USE OF THESES

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'AND THE VILLAIN STILL PURSUED HER'.

ORIGINS OF FILM IN AUSTRALIA; 1896 - 1913.

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Submitted for the Degree of Master of Arts,
Department of History, School of General Studies,
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**  

**INTRODUCTION**  

**CHAPTER 1.**  

**THE AUSTRALIAN EXPERIENCE OF CINEMA**  

International Beginnings - Melbourne, August 1896 - Carl Herts - The Experience of Cinema - The Melbourne and Sydney Film Scene, 1896 - First Australian Films; The Melbourne Cup, November 1896 - 1897-1900, Decline of a Novelty.

**CHAPTER 2.**  

**FILM AS PROPAGANDA: THE SALVATION ARMY'S LIMELIGHT DEPARTMENT**  

Herbert Booth and the Australian Salvation Army - 'The Major' - The Limelight Department; Early Years - The Salvation Army's First Australian Films - Exhibition and Impact of Soldiers of the Cross; 1900-1910 - Biorama Tours and the Limelight Department, 1900-1908 - Heroes of the Cross and Scottish Covenanters, 1909 - Closure of the Limelight Department - Conclusion.

**CHAPTER 3.**  

**FILM AS COMMUNICATION: THE NEWSREELS OF 1900-1905**  

Boer War Films and Others, 1900 - Ceremonies and Processions Rule Supreme; The Films of 1901 - Consolidation of a Novelty; 1902-1904 - The Chaotic Years in Exhibition; 1904-1905.

**CHAPTER 4.**  

**FILM AS DRAMA: THE KEY SHOWMEN AND THE KELLY GANG FILM: 1906-1908**  

Formative Years; 1906-1907 - First Australian Features; 1906-1908.

**CHAPTER 5.**  

**PATTERNS OF DEVELOPMENT: 1908-1913**  

## CHAPTER 6.
**AUSTRALIAN FILMS: 1908-1913**

- Non-fiction Australian films - Australian Feature Films, 1909-1913 - The Cameramen - The Actors and Actresses - Film Themes; And The Villain Still Pursued Her - Conclusion.

## CONCLUSION

APPENDIX I. **SOLDIERS OF THE CROSS, 1900**

*Making Soldiers of the Cross, 1900.*

APPENDIX II. **THE STORY OF THE KELLY GANG, 1906**

APPENDIX III. **EXHIBITION - COMPETITION OR COLLUSION**

APPENDIX IV. **GOVERNMENT INTEREST IN THE FILM INDUSTRY 1908-1913**

- Municipal and State Government Action - Film Censorship - Government Film Production.

APPENDIX V. **THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME**

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

* * *
# LIST OF PLATES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>After Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Carl Hertz</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Marius Sestier</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>A Limelight Lantern</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Colonel Henry Hadley</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Heroes of the Cross</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Jack Gavin</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>W. A. Gibson</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Members of J. &amp; N. Tait's original biograph company</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>J. D. Williams</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Crystal Palace, Wintergarden</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Alfred Rolfe</td>
<td>284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Agnes Gavin</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Gaston Mervale</td>
<td>288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Bert Bailey</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Franklyn Barrett</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Raymond Longford</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Arthur Higgins</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Lacey Percival</td>
<td>306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Alf. J. Moulton</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>A. O. Segerberg</td>
<td>311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Miss Lottie Lyell'</td>
<td>317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Louise Lovely</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Will They Never Come?</td>
<td>394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Vera Pearce</td>
<td>394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Snowy Baker in The Enemy Within</td>
<td>394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>The Hayseeds Series</td>
<td>394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>The Face at the Window, 1919</td>
<td>394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Raymond Longford, Lottie Lyell and Arthur Higgins</td>
<td>394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>The Temptation</td>
<td>394</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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DECLARATION

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any University and to the best of my knowledge and belief it contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text.

[Signature]
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I wish to thank my friend Ken Gooding for suggesting that I attempt a history of Australian films. This work has largely been made possible by an Australian National University scholarship. The History Department and Menzies College at La Trobe University also provided time, money and facilities for me to continue and finish this thesis. My debt to the many people who have guided, encouraged and informed me over five years is incalculable, and since there were so many I can only mention a few here and hope that those not mentioned will accept my deepest gratitude.

Of the many personal sources of information about key films and personalities in the industry who freely gave of their time and records, I especially want to thank Reg. Perry, Bert. Cross, Reg. Edwards, Miss Barrett, Mrs. Emily Longford, Miss Percival, Miss Louise Lovely, Mrs. Higgins, Mr. Bryce Higgins, Mr. Ivan Iye, Mr. Wotton, Mrs. M. Dolphin, Mr. L. Endean and the 200 or so people with whom I corresponded after an appeal for information was published during 1968. Then there were the various institutions and their staff that facilitated my research. I wish to thank the Mitchell Library, the N.S.W. State Archives, the La Trobe Library and the Victorian State Archives, the National Library of Australia, the Victorian State Film Centre, the Commonwealth Archives, the Tasmanian State Archives and the Commonwealth Film Unit.

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INTRODUCTION

About a quarter of a century from now, there is certain to be a good deal of controversy on the pioneers of the film business.

Picture Show, 1 August 1920.
This thesis sets out to answer the question; how did Film develop in Australia before World War One? Film came to Australia in a magician's bag of tricks; it stayed to become big business, and in the process it transformed the life of Australians. From magician's art to industrial organization is thus the scope of this history and it encompasses the dilemma facing any film historian; for film has the dual characteristics of being at the same time an art form and an industry. It is the main thesis of this study that already before World War One, Australia had experienced nearly all the functions of twentieth century Film as an art form, and that the small-scale industry that emerged by 1913 owed its peculiarities to the first two decades of Film's existence in Australia.

The origins of Film in Australia are dealt with in Chapter One. This chapter also describes the impact this novel form of entertainment made on Australian audiences and how it immediately captured their imagination. I have found that foreigners and not Australians played the leading roles in the early development of film in this country. The first films were English brought to Australia by an American magician. A Frenchman made the first film of The Melbourne Cup (1896), and two Englishmen developed Australian religious propaganda films by 1900. It was also foreigners like T.J. West, Cozens Spencer and J. D. Williams who built the first permanent cinemas and established the economic base of the industry. Nevertheless, it will be argued in later chapters that
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despite this early dominance of the local industry by foreigners, and
of Australian screens by foreign films, within two decades,
Australians had taken over the local industry and some films were
beginning to express a peculiarly Australian idiom.

The next chapter describes one of the first uses to which film
was put in Australia; that of propaganda. In this field the
Australian Salvation Army was a pioneer. Joseph Perry and Herbert
Booth were among the first to try and improve men's minds by using
films and they were overwhelmingly successful in the money they
made and the faithless they converted by this means. While earlier
writers have tended to give most credit to Herbert Booth, this
chapter establishes that Joseph Perry used the screen for propaganda
purposes long before Booth's arrival, and that he was also making films
long after Booth's departure. It thus places the achievements of
these two men in a more accurate perspective.

Chapter Three explores another of the earliest uses of Film
in this country; that of imparting information. Short realist films
from local and overseas sources gradually evolved into a system of
weekly newsreels. The origins of this development can be seen in
microcosm in the films shown in Australia during 1901. These films
exemplified the future pre-occupations of films that were to be
shown in Australia during the following fifty years. The films
reporting the Boer War foreshadowed the films of the First and
Second World Wars that were to inform trouble-free Australia of the horrors of modern war. The 1901 films of royalty presaged the aura that world leaders and popular actors were to be endowed with by this mass medium. Lastly, there were many films which were educational and informed Australians in a graphic manner both about their own country and the world in which they lived. Film gradually became indispensable to Australians as both a medium of entertainment and a medium of information.

