it's natural to play with them, try them out for the technology's sake, which becomes an entertainment in itself. Perhaps we should expect a period when some film-makers are more intent on showing off their new toys and many audiences are enjoying the results of those toys, content to be entertained by the new-fangled inventiveness of special effects ... for

a while ... until those effects become too familiar.

But let's also ask ourselves whether the flash and trash that is understandably worrying to some has in fact fully displaced story and character. And whether it has indeed ruined young people's ability to follow a complex plot and an interest in character development.

Oh, there it is!

If it's true that mainstream, blockbuster movies have headed in a more spectacle/less story direction, has the art and appetite for sound storytelling disappeared? I suggest it hasn't because I think I know where it's gone. To television. TV!

I can testify from first-hand experience that television is today proving beyond a doubt that there are audiences that not only appreciate good story-telling and character development, but who form active "clubs" online that discuss, critique, and debate about the story-lines, character development, dialogue, and speculate on where the story is going with much seriousness.

For instance, when the hit TV show, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003) was in its first run, along with several million other people, I got hooked on the show. Not for the sensation of the vampires and monsters involved, and not for the "special effects", which were often rather low budget.

Those things wouldn't have brought me back week after week, nor have prompted me to seek out an online discussion forum (called "The Bronze", named after the teen hangout in the show) to discuss the various aspects of the show with other fans. What we all loved about the show was the developing characters, their ongoing issues and growth as young people coming to terms with not only their own relationships, but with harsh (if bizarre), evil realities in the world.

We loved the principles that the stories illustrated and the way they did so. And the intelligence of the dialogue

and humour. And the story arcs were always interesting, suspenseful, and thought-provoking. That's why the virtual world of

"The Bronze" forum was always packed with people from around the globe, getting to know each other, discussing, arguing, offering interesting insights about the characters and plots, and playing together as well (for instance, inventing contests and quizzes, writing spontaneous stories together...).

People would sometimes write whole essays on an episode or a character. And these weren't shallow minds. It was stimulating and enriching fun. And many of the fan-fiction writers (who wrote stories based on the characters, sometimes alternatives to what had happened, or speculative stories on where the show might go) were quite talented. (Some, not so much.)

There was a lot to talk about. The Bronze was definitely a club, a "society", where people got to know each other and where certain people were drawn together as natural friends, just as happens in person. And then ... we started having yearly get-togethers in person. We'd invite the show's creator, Joss Whedon, and the writers and the actors and even the stunt team ... and they showed up! Not all of them did, of course, but a surprising number, including Joss Whedon, came along and mingled and shared.

There are a variety of shows that earn this kind of serious, thoughtful fan base and that can be discussed in-depth. I've had many engaging conversations off-line about *The*

Mentalist, *Angel*, *The Walking Dead*, *Star Trek*, and *Firefly* (and a few conversations about *Game of Thrones*). The conversations have been with people of a wide range of ages.

So I do not think a love of complex story and character are dead, or that people are losing their ability to follow those aspects of a cinematic presentation. Otherwise TV productions that do have these features, and require fans to follow long plot-lines with lots of characters over months and years, would not become hit series with vibrant online clubs. I think, perhaps, spectacle is something people can enjoy as well as the more demanding kinds of cinema and TV. No, love of story is not dead. It's just currently visiting television.

And one more thing! Many of these well-written and engaging TV shows are available on DVD and may be viable candidates for film society screenings!

Smart Girls Film Club is about to screen and study two episodes of *Buffy*.



Prodos interviews : John Hughes

Australian filmmaker

John Hughes's website: EarlyWorks.com.au

Film credits: Love & Fury (2013), Indonesia Calling (2009), The Archive Project (2006), Moving History: 60 Years of Film Australia (2007), The Art Of War (2005), Film-Work (1981), and many more, including:

"What I have Written"

DVD & Screening Rights
Available to film societies
through the FVFS
Independent Films Library.
Find out more at
fvfs.org/indie-films

Editor The following is an edited transcript.

All views and opinions expressed are personal and do not necessarily reflect the views of the FVFS.

PRODOS: Your filmmaking seems to focus a lot on Australian themes.