Within ten years of its introduction, Film had been developed in Australia in three of its important functions: entertainment, indoctrination and communication. There remained one further field; Film as Drama. Chapter Four examines the infant film industry and its first feature film; The Story of the Kelly Gang (1906). The businessmen who first became interested in the Australian film industry had no wish merely to make local films, but wished to engage in what they saw as a lucrative entertainment business. Film production thus came after film exhibition. This first feature was significant not only for its precocious length but also because it was conceived of in cinematic terms and was thus a true film without the disturbance of subtitles.

Chapter Five examines the type of 'showmen' who became the entrepreneurs of the new medium, and the physical conditions under which films were shown. The audiences of the early film shows are
described and the effect of films on Australian cultural attitudes and habits is discussed. Finally, the role of the film distributor who stood midway between the producer and the exhibitor is analysed, and his positive role in the development of the industry is emphasised.

The last chapter examines Australian films - both features and documentaries - of the period 1908-1913. Directors, cameramen and cast are presented, and the reactions to their films are examined. It is suggested that their films were no worse than the typical overseas product of the time and that in some sense their local success indicated that a viable Australian film industry was slowly emerging. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the way the new medium of film grew out of, and was influenced by the stage. This process of the old pursuing and conditioning the new is symbolized by the line taken from the old melodrama; 'And the Villain still pursued Her'.
CHAPTER 1.  THE AUSTRALIAN EXPERIENCE OF CINEMA

It is very long too since an exhibition so interesting in a scientific sense as the cinematograph, and yet of such irresistible popular attractiveness has been seen at a place of public entertainment. The pictures shown nightly to the audience by means of this astonishing invention would have suggested witchcraft a century ago.

The Australian, 10 October 1896.
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The Australian, 10 October 1896.
1. INTERNATIONAL BEGINNINGS

Motion pictures had an international beginning. The first statement of the basic principle was given by the Frenchman, Roget (of Thesaurus fame), in his paper *The Persistence of Vision With Regard to Moving Objects* in 1824. Another Frenchman, Louis Daguerre demonstrated a complete, practical photographic process in 1839. In 1882, the Frenchman, Dr. E.J. Marey, developed a 'photographic gun' with which he took a series of pictures of birds in flight and this naturalistic motif recurred soon after with the American Eadweard Muybridge's experiments recording the motion of horses. By 1888, an American, George Eastman had developed a cheap, flexible, unbreakable celluloid film, and marketed a portable Kodak camera which brought photography to everyone. In England, there was the strange, controversial William Friese-Greene, who, according to some, single-handedly solved the problems of photographing and projecting motion picture film. All of these men helped to pave the way for a machine that would record reality accurately and reproduce it at a later time, but the most important synthesizing work was done by three: Edison, and his assistant Dixon in America; R.W. Paul in England, and the Lumiere brothers in France. Edison and Dixon achieved moving pictures (even with accompanying sound) in 1889, but Edison's stubborn decision to market them only in his peep-show, penny-in-the-slot kinetoscopes, and his subsequent failure to take out an
international patent led to the pirating and expansion of his idea into projected motion pictures for mass audiences by R.W. Paul in London and the Lumieres in Lyons. The first public screenings took place in Paris and London in late 1895 - early 1896.\(^1\)

2. MELBOURNE, AUGUST 1896

It was nine o'clock on Saturday 22 August 1896, in the old Melbourne Opera House.\(^2\) There had been a crowded but uneventful vaudeville programme for the first half of the show, and now it was after interval and the slightly bored patrons were resuming their seats. The curtain parted to reveal a screen similar to those used for screening limelight slides. The chatter continued; slides were old-hat for the blase Melbourne audiences.\(^3\) Soon, however, as the

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2. See Argus, 23 October 1896, for full times and details of the acts at the Melbourne Opera House which ran from the 7.50 p.m.overture until interval at 8.25p.m. Hertz's act ran for 20 minutes after interval.

3. Melbourne audiences had been accustomed to seeing images on screens since the advent of the 'magic lantern' about 1860, see Jack Cato, The Story of the Camera in Australia p.115. 'Cycloramas', realistic stage settings, and the Edison Electric Parlours complete with their phonoscopes, vitascopes, X-rays and kinetoscopes all helped to prepare Australian audiences for the imaginative leap involved in comprehending motion pictures - they also in some way conditioned and created a 'music-hall' audience which the cinema could take over ready-made. For evidence of an Edison kinetoscope in Adelaide as early as January 1896 see The Advertiser, 1 January 1896, and from March 1896 at least, if not before, there was an 'Edison Electric Parlour' at 162 Pitt St. Sydney complete with gramophones and kinetoscopes (showing the Corbett fight, and a coloured film of Annabelle performing the serpentine dance). See; The Referee, 11 March 1896. The Bulletin, 14 March 1896; 17 October 1896. Sydney Morning Herald, 29 August 1896.
chandeliers dimmed, a strong light was thrown onto the screen, and
with a jerky yet distinct motion, shadows of men and vehicles started
to dance across the screen in a superb imitation of reality.
Fashionably dressed ladies with their equally immaculate escorts
strained forward in their seats to peer down at the stage where the
tiny screen was teeming with animated, soundless shadows of a London
street scene complete with buses, cabs and pedestrians all in life-
like motion. (4) On that night, the American magician, Carl Hertz,
became the first man to exhibit motion pictures to Australians.
It was less than a year after the first films had been shown to the
world by the Lumière brothers in Paris. (5)

From this beginning developed three themes which all have
prime significance in this work. Considering the later development

5. T. Ramsaye, op. cit., p.166. The first public exhibition by the
Lumières was 28 December 1895 at 14 Boulevard de Capucines, Paris,
but there had been earlier private screenings by them on 22 March
1895 at their Lyons factory, and 10 June 1895 at the Congres des
L'Union Nationale des Sociétés Photographiques de France. According
to Low & Manvell op. cit., p.36. the first British exhibition was
given by Trewey using a Lumière cinematograph at the Polytechnic,
London, 20 February 1896. This show was later transferred on 9 March
1896 to the Empire, Leicester Square, where it ran for eighteen
months. At the same time, Paul's machine ran for two years at the
London Alhambra where it had started on 25 March 1896. According
to Ramsaye op. cit., pp.226-234, the first public exhibition of Edison's
projector, the 'Vitascope' took place on 23 April 1896 at the
Broadway music hall of Koster & Bials, 34th St. Broadway, the present
site of the Macy store.
of world cinema, it seems appropriate that the man who should introduce motion pictures to this country was a magician. Films were to substitute for the fantasy that had once been provided by such entertainers, and it is therefore not surprising that so many magicians became fascinated with the dream-like fantasy of the primitive film. The most famous of all these conjuror film men was the brilliant Frenchman, Georges Melies, who included motion pictures in his act about the same time as Hertz, but, unlike that itinerant American, Melies had both the vision and the talent to make films which established new creative film standards around 1900. (6)

Again, it is prophetic of future trends in Australia, that the harbinger of motion pictures was an American. America in the 1880's and 1890's was a burgeoning frontier, both in a territorial and a technological sense. It was Thomas Edison, the 'Wizard of Menlo Park' who made the first machine for viewing moving pictures: the 'Kinetoscope'. (7) But the kinetoscope was bulky and only allowed one person at a time to view the short strips of film, so it was left to the French brothers Lumiere and the Englishman

6. See A. Knight op.cit.,p.23. J. Cato,op.cit.,p.118. and Low & Manvell op.cit.,pp.19, 45 & 78. Melies was a professional magician who early became intrigued with the movie camera and is famous for his combination of magic tricks and pantomime stories on film.

7. See T. Ramsaye op.cit.,passim for a eulogistic account of Edison's role in motion picture history. But there have been other books seriously questioning Edison's role and giving more credit to Dixon his assistant.
R.W. Paul to translate the kinetoscope principle to the screen, thus giving the world the 'cinematograph' or motion picture projector. Edison soon appreciated the projector's potential, and America with its huge domestic market eager for new technological thrills soon became one of the leading producers of motion pictures and motion picture equipment. Carl Hertz was merely the first of a stream of Americans to bring film entertainment - American entertainment - to this country, and he, like his successors, extracted his price.

It is also significant that Australian audiences had such an early taste of the new invention. Most countries of the world had to wait until the following year or even the one after before they were privileged to view motion pictures on the screen, but Australia, with its huge urban concentrations was on the touring circuits of most new theatrical acts, and this explains why Hertz spent eighteen

8. The Bulletin 12 September 1896 in satirical fashion succinctly defines the difference between the kinetoscope (peep-show) and cinematograph or kinematographe (projected image):

The difference between the new thing with the long name and the old thing with the name that isn’t much shorter is that the latter shows the dog-fight in miniature through a glass, while the former reflects it full size on a sheet, so that you see the whole disturbance just as it really was. If it is a really cordial and enthusiastic dog-fight the effect is very gratifying; in fact, it is almost as good as the real thing, barring the barking, and as you can have the same fight as often as you like, without wearing out the dogs, it makes the pleasure go further.
months in Australasia. An early experience of cinema viewing was also likely to lead to an early experience of film producing, and this is what happened; Australia became one of the first nations to use and experiment with the motion picture.

3. CARL HERTZ

Born the son of Russian immigrants in 1859 in San Francisco, Hertz began conjuring in the mining districts of California. He practised his art of illusion and fantasy in England and on the continent for forty years and interspersed it with several tours including three trips to Australia. Diminutive, with a big black moustache and lively piggy eyes, Hertz was the first in England to present Kolta's 'Vanishing Lady' trick, the 'Flying Birdcage' and the production of flowers from a paper-bag. He had the novel experience of presenting a trick in a room of the House of Commons to a committee that was inquiring into alleged cruelties in the training of performing canaries. His first visit to Australia, sponsored by George Musgrove was in 1892, but it was on his second visit in 1896 that his varied vaudeville programme included the novelty of moving pictures.\(^9\) In his egotistical autobiography, Tales of a Modern Mystery Merchant, he recounts how, after repeatedly taking R.W. Paul out to dinner, he finally cajoled the British

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9. See C. Hertz. *A Modern Mystery Merchant, the trials, tricks and travels of Carl Hertz* (London; Hutchinson & Co., Paternoster Row 1924). For an excellent photo of Hertz, see facing page. For a brief biographical comment, see also *Everyones* 16 December 1936.
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manufacturer into selling him one of the two machines then playing to packed houses at the Alhambra. It was in March 1896, the day before Hertz left for South Africa. The projector and a few hundred feet of miscellaneous film cost him £100; over the next few years on this tour he was to make £10,000 from showing it, and he became the first to exhibit moving pictures in South Africa, and New Zealand as well as Australia.

Once on board ship, Hertz, who confessed to ignorance of the machine's operations, managed after some delay, and with the engineer's help to rig up the first film show at sea, and its success was followed by others in South Africa. Unlike the Lumiere machines which could both show and take moving pictures, the machine Hertz bought could only exhibit films. Running short of new subjects for this projector in Johannesburg Hertz shrewdly bought twenty old kinetoscope films for £10. These films had different sprocket holes, so the magician had to laboriously cement new sprocket holes, onto the side of the film so that they could be run through his hand-driven movie projector. These subjects

11. The Referee, 15 December 1897: An extraordinary success dogged the show in every centre, hence the enormous financial result, certainly a record.

12. See C. Hertz op.cit., p.139. He claimed this was the first cinematograph show ever given at sea, on the S.S. Norman, approx. April 1896.

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supplemented his others and they were among the first films that delighted Australians in August 1896.

On 15 August, a week before the momentous premiere at the Melbourne Opera House, Harry Rickards, the energetic manager of the circuit, modestly billed Hertz as 'the Premier Prestidigitator and Illusionist of the World in his Conflux of Apparent Miracles including the Most Marvellous Illusion ever seen'. (14) This last cryptic comment did not refer to the as yet untried cinematograph, but to Hertz's pride and joy, a disappearing act called 'Stroubaika'. (15) This trick was such a secret that Hertz in his book recalls how earlier in England he had been 'forced' to marry his beautiful assistant, 'Mademoiselle D'Alton', to keep the secret of his act in the family. This little young lady in tights helped considerably.

14. Harry Rickards was a Melbourne theatrical agent and owner, entrepreneur and also singer on his own shows. He organized the Tivoli circuit of vaudeville, and in 1896 he had three groups, one at the Melbourne Opera House, the other at the Sydney Tivoli, and the third constantly on tour in the other Australian colonies. See Australasian, 10 October 1896, M.J. Wasson in his monograph, The Beginnings of Australian Cinema (Australian Film Institute, Carlton, 1964), p.2. is wrong when he states that Rickard's real name was Henry Benjamin Leete. An examination of the Sydney Morning Herald, 28 August 1896, reveals clearly that they were two separate individuals, and Leete was merely Rickard's manager. The Argus, 15 August 1896.

15. The Referee, 30 September 1896.
to relieve the tedium felt by theatre critics watching her husband's rather jaded illusions. The critics were at first uniformly hostile, since they felt that nothing new had been added to Hertz's programme since his last visit. (16) A week later they were pleasantly surprised when he unveiled the wonders of his cinematograph amid a great fanfare billed in the press as 'The Great London Sensation', and 'The Most Startling Scientific Marvel of the Age'. (17)

The first films shared the crowded bill that Saturday night with acts by England's Amy Dewhurst, vocalist; Harry Shine, comedian; Thomas Brew, baritone; Clarence Lydon, Australian song and dance man; Sonny Parlatto, a Dutch comedian; Will Whitburn, 'Melbourne's Greatest, favourite, versatile, original and eccentric comedian and end man'; the New Tivoli Minstrels and the Durham Dancers. (18) The films were shown by Hertz and were only

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16. *The Australasian*, 22 August 1896, See also almost identical critical comment in *The Bulletin*, 22 August 1896. It is possible that the public was bored with Hertz's tricks and so he trotted out his cinematograph to stimulate new interest. This would explain the otherwise puzzling fact that he went on alone without it for the first week, 15-22 August, and it was only on the second Saturday night that he first brought out his machine. Either he didn't think it was necessary until then, or it was broken down and took a week to repair, or it had not yet arrived, or been unpacked etc.? M. Wasson, *op.cit.*, p.1. also thinks that it was brought out as a last resort.

17. *The Argus*, 20 August 1896. 'Startling announcement....First production in Australia...Saturday next 22nd.August'.

18. For programme that first night, see *The Argus*, 22 August 1896.
on for a total of twenty minutes. (19) Each film was less than
100ft. long, and took less than five minutes to jerk its way
through the hand-operated, electrically-lit projector. (20) The
Bulletin in a playful mood likened Hertz to the Devil, and this
resemblance added to the cumulative effect of his show. It would
have been quite eerie to see Hertz standing at the back of the
dress circle, his face illuminated by the brilliant projector
light, as he slowly cranked the cinematograph handle and 'real'
figures spilled out onto the screen. (21)

p.118: 'up to 1901, Charles Pathe, Gaumont and Lumiere made only
60ft. and 75ft. films of incidents, documentaries and items
of reportage, such as the arrival of a Royal visitor to
Paris. Each 60ft. of film lasted only one and a half
minutes on the screen, and no audience could stand more
than 15 minutes of them'.