JOHN HUGHES: Yes, that's true. Mostly the films are concerned with Australian stories and situations. There was a period when I was doing quite a lot of work around Native Title and Indigenous Rights. More recently, a lot of the work I've been doing is concerned with Australian film history. Partly because I was interested in trying to bring some material into Australian film history that puts emphasis on traditions in Australian documentary. It seemed like an area that was under-served.

Australia has a very interesting film history, doesn't it? On the one hand we produced some of the earliest – including the very first – commercially successful full-length feature films. But not many people are making much money making films in Australia today.

I'd say that's probably true, yes.

Is "commercial" necessarily opposed to "artistic"?

No, I don't really think so.

Last year I looked into why and how the very popular Bushranger films were banned in 1912 (because they might have an "injurious influence on youthful minds") as well as studying the 1928 Royal Commission on the Moving Picture Industry, which argued we were being "flooded" by "foreign" -- American and British -- films. Why the Hell doesn't the



government keep its hands off Artists and citizens instead of trying to socially engineer our culture? You know it always stuffs it up.

Some of the dedicated fighters against this kind of thing were the founders of the Film Society Movement, like Ken Coldicutt and the Realist Film Unit which your film, The Archive Project – which I completely adore – studies. Can you talk a bit about that?

(Laughs) I'm glad you like it! How that film came about ... there was a kind of a "correspondence" at the time with a number of things going on at once around 2002.

I'd just concluded working on a big project -- about Australian Indigenous history -- working with Rachel Perkins (Blackfella Films) on "First Australians" (a 7 episode documentary series). During the course of researching material for what became that project I was also thinking about the little-known or lesser-known history of Australian independent activist films.

A couple of reasons for that. One was that at the time there was an emerging group of young people making very exciting activist work -- and they couldn't get it out anywhere. They had small clubs which were terrific -- like a contemporary version of the (early) Film Society Movement. But completely different forms of organisation, of course, but with the same kind of imperative driving it. These people were

making really interesting work that (they were) very committed to, but there was no mode of distribution other than what they could establish themselves.

I was in the roof at my house ... in the cavity of the ceiling bringing down boxes of files which I'd been storing up there ... I knew I had a box of material from the sixties on the Gurindji land rights struggle ... a lot of pamphlets and stuff like that, relating to Rachel Perkins' project -- and then *among* all that material was all this stuff I had about The Realists -- which I'd been given by Ken Coldicutt around 1981. I'd lent a lot of it to a friend of mine, Deanne Williams, who was able to make use of it in his terrific book, "Post-War Australian Documentary: An Arc of Mirrors" (2008).

So there I was looking through these files and thinking, this is probably a good moment to finally make this film (The Archive Project). It was material I couldn't fit into (an earlier production) "Film-Work" (which examined the 11 documentaries made by the Waterside Workers Federation Film Unit between 1953 & 1958)

But now it seemed like "Right! This looks like it might be the time to make this film!" because of what was going on around us -- and the emergence of these new modes of independent activist filmmaking.

The other thing that had resonance was that since September 2001 the political security apparatus was enlivened again and resourced. (The situation) had this resonance with the circumstances that surrounded that early Cold War experience that Ken Coldicutt and others like the Waterside Workers Federation Film Unit in Sydney and so on all had to deal with. I sort of felt, well the young people who are now inheriting that imperative of independent activist filmmaking with no outlets and no funding ... maybe they'll recognised this story now -- in a way they might not have recognised it five years earlier.

So that's how it happened, that's how it comes about -- through getting a feeling that there's a correspondence of cultural context that will make this particular story resonate.

You felt that a film like The Archive Project might provide some encouragement to the current generation of activist filmmakers? It was a moral and intellectual ammunition.

(Laughs) Yes, that's right.

On your website you write: "The Melbourne Realist Film Unit forged an Australian response to threats to freedom of speech". You're talking about the "Red Scare" and the fears of Communism at that time, right?

Yes.

Did you meet with Ken Coldicutt?

I had a couple of conversations with him. I went and met him in the context of making "Film-Work", but I couldn't work out at that time -- in the late seventies -- how I could incorporate the Melbourne Realist experience into that film. Partly, that was because it was a contextual thing about that late seventies period when I was making "Film Work" (1981).