20. There were generally no take-up spools in these first few
years, the film was allowed to spill out into a basket and it was
re-wound later. Generally, the illuminant used in these early
cinematographs, as it had been in the 'magic lanterns', was 'Limelight',
but in his autobiography Hertz mentions the electrical trouble he
had on the ship bringing the machine out, so it is likely his machine
was in fact lit by electricity, although it was still hand driven.
'Limelight' was the illuminant used in the slide projectors and the
ever motion picture projectors - since it could be set up anywhere,
in outlying districts without electricity. It was made by
generating two gases under pressure; hydrogen and oxygen on the spot
and mixing them in a special burner. This in turn was directed on to
a hard lime which became incandescent. This method proved much more
effective than the four acetylene burners previously used, and could
be carried by the projectionist. They were, however, quite dangerous,
as sometimes the gases would be placed under too much pressure and
explode, while the close proximity of a naked flame near the highly
inflammable nitrate film was another constant danger.

21. The Bulletin, 27 February 1897:
'...of late he/Hertz/ has made a profound impression on the
Bulletin by his resemblance to the Devil. He is younger and
better looking than the other Dark Gentleman, but the
likeness sets one thinking..'
4. THE EXPERIENCE OF CINEMA

While their titles sound mundane today, Melbourne audiences of the late nineteenth century sat transfixed at the astonishing reproduction of reality in such films as a seascape; 'a flowing tide and a rocky foreshore', a scene from the stage play 'Trilby', Westminster Bridge, a London street scene 'showing hansom, market wagons, buses, and coster carts threading their way at various rates of speed through a maze of traffic, the drivers gesticulating and apparently reviling each other.' (22)

Other short subjects included the Kempton Park races, a military review, skirt dances, acrobats and 'humorous pictures of everyday life'. The three best views, namely, 'Seascape', 'Westminster Bridge' and a 'London Street', created such an uproar of applause that they had to be shown twice. (23)

Audience reaction generally was immediate and enthusiastic, while the critics were full of praise for the novelty. The press reviews of the time evoked the profound effect moving pictures had

22. The Leader, 29 August 1896.
23. The Referee, 23 September 1896, and The Argus, 31 August 1896. See also C. Hertz op.cit., p.151. Hertz's films at the Opera House was so popular that he was summoned and fined on three different occasions for permitting overcrowding.
upon the imagination of Victorian audiences. There is a queer mixture in these reviews of the naïve and the primitive, and reading them today takes us back to a time when Man did not have his senses so continually stimulated to the extent of unfeeling satiety. Indeed, so great was the effect of these early motion pictures on the unaccustomed eye, that by a process of psychological transference other senses beside sight were simultaneously stirred. These critics wrote about a visual soundless medium in an almost tactile aural way; they hadn't just seen these films, in their imagination they had heard and felt them too. The Australasian critic of the time, for instance, began his review with a poignancy we can still recognize today, when he pointed out that these were not mere 'pictures', but an actual 're-enactment of the scenes reproduced'. He described the London street scenes in minute detail, and when he came to the seascape he revealingly used the adjective 'coolly' in a context which conjures up impressions of the tactile experience watching the films evoked in him: 'A boat moves slowly shoreward over a calm sea; its sails are swiftly lowered, its male occupants leap out bare-legged, and with the waves lapping coolly about their feet proceed to carry their lady passengers ashore'. (24) This same unconscious

24. The Australasian, 10 October 1896.
participation recurred in too many reviews to be dismissed as mere journalistic licence. When Hertz later showed the films in Sydney, the Sydney Morning Herald's usually conservative theatre critic demonstrated how much his ear had been affected by what his eye saw when he innocently described a military subject in the following terms: 'Then the 96th Regiment of French infantry appeared swinging along a country-road, with valises strapped on shoulders, and all in 'marching order' as the drums and bugles marked the ceaseless tramp of a thousand feet'. Of course in the quiet theatre there were no bugles and no 'ceaseless tramp of a thousand feet'.

So vivid was the impression of reality that on occasions the audience grew apprehensive. In one show run by the MacMahon Brothers in Sydney, the film was run backwards and the audience was horrified by a carriage which appeared in the far distance and backed furiously towards them. It grew larger and larger until at last it was practically life-size and it seemed as if it would burst right out of the picture and run over the crowd. The front people instinctively ducked aside as it came towards them. Then it vanished, no one knew where, and the

'people who thought they were dead breathed again and felt as if they had just escaped a tramcar'. (26) On another occasion, the audience experienced something of the nausea of seasickness as they watched a boat rowing away through turbulent surf. Patrons were caught up in the action on the screen, and many found it hard to realize that they were not part and parcel of the moving panorama. (27)

In November 1896, the same Australasian critic was still wallowing in the total experience of cinema;

There is a wonderful vivacity and motion in all the scenes depicted from the expressive pantomime and extraordinary facial contortions of the conjuror performing his hat trick to the bathing scene, wherein a string of men dive rapidly from a stage of planking into the sea and flounder out again, or that other seascape in which a boat rows away through the surf with a motion almost sufficient to afflict the spectators with nausea. (28)

Audiences watching 'Cinerama' for the first time during the nineteen-fifties re-experienced something of this artificially induced nausea as they watched the ride in the 'big dipper' sequence.

27. It is interesting to note that Jean Luc-Godard has a sequence in his film Les Carabiniers (1961) where one of the soldier-brother-heroes finds a film show more real than reality and leaves his seat to try and get into a bath with a beautiful girl on the screen.
where the camera had been strapped to the front of a racing and plunging Coney Island 'big dipper'. (29) The experience in the theatre was distinctly real and so were the symptoms of 'big dipper' rides, evident in the number of people who had to look away or leave their seats. In 1896, uninitiated audiences in Melbourne and Sydney felt the same effect, but then it was from a standard screen and a jerky film that had been taken at silent speed by a stationary camera. It was also soundless and in black and white. The Sydney Daily Telegraph critic wrote: 'It is a glorified magic lantern with living, moving pictures, and scenes of everyday life for pictures, and the effects obtained are delightful, though at times the life-like movements give rise to an uncanny weird feeling in the spectator'. (30)

At this same period English audiences panicked when a film of a train steaming into a station was shown, and even as late as 1903 when Edwin S. Porter's American classic The Great Train Robbery had a close-up scene where the 'baddie' pointed his revolver.

29. Cinerama was one of the 'wide screen' versions of modern motion pictures developed during the nineteen fifties as an answer to T.V. but the principle of involving two or three cameras photographing simultaneously an area span of 140 degrees (almost as wide as normal human eyesight) was first demonstrated as early as 1934 by Fred Waller. See A. Knight op.cit.,p.269.

30. Quoted in advert in the Brisbane Courier, 26 September 1896.
directly at the audience and fired, many were seen to duck at each
performance. (31) For the people of the time, Cinema was super-real;
they had to learn to see things in a new way.

In fact, cinema audiences in Australia, as elsewhere,
manifested all the symptoms of little children delighting in a new
novelty. With their nineteenth century faith in the photograph
which 'could not lie' these audiences were immediately intrigued
by the Film's seeming realism and found in this realism its
principal charm. (32) At first they suspended their disbelief and
believed everything they saw on the screen, even that which was
patently impossible:

'Realism could scarcely be more vividly portrayed [sic] for
instance, than in one of the pictures shown on the screen
last night. It represented the executing of Mary Queen of
Scots. Amid a group of armed men, the hapless Queen
attended by one of her ladies in waiting walks with royal
dignity to the scaffold. Her head and neck coverings are
removed by the attendant; the Queen kneels for a few
moments in prayer, and then places her head on the block.
The executioner does his ghastly work, the head rolls off,
and is lifted by the axeman and held aloft.' (33)

31. A. Knight op.cit., p.22.
33. Brisbane Courier, 26 September 1896. The Execution of Mary Queen
of Scots (Edison, 1893). For details of this film which was originally
produced by Edison for use in his kinetoscope and transformed by
some film pirate (perhaps Hertz?) to a projected picture, see
A. Knight op.cit., p.22.
Naturally, such literal naïveté did not last long, and there was later a backlash of ire as critics discovered how easy it was for the motion picture camera to deceive the eye. The Bulletin critics of 1900, for example, delighted in pointing out the 'fakes' in films of the Boer War, with some of the vehemence of revengeful children. (34)

Like children, they would delight in seeing the same thing over and over again if it captured their imagination; thus the weary operators of the hand-cranked projectors often had to respond to repeated encores for favourite films. This was an advantage for the first showmen who had to buy their films outright at 3d. or 6d. per foot, irrespective of subject or quality, and 'run them into the ground' if they were to show any profit. In the early days they could afford to show the same films week after week because audiences never tired of seeing their old favourites again:

34. See for example The Bulletin, 17 February 1900 and 3 March 1900.
'Some of the figures that travel London Bridge are now regarded as dear old friends, especially the man who looks over his shoulder, when he gets halfway across the picture, as though startled by the roar from the gallery. Some of the 'gods' pay sixpence two or three times a week, just for the pleasure of shouting at that particular man and seeing him turn his head.' (35)

The first 'sound effects' were thus those supplied spontaneously by audiences; months later, perceptive managers like Harry Rickards in Melbourne would hire professional 'sound effects' men and musical accompanists so that the film's inherent realism could be heightened. The Silent Film was never really mute.

These early cinema-going fanatics or 'fans' also had their favourite film 'stars', like the popular American danseuse 'La Loie Fuller' who appeared 'life-sized in about 25 colours, amid a whirlwind of ankles and gaudy skirts, and with wild black hair.' (36)

35. The Bulletin, 12 September 1896. See also The Picture Show, 16 August 1919. Even 23 years afterwards the father of this writer could still vividly remember scenes of London Bridge and the man who turned back as if in response to a whistle. It is amazing the vivid impression these films made on their early audiences. One old lady of 85 wrote to the writer of this thesis and described in detail a film she saw as a child before the turn of the century in South Australia - it showed dogs and cats running into a machine at one end, and coming out the other as sausages.

36. Bulletin, 14 November 1896. Some early films were hand tinted.
She had many encores and went flouncing through her dance routine before the delighted masculine audiences without ever showing signs of tiring. The Bulletin's Melbourne correspondent regretted the passing of Hertz's films in September because he had become 'conscious of a growing attachment for one fine girl foot-passenger in the Bridge scene' and hoped to see her again at a later date.

* * *

The primitive cinematograph with its trying downward flicker, and frequent stops for reel changes, not only excited expressions of awe and delight, it also stimulated the nineteenth century faith in science and progress in quite an extraordinary manner. There were even some commentators who looked forward confidently to the golden time half a century later when sound films would be taken for granted. 'We wonder what next', the

37. Argus, 26 September 1896. Note T. Ramsaye op.cit., p.253, where he says the real La Loie Fuller never appeared before Edison's camera at all - this film starred her less famous sister, and was the first 'instance of the use of a screen double'. Note also that La Loie's serpentine dance was a famous one at the time, and had many imitators including the one in Melbourne given by Miss Bessie Clayton at the Princess Theatre a month or so before. See also M.J. Wesson op.cit., p.3, for an account of the hand-colouring of this film by Mr. R.H.B. Brangwin of the staff of Baker & Rouse and his daughter.
Australasian critic wrote:

'Perhaps we shall one day combine with the cinematograph an improvement upon the present phonograph. Then we shall be able to hear the cries of the lucky winners as Persimmon gallops home, the murmur of the sea as it ripples upon the beach, and the roar of the London streets as vehicles and men scud across the canvas.' (38)

One even prophesized television:

'What is badly wanted now is some device whereby the machine can be connected with the telegraph and made to represent events while they happen, so that the public can sit in a theatre on Cup Day, and see the race in spectral guise on a white background as it progresses. This improvement is bound to come along sooner or later and when it does the 'graph will have a great future before it.' (39)

The republican Bulletin in typically irreverent fashion prognosticated yet another future use for the new medium; far from simply entertaining, films would soon be used to stimulate colonial patriotism; 'The sheet of the future will display a faithful representation of the bald-headed King Albert Edward moving his lips in prayer for the welfare of this distant land, while an assistant phonograph pours forth the words from a funnel.' (40)

38. The Australasian, 10 October 1896.
40. Ibid., 5 September 1896.
In fact, in this jingoistic age of Imperialism, some of the earliest and strongest manifestations of spontaneous sentiment occurred when military subjects were shown or when Royalty was portrayed. In November 1896, the Australasian reviewer took pains to reprimand the audience who had so unloyally cheered when some French troops were shown on manoeuvres, and the theatre orchestra had played the 'Marseillaise'. Did they not remember that France was Britain's traditional enemy? 'The Australian audience cheer as if Jena, Austerlitz and Borodino were national memories of their own', he fumed. (41) A year later, when scenes from the London Jubilee procession were shown in Melbourne 'The Opera House audience cheered wildly for some minutes at this spectacle, and then, moved by a common impulse, burst into the National Anthem'. (42) Later still, after the turn of the century, films of Queen Victoria's funeral were soberly and interminably shown throughout Australia to millions of grief-stricken subjects. (43) Others in those early audiences were soberly appreciative of the Film's potential both as a teacher for enlightening the masses, and for shrinking distance. 'Well may we begin to realize that though

41. Australasian, 14 November 1896.
42. Ibid., 21 August 1897.
43. See The Bulletin, 23 March 1901; 27 April 1901; 18 May 1901.
many thousands of miles from the great hub of civilization, thanks to the enterprise of such men as Harry Rickards we are kept thoroughly up to date by the advent of a Hertz with this triumphant invention'.

At a crucial time for Australians, just before voting their approval of Federation, audiences were soon to witness vicariously and shortly after their actual occurrence, such events as the Boxer Rebellion, the Spanish-American conflict, the Boer War and the Sino-Japanese War. Such realistic films shattered the complacency of an isolated community and enhanced the desire for a strong national government.

Finally, the Bulletin thought the new medium’s greatest boon would be in showing politicians and others what they looked like to those forced to bear with them.

This latest kind of 'graphe enables any action or set of actions to be photographe and reproduced life-size at any time afterwards, so that the person who did it can stand outside of himself, and see himself doing it, and thereby realize what an awful spectacle he looked when he did it. Therefore, the 'graphe has a great mission to serve in this world, and deserves encouragement.

44. The Referee, 30 September 1896.
45. The Bulletin, 26 September, 1896.
5. THE MELBOURNE AND SYDNEY FILM SCENE, 1896.

Carl Hertz stayed at the Melbourne Opera House with his now wildly-successful magical-cinematograph act from 22 August until 17 September when he went to Sydney and then on to Brisbane. The first films lasted him a fortnight since new subjects were not added to the Hertz repertoire until 5 September. The additions included 'Gaiety Co. Ballet', 'Boxing Cats', 'Negro Dancers', 'Serpentine Dance' (by a dog), 'Sword Combat on Horseback', and 'a Burlesque Boxing Match'. These titles, which illustrate the factual flavour of the early film, with just a touch of comedy beginning to creep in, were among those he took with him to Sydney and Brisbane.