The Waterside Workers Federation Film Unit at that time had, in a way, been forgotten by people of my generation. I was surprised to learn about it! I knew about the more popular commercial fiction film of the Fifties and Sixties and so on. But I didn't know about the Waterside Workers. And it wasn't known in the contemporary trade union movement either!

So when I learned about it, I thought this is incredible! There's this mob of people who were working with the trade union and they were able to successfully make films -- very, very interesting films -- because they were in an alliance with the trade union movement.

Nowadays there are all these independent filmmakers and we have no organisational base with organised Labour. We think we're kind of unique artists who have made up the idea of independent filmmaking.

Whereas there's actually this tradition that was trying to do what the feminists were doing -- which was to recover through oral history a kind of forgotten tradition that could inform the present, right?

The Realists were actually in many ways defeated during their period because it was possible to pick them off. They didn't have an organisational base that could sufficiently defend them in the Cold War context.

When Marx was 24 y.o. he wrote a series of incredibly lucid and strong essays on freedom of speech and opposing censorship. A quote: "No man combats freedom. At most he combats the freedom of others."

That's the thing I want to throw at you, because every Fascist and every totalitarian wants *themselves* to be free, but we haven't really tested whether someone is a true advocate of freedom until ... let's say you have a view that I think is atrocious. It's not until I defend your right to hold that "atrocious" view that you can say I'm a true advocate of freedom of speech. What do you think about that?

So far so good.

One of the early instances of censorship in Australian cinema -- a direct result of the fact that audiences in Sydney cinemas were standing and applauding newsreels of the Russian revolution -- was the banning of the film "The Great Strike". The film had to have its name changed. It couldn't be presented with the title "The Great Strike". It had to be taken away -- and was "buried" for about 8 months -- and then came back and it was then possible to put it in the cinemas, as long as it was called "Recent Industrial Disturbances in New South Wales".

That very much ties in with the banning of the Bushranger films. I wonder whether that indicates ... we often hear the cliché about Australians have a kind of larrikin spirit. Maybe it's true. Maybe Aussies tend to like a rebel here and there? Maybe they like a troublemaker? Maybe the powers that be feel a bit threatened by that?

It's complicated isn't it? I think you probably put it very well in saying that when the population did get the opportunity to confirm Menzies' plans to ban the (Communist) Party via the 1951 referendum and the referendum was lost, people (had essentially) decided that Menzies' plan was probably more dangerous than the people he was calling Communist.

Isn't banning free speech *always* more dangerous than what you're trying to solve? If you don't like what I have to say -- to use Law and Guns to stop me -- that means you've just demonstrated you can't argue your case, that you can't beat me in the public forum of open debate.

In your work on The Archive Project, could you tell us more about the fight to oppose censorship? Any other interesting things that you came across?

I'm absolutely not an expert on it. The best person to talk to about it is Ina (Winneford) Bertrand who wrote the (1978) book "Film Censorship in Australia".

The other one is a book by Peter Coleman, but that's mainly about literary censorship -- mainly the banning of books.

It's interesting to me that Peter Coleman did that book. He was on the kind of right wing of the Liberal Party. He was a member of the Association for Cultural Freedom [Editor: Originally known as the Congress for Cultural Freedom and later re-named the International Association for Cultural Freedom, it was an anti-Communist and Anti-Nazi/Fascist educational/activist organisation started in 1950].

At the same time he was also one of the people on

the committee that designed the financing of the Renaissance in Australian film in the mid 60's along with Phillip Adams and Barry Jones. It's interesting that there's a very strong kind of alliance between certain sections of the Left and the Right (when it comes to) anti-censorship.

There are many in the Liberal Party, of which I'm a member, on the so-called "Conservative" side who are very ardent pro individual rights, libertarian types.

Getting back to the Melbourne Realists, did you find other evidence and interesting information about their fights against censorship?

What they were interested in, of course, at that time -- from the early to mid thirties -- was politically oriented censorship. Ken Coldicutt was an activist defending the Spanish Republic. He was part of the Spanish Relief Committee which was like an international support movement for the Republicans in Spain -- who were being attacked by Franco ...

[Editor: Francisco Franco Bahamonde became dictator of Spain in March 1939 -- 6 months before the beginning of WWII -- after fighting a 3 year civil war between his Nationalist/Rebel faction against those supporting the democratically elected, Soviet supported "Second Spanish Republic".]

... and they were bringing films into Australia which they were trying to circulate to raise money for the cause. They found that certain films would not be allowed in. And other films would need to be cut. So, that was one thing.

The other thing was that he (Coldicutt) was also involved at a different time with "Friends of the Soviet Union" (FOSU) and they were trying to import Eisenstein's "October: Ten Days That Shook The World" (in 1936). (See: *Dean Williams, Screening the Past, December 08 1997*)

And that was banned. So they were very conscious from that 1930's period, before the War, when we had people like Menzies and (Sir Wilfrid Kent Hughes) and others praising Nazism and Fascism [Editor: This view of Menzies is widely held, but is also disputed by some. More details & context at "History Reference Box", next page] ... and administering a state apparatus that would try and prevent the distribution of films that had an anti-fascist perspective. That was one element of the resistance to censorship during that period.

Was their resistance due to being Communists or because they were Australians or because they were from a free-thinking British heritage?

History Reference Box

The "Nazi Party" -- full name: "National Socialist German Workers' Party" -- was formed in **1920**.

Ken Coldicutt joined the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) in **1935** and resigned in **1951** (*University of Melbourne Archives, Accession number: 2003.0111*)

1938: Robert Menzies, then Attorney General, visited Nazi Germany.

There he met with Dr Hjalmar Schacht -- president of the Reichsbank, who was later sent to a concentration camp, was an opponent of Jewish persecution, and involved in an attempt to assassinate Hitler the following year -- to whom Menzies said: "the real danger of the regime was that the suppression of criticism would ultimately destroy Germany" (*Australian Jewish News, Jan 24 2013*).

Menzies privately wrote several biting, observations about his German experience. For instance that in Germany, Hitler was only

spoken of "with the respect which one attaches to a legal fiction".

1939: Australia (along with Britain, NZ, France) declares War on Germany.

From **1939** until **1941** the Soviet Union and Germany maintained a "Non-Aggression Pact" during which period the Soviets annexed Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and parts of Poland, Finland and Romania. During this period Germany supplied the Soviets with military technology & the Soviets supplied Germany with raw materials. Opposition leader, John Curtin (ALP) considered the Soviet Union an ally of Nazi Germany and stated, referring to the Soviet Union: "... we regard Germany's allies as enemies of Australia." (*The Townsville Daily Bulletin, Wednesday March 27 1940*)

During this period the CPA opposed Australia being at war with Nazi Germany (*For instance, see "Communist Review" -- the official CPA mag -- April 1940, page 252, Hands Off Russia! by J B Miles - who was imposed as*

General Secretary of the CPA by the Soviet Comintern.)

The CPA was banned on June 15, **1940**, after the Soviet/Nazi alliance was forged. Allowed again in December **1942**. Banned again in 1950.

The banning of the CPA was declared unconstitutional and struck down under the anti-Communist Chief Justice (Sir Owen Dixon (*below*) in 1951.



A proposed ban was then put to a referendum later in 1951 and narrowly defeated.

I think it was much more pragmatic. I think the way they would have seen it was that they were dealing with an oppressive, authoritarian political regime in Australia that would not resist fascism. And the evidence they had was that they weren't allowed to show certain films explaining what was going on in Spain. Here were people who were calling out "Can't you see what's happening in Spain? Can't you see what's coming next?" and you have the prime minister of the country (*Joseph Lyons, United Australia Party*) nonchalantly praising what's going on in Germany as late as 1938.

[Editor: For studies of Australian pre-war appeasement by the Catholic Church, Australian Labor Party, Manning Clark, and other politicians and intellectuals towards Mussolini and/or Hitler See "Nazi Dreamtime" by David Bird and "Australia and Appeasement" by Christopher Waters.]