By the end of September 1896, cinematograph machines seem to come from nowhere and to proliferate throughout Melbourne and Sydney. While Hertz was away in Sydney, Rickards was doing a roaring trade in Melbourne at the Opera House with what his advertisement in the Argus termed 'a second edition of the

46. The Argus, 31 August 1896, when the Police were called in to keep the passageways clear; also 17 September 1896. The Referee, 23 September 1896. Brisbane Courier, 10 October 1896. 47. Argus, 5 September 1896.
marvellous cinematograph' on 25 September. (48) Since Hertz was also showing films on that day six hundred miles away, Rickards had at least two machines under his control. (49) Yet, even so, Rickards and Hertz were not the first to show films in Sydney.

It is perhaps significant for future film developments in the rival capitals, that Sydney had to wait two weeks after Melbourne before it had a chance of witnessing the new phenomenon. On 8 August 1896, long before Hertz had installed himself in the Melbourne Opera House, a *Bulletin* journalist had discovered that a cinematograph was bound for Sydney on board the incoming *Oroya*, with a second machine to follow. From ensuing events it is likely that the importers were the theatrical MacMahon Brothers. Cables from London concerning the success of moving pictures had already whetted the Sydney public's appetite, so the *Bulletin* could justifiably predict

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48. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 September 1896, *Argus*, 25 September 1896, 'with entirely new pictures'. Note a film of 'Chirgwin, the White-eyed Kaffir', an entertainer who later came to Australia, was among those shown at the Opera House by Rickards while Hertz was in Sydney, see *Argus*, 26 September 1896.

49. The *Argus*, 24 October 1896, in an advert, Rickards announced that he had negotiated directly with Paul, who had sent out 'this very latest machine and views' under the control of a Mr. W. Baxter 'direct from the inventor's laboratory'.
that 'the introducer is confident of a boom'.

Sydney's first taste of the novelty was provided by Joseph MacMahon at the Sydney Criterion before 12 September 1896. According to A.J. Perier, an early film pioneer in Sydney, the MacMahons had a Gaumont-Denemey projector, a machine that was both a camera and a projector like the Lumiere camera; the difference being that it took a larger size film. Mervyn Wasson in his monograph The Beginnings of Australian Cinema speculates that the MacMahons either had no raw film stock, or had come to an understanding with the Lumiere agents (who arrived in Sydney shortly afterwards) not to compete by making their own local films. Possibly they were frightened off by threats to prosecute imitations of the Lumiere cinematograph which its manufacturers claimed had been patented. In any case, there is no further press mention of a MacMahon screening until 25 September, when they became the first

50. Sydney Morning Herald, 22 August 1896, a cable from London reported the cinematograph's success on the same day that Hertz opened at the Melbourne Opera House. The Bulletin, 8 August 1896.

51. Ibid, 12 September 1896, 'one night last week'.

to exhibit moving pictures in Brisbane. Soon after this triumph they returned to Sydney and settled down to become one of Australia's first permanent exhibitors.

The MacMahon's brief preview served to increase the Sydney public's enthusiasm and ensured Hertz's success at the Opera House the following week. In the same week that Hertz actually began screening films in Sydney, another cinematograph arrived in the possession of the Lumiere agent, Marius Sestier. Fifty years later, Jack Cato told the background story regarding this momentous arrival in his book *The Story of the Camera in Australia*, just as he had been told it in 1910 by Barnett with whom he worked in London. In January 1896, Barnett, fashionable photographer and urbane personality of Falk's Studios (Sydney), had gone to England on vacation, and returning via India, he fortuitously met a Monsieur Marius Sestier in a Bombay Hotel. Sestier was one of the legion of Lumiere operators sent out to all parts

53. Brisbane *Courier*, 25 September 1896. They gave a private screening for the Press on Friday 25 September, and their first public exhibition on Saturday 26 September.
of the world in the first year of moving pictures to send back film of exotic events in faraway places. (56) Climate and incompetence had combined, however, to make the Frenchman's work below standard, and he was still bristling from a head office reprimand when he met the Australian. Barnett instantly saw the potential awaiting such a machine in Australia, and according to Cato, a deal was sealed then and there to bring Sestier, his wife, and the cinematograph to Sydney. (57)

Sestier duly arrived with the "only authorized cinematograph direct from the Lumiere Manufactory". (58) His arrival (the previous week) was announced in the Sydney Morning Herald on Tuesday 22 September, although by calling him M. Sistier they mis-spelt his name. (59) Sestier and his backers, Barnett and

56. Bulletin, 10 October 1896, Lumiere's world total of 23 machines were estimated to return £5,000 royalty monthly at this time.


58. Sydney Morning Herald, 22 September 1896, the advert announced his arrival 'from Paris,[sic] bringing with him the only authentic cinematograph direct from the Lumiere factory'. If this is true then Cato's India story is false; but it may have been public boasting by Barnett to make Sestier's appearance more sensational. Wherever he came from, or by what arrangement, the significant thing about his arrival was that he brought some unexposed film with him, with which he could take the first Australian films.
Photo by Falk.

MARIUS SESTIER, sole representative in Australasia of Lumière's Cinematographe.

PLATE 2

Source: Bulletin, 10 October 1896.
Photo by Falk.

MARIUS SESTIER, sole representative in Australasia of Lumière's Cinematographe.

PLATE 2

Source: Bulletin, 10 October 1896.
Westmacott were chagrined to find that he had been beaten to Australia by Hertz, and although they immediately held a private viewing of the cinematograph on 18 September they could not find a venue for a few days and Hertz beat them to the first public screenings in Sydney too, on the 19 September. In an interview with the Bulletin Sestier showed his displeasure by growling that he carried 'power of attorney to fight the question regarding infringement of the title: 'cinematograph' which he claimed had been registered by the Lumière Brothers before there were any rival machines in the field.

Hertz failed to respond to the threat and went on his merry way, so with a few vague mutterings Barnett and Sestier got down to the serious business of establishing the 'only authorized cinematograph' in a specially converted ex-shop in Pitt St. opposite

59. Sydney Morning Herald, 22 September 1896. Note that Sestier gave his first private exhibition of the cinematograph on 18 September at the Lyceum Theatre, and so beat Hertz to Sydney.

60. But since both MacMahon and Sestier gave private screenings in Sydney, Hertz can still claim to have been the first to have given public screenings in the two capitals.

61. The Bulletin, 10 October 1896.
the Lyceum theatre.\(^{(62)}\) This 'Salon Lumiere' in 'commodious and central premises at 237 Pitt Street near Market Street', became Australia's first 'cinema' when it was opened on Monday 28 September 1896, since it was the first building especially set aside purely for the exhibition of motion pictures.\(^{(63)}\)

Films were displayed on a large screen surrounded by a 'richly moulded frame' and at least on several occasions musical accompaniment to the films (perhaps the first in Australia?) was provided by the Lyceum orchestra under the skilled direction of Mr. W.J. Rice.\(^{(64)}\) The classic Lumiere programme that had been

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\(^{(62)}\) Sydney Morning Herald, 24 September 1896. '...a commodious and central premises...which have been specially fitted and completed in order to afford the Sydney public...', Sydney Morning Herald, 26 September 1896, '...at premises nearly opposite the Lyceum theatre...'.

\(^{(63)}\) Sydney Morning Herald, 28 September 1896.

\(^{(64)}\) For a description of the Lyceum - 1,600 seats, lit by electricity - offered for lease in October 1896, see Argus, 17 October 1896, then owned by George Hill. Note that the Lyceum when leased by Cozens Spencer in 1904 was to become the first permanent cinema in Australia, and it has become the longest-running cinema house in Australia, films being shown there still today, although the theatre has a new name and has been unrecognizably remodelled on many occasions. The irony of this achievement is that the ownership for the first few decades of the twentieth century was fiercely religious, and there were often clashes between the management and Spencer.
the first ever screened in the world, ten months before in Paris, was re-shown, and the exit of the employees from the Lumière factory in Paris, the arrival of horsemen and lady cyclists in Hyde Park, London, and the movements of military troops on parade proved the most popular for the Australian audiences. These were just some of the '150 subjects' from which 12 were to be shown daily at seven half-hourly sessions beginning at 1.30 p.m. and finishing around 10.00 p.m. (65) The cost was one shilling, a substantial sum for the time when seats in the legitimate theatres could be had for 3d and 6d, so it proves the new entertainment's popularity. (66) The shop was small for public exhibition, but in terms of cash it held £17 per session, and as there were seven sessions, and the place was always full, the takings according to Cato's calculations were around £700 per week. (67)

The extra long Sydney Morning Herald review of the first Lumière screening is curiously revealing of the current preconceptions and the impact moving pictures made upon the Sydney

65. Sydney Morning Herald, 28 September 1896.
66. A full entertainment was offered at the Tivoli, including moving pictures for the same amount.
67. J. Cato, op.cit., p.116
audience. It began by saying that the large audience applauded every scene with delight, but that in summing up the attractions of the show, the honour had to be accorded to those pictures that had the magic power of the famous table cloth in the Arabian Nights which transported all those who stood upon it to foreign lands. For this reason it was the military scenes that took the spectators into a novel and forbidding environment. Three scenes in particular caught the reviewer's imagination and for a moment made him forget that the pictures were not accompanied by sound. But if he temporarily forgot that the film was silent, he did not let his imagination supply colour because he made a special point of mentioning how impossible it was to identify some of the British troops without the colour of their uniforms. Another popular view was of workmen demolishing a wall. When the supports were at last hewn away, and the wall fell, a little boy amongst the audience summed up the general impression by screaming out 'I never saw such a dust in my life!' and the laughter was mingled with the applause. The realism of the film always impressed the first audiences, as in this session when the Cologne Express seemed to run straight towards the footlights and then appeared to glide slowly round upon a curve, whilst the porters opened and closed doors and passengers passed in and out. (68)

68. Sydney Morning Herald, 28 September 1896.
Because the 'Salon' was not a 'music-hall' with all the evil connotations of such places, it could and did make a snob appeal to the 'better class of patrons' who would not normally frequent such places as the vaudeville Tivoli where Hertz was nightly exhibiting his rival films. On 16 October, Sestier and Barnett captured vice-regal patronage when they were specially visited by the Governor, Lady Hampden and suite. The Sydney Morning Herald reported that 'the Governor before leaving expressed to M. Sestier his admiration of the pictures shown'.

Such approval and endorsement led to followers and a few days afterwards, the cinema was visited by the Primate, the Bishop of Newcastle, the Bishop of Goulburn, the Rev. Father Ryan, and a large contingent from Riverview College. In November, Sestier and Barnett opened a 'Salon Cinematograph' at 266 Collins Street, Melbourne, but with these two exceptions, most films before 1900 were shown in the legitimate stage theatres as just one of many other vaudeville acts, and their typical audience had already been formed for them by the music halls over the previous decade.

69. Ibid., 17 October 1896.

70. Ibid., 21 October 1896. Even by 29 September, it was evident that the Lumiere cinematograph had been '...a gigantic success.' Sydney Morning Herald, 29 September 1896.
From as early as 3 October, the Bulletin declared that Sydney was gradually going mad over the new invention, and that the signs were that the cinematograph was going to rage virulently for some time. Hertz's departure from Sydney was announced on 9 October, but presumably the arrival of a fresh lot of films from London delayed him, because on 10 October, 'his positively last six nights' were advertised, and the new films were announced; 'For the first time in Australia. The Prince's Derby. Persimmon Wins! An exact reproduction of the English derby, H.R.H. Prince of Wales' horse, Persimmon, winning—and the crowd swarming the course after the race. The London and Paris Express. Hampstead Heath on a Bank holiday. Morris Cronin etc.' This new show of Hertz's renewed his flagging support, and was written up the following Monday, 12 October. His show must have been a blow to Sestier, especially since one of the new series was an English version of the famous Lumiere Arrival of a train. But the most important addition, however, was the finish of the 1896 English Derby. To the horse-mad Australians this film held the greatest attraction. The critics saw this picture as wonderful and described it in minute detail:

71. The Bulletin, 3 October 1896.
72. Sydney Morning Herald, 9 October 1896; 10 October 1896.
73. Ibid., 12 October 1896.
'By means of the unique photographs we critically examine literally every step of the Prince's Derby. First of all we discern the leading horse in the distance, then as the horses draw nearer we can realize that the Memorable Derby of 1896 was at the finish a contest between the favourites only. Earwig being quite behind. The hotly contested race was won by Persimmon with Watts up. Next is the beginning of the inevitable rush across the course. Notice the policeman in the foreground; one can see his head turning around as the great river of humanity has grown into a veritable sea of human beings each wild with excitement and delight at having witnessed the most popular horse race of modern times.

The close scrutiny paid to the race, and the comment about Earwig presages the use of the 'photo-finish' to determine race winners, and interesting too is the use of the term 'pictures' in an Argus review of this film. There was also a significant split up of the film into neat divisions, or scenes, foreshadowing 'acts' on film: '(1) The Coming in Sight, (2) The Struggle Commences, (3) Sir Frusquin Makes His Effort, (4) The Last Horse coming in and the crowd swarming the course'. The audience insisted on having this and several other pictures repeated, and Hertz took careful note of the popularity of a horse-race among his Australian audience. This English film was the direct antecedent of the Melbourne Cup, (1896).

74. The Argus, 24 October 1896; 29 September 1896. See also The Australasian, 17 October 1896.
In this same Sydney Morning Herald report of the 12 October, Hertz let the cat out of the bag by announcing airily to Sydney generally, and incidentally to his competitors, that he had many high hopes for the future. 'It is understood that Mr. Carl Hertz hopes soon to receive a series of coloured pictures for the cinematograph. He is importing a machine for taking the pictures himself, with the intention of using it to record the finish of the Melbourne Cup, to be shown afterwards in England'. (75) In both of these ambitions Hertz was to be beaten by rivals.

Coloured moving pictures were first shown in Australia on the kinetoscopes in the Sydney Edison Electric Parlour in October 1896, and later that month on the screen by the MacMahon Brothers who had a film of 'Loie Fuller' especially hand coloured. Hertz was also beaten to the filming of the Melbourne Cup by Marius Sestier who may have received the inspiration for this scoop from the newspaper boast by the magician a month before the big event. (76)

75. Sydney Morning Herald, 12 October 1896.
76. Ibid., 17 October 1896. A coloured film of Annabelle performing the 'serpentine dance' was on view at the Edison Electric Parlour, 162 Pitt St. under managership of W.J.N. Oldershaw: 'every movement faithfully portrayed, and by a new and ingenious process, the natural colours of the face, hair, etc. and the beautiful tints of the drapery are shown, giving an absolutely life-like effect to the reproduction'. Note that even the month before, J.F. MacMahon had taken some coloured films with him to Brisbane; Courier, 26 September 1896. See footnote, M.J. Wasson op.cit., p.3. for an explanation of how MacMahon had the films coloured by Mr. R.H.B. Brangwin and his daughter in Sydney even before Pathé.
On 15 October Hertz left Sydney, and after a one night stand in Brisbane, he returned to Melbourne. (77) He left the Sydney field to Jimmy MacMahon who departed from Brisbane on 10 October and installed himself by fair means or foul, in the cinema at 237 Pitt St. previously occupied by Sestier. Sestier in turn took time off to go to Melbourne and film the Cup race, and when he returned he booked into the Criterion for a time and then moved to 478-George Street, and opened a new cinema, mainly for the purpose of exhibiting his Cup film, from 19 December on into the new year.