The next thing was when they found they couldn't purchase or distribute films that were agitating against the continuing development of nuclear weapons in the Cold War period -- when Menzies announced that Australia should be prepared for a new war, and everyone knew that meant a nuclear war. Films like "Where Will You Hide" (1948, short animation) which was an anti war film -- that was banned. So they would have seen a lot of parallels there.

Do you think they would have been equally opposed to the censorship of films that had a different viewpoint from their own?

Two things there. One of the really interesting things was that they didn't actually have that problem because the American films of the time that were promoting militarism, and the Australian propaganda films that were promoting militarism were given the most widespread distribution. They were in cinemas

in every city, every night for weeks on end! Whereas the films that were supporting the positions (of the) Peace Movement were considered subversive and banned.

On the other hand, yes they did object to the screening of certain films. So, there were cases where particularly militant films like *The Green Berets* (1968, starring John Wayne, set during the Vietnam War) ... that's a bit later, ... the Left did organise demonstrations against films like that while being very alert to the irony that they were vociferously in favour of getting rid of censorship wherever possible.

Here they were trying to protest about films they considered to be dangerous and destructive -- which were not only films that were advocating very specific political arguments. They were also horrified by what you would perhaps consider libertarian films ... films that would celebrate crime and violence. (For instance) they hated comic strips and didn't like American cartoons.

There was also this very kind of "puritan" strand within that hard Left during the Cold War.

What about the Realist Film people?

For Ken Coldicutt or Gerry Harant or that mob, it wasn't the focus of their attention, really. However, they would have recognised that popular culture was doing political work for American power. But they were much more interested in trying to advance their own ideas and trying to allow local people to make work (films) and distribute it.

(Consider that) there's a scene in "These Are Our Children" (1948, silent short, 22 min) where going to the cinema and seeing a horror movie is signalled as a sign of moral degeneration. (Laughs).

Lately I've been reading "My Generation", the memoir of (film director, writer, producer) Albie Thoms (1941 - 2012), experimental filmmaker, co-founder of Ubu Films, and the Sydney Filmmakers Co-op) and it's very interesting.

They were still dealing with all this sort of (censorship) stuff. When you read about the Sydney Underground or Albie Thoms' "My Generation" -- all the stuff that these libertarian anarchists -- it's difficult to know whether to put them on the Left or the Right -- who are making avant-garde, experimental films, they were being banned all the time. The cinemas (where they screened) kept getting raided, they were fined. This was going on right up until 1971.

The manager of the Melbourne Filmmakers Co-op was dragged off to the Magistrates Court for showing films that hadn't been cleared by the Censor. It didn't

really get dealt with until probably the mid 1970's. Don Chipp did a lot about it. [Editor: Around 1970, then in the Liberal Party, Don Chipp abolished most bans on printed works and introduced the "R" rating for films, allowing previously banned films to be screened.]

Do you think that it's true that the Film Society Movement does have a tradition of free speech and fighting for free speech?

Yes. I would think so -- in the broadest sense. The initial impetus really was (an appreciation of the fact) that the world is a bigger place than what we're being told by the British and American commercial film industry. That's the sort of first step in a way -- it's what we now call World Cinema. It's a welcoming of the idea of free speech and the idea of tolerance about other cultures and interests. And of curiosity -- all those things. Rather than necessarily free speech as a political principal, (that aspect) has more to do with free speech as a humanist value.

Trivia Alert: Censorship

The *Statens Biografbyrå* of Sweden was the first state censorship board in the world. It was founded on September 4, 1911. All films released in Sweden after December 1, 1911 had to be certified by the board.

Abu Dhabi has banned the most films outright -- over 3000 in all. Most of these films were condemned as obscene, anti-Islamic, or favourable to Jews.

Surprisingly, Russia was the first country to abolish censorship of films -- under the Kerensky government in May, 1917. But once the Bolsheviks took over, government control of what could be seen was reasserted, although censorship was not *formally* imposed until 1922. Under the Soviets, censorship was the most rigorous in the world, almost eradicating the USSR's film industry in the 1950s. It was not lifted until *Glasnost*.

The only country that has never censored films for adults is Belgium.

All "Trivia Alerts" in this newsletter were researched using the book, *Film Facts* by Patrick Robertson.