Back in Melbourne on 20 October, Hertz was again installed at the Opera House with new pictures, but soon he had to contend with opposition from no less than four other cinematograph shows. (78) At first he had Melbourne to himself as before, with the exception of the films at the Opera House being run by a Mr. W. Baxter.

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77. See Sydney Morning Herald, 13 October 1896; 15 October 1896 - he had been in Sydney about six weeks. See also Hertz, op.cit., p.153, and note that during his stay in Australia he went out to Charter Towers in Qld. and to the mining fields of W.Aust. with 20 camels and 6 assistants, plus his wife.

78. See Australasian, 7 November 1896. There were five cinematographs in operation in Melbourne at this time: Hertz at the Opera House with a mixed vaudeville bill, the Lumiere programme given by Sestier at the Princess Theatre after the third act of the revised musical 'Djin, Djin', another at the Theatre Royal before 'Henry V', the Vitacope at the Athenæum Hall, and another machine lower down Collin St. upon the block.
'direct from R.W. Paul's laboratory' under contract to Rickards, but within a few days, there appeared a series of disturbing advertisements announcing the coming of several other competitors, all anxious to exploit the holiday crowds thronging to Melbourne for the Cup festival. The first to arrive was a Mons. G. Nymark with his Cinematograph Perfectionne at 266 Collins St, next door to Mullens, opposite the National Bank, opening on 26 October.  

'Between Mullens and the Vienna Cafe. Gentlemanly ushers in attendance. And is in no way to be identified with any machines hitherto shown'.

These two machines were joined on Saturday 31 October by an American machine - the Vitascope - at the Athenaeum Hall, 'invented and perfected by the Electrical genius of the Century, Thos. Edison whose name is a guarantee for all that is modern,

79. The Argus, 26 October 1896.

80. Ibid., 23 October 1896 - announced to appear 'in a few days'. See also Ibid., 24 October 1896. This tiny theatre was criticised by the Bulletin, 21 November 1896 in the following terms: 'The cinematograph is responsible for some exhibition of colossal 'cheek' by amateur showmen. A Cine-Salon - a long, thin, ill-ventilated room - was opened in Collin St. Melbourne, the other week. The entertainment consisted of 16 views displayed in a small frame, very little better, as works of photography, than those which Rickards includes in his variety entertainment. Yet the public were asked to pay 1s. a time for the periodical reproduction of these 16 second-rate samples of stale novelty, whilst the same coin would buy an ampietheatre seat at the Princess's where the vastly superior Lumiere cinematograph is given away with 'Djin Djin'."
startling, unique in electrical surprises." (81) This exhibition was fresh from America and was to be presented with every attention to proper detail, illustrating living pictures and moving scenes of actual life. Also at the Princess Theatre and incidental to the third act was to be exhibited 'The Marvel of the 19th Century, the Lumière Cinematograph invented and perfected by the Lumière Brothers of Paris and exhibited by Mons. M. Sestier.' The public was respectfully notified that this was the only authentic Lumière cinematograph ever brought to the Australian colonies, and its superiority over all others was to be clearly demonstrated. (82)

81. The Argus, 30 October 1896.
82. Ibid., 30 October 1896. See also the review in the Australasian, 14 November 1896 which was particularly delighted by the 'subjective camera' qualities of the films. Here the camera acted as the audience, and the effect was reversed, instead of usually looking out on the world objectively, it seemed at times that the world was looking in at them. E.g.:

'A novel feature about the Lumière cinematograph also is the humorous style in which the audience are allowed to see that the views have been taken for show purposes. A company of Cuirassiers charge directly to the foreground of the picture, rein their horses in splendid line, and salute the audience as they would the reviewing officer on the parade ground. In one busy street scene again attention is chiefly riveted upon the conduct of one passer-by, who stares with amused interest into the auditorium, and collects a little crowd of foot passengers in a corner of the canvas to emulate his impertinent curiosity. The impression produced by all this is slightly eerie...'

(my emphasis).

It is also significant that no mention is made in the Melbourne Press...
The following Saturday was 7 November and the
Cinematographe Perfectionne at 266 Collins St. had only one
more day to go. Perhaps it was a coincidence that on that
same day the Argus carried one of the first advertisements of
this kind: 'for sale, the cinematographe just arrived. A rare
opportunity is offered to an investor of acquiring this
wonderful exhibition. Can be shown anywhere without electric
light. Full particulars to bona-fide buyer. Letters only to
X-ray, 256 Bourke Street'. (83) This was also the last night
of the Vitascope, and the field was again left to the Rickard's
machines, and that of Sestier at the Princess. Before long,
however, both were to move off. Hertz had gone by 10 November,
and Djin Djin and the associated cinematograph came off on 20
November to make way for a new show. It was not until right at
the end of the year, on 20 December, that any cinematograph was
again advertised in Melbourne and then it was exhibited

of Sestier showing any of his own films, which according to Cato,
he had already taken around Sydney Harbour. Surely, if he had them
with him, he would have taken the opportunity to show the first
Australian-made films? Either they had not been developed yet, or
Sestier had not bothered to bring them with him, or he was saving
them up for an Australian programme later in the year, which is the
conclusion of M.J. Wesson, op.cit., p.5.

83. The Argus, 7 November 1896.
at the Rotunda Hall, opposite the Wax-works in Bourke Street. This was most likely a new entrepreneur (perhaps it was he who had bought the machine advertised for sale in November?), who entered the field to make the most of the summer holidays. The Director was 'Prof. Smythe' and he presented 'Life size living photographs, city, rural, seaside, sporting and courting scenes'. *(84)* This was just one of the many temporary shows that blew into a town one day and advertised the next for such things as; 'wanted immediately a professional pianist, fife and drum or brass band, and two handy men, also want to hire about 175 chairs for a week. Apply early to above address. Shows on the hour'. *(85)*

Adelaide people had to wait nearly two months after the first screening in Melbourne before they were privileged to see, motion pictures at the Theatre Royal on 15 October 1896, and these were shown by a gentleman called Frank St. Hill, who soon moved to the Beehive Buildings, King William Street, where he stayed until well into November. *(86)* Brisbane by this time was not so well

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86. *Adelaide Advertiser*, 15 October 1896; 19 October 1896, 20 October 1896; 23 October 1896; 9 November 1896.
served with the cinematograph. After its brief introduction by MacMahon in September, and the occasional show by Hertz, there were no exhibitions in November, and in fact all four capitals suffered a lack of cines during long periods of November and December 1896. By this time, the various showmen's supply of films had probably been exhausted, and each was forced to move from the capital cities to fresher provincial pastures.

6. FIRST AUSTRALIAN FILMS: THE MELBOURNE CUP, NOVEMBER 1896

The films shown in the Australian music-halls and primitive 'cinemas' before the turn of the century were all 'shorts'. They included 'scenics', 'documentaries', 'industrials', 'newsreel gazettes' and the occasional novel or 'comic' film. They were nearly

87. Brisbane Courier, 26 September 1896; 3 October 1896 - J.F. MacMahon still had his cinematograph at the Royal Arcade.

88. 'Shorts' ranging in length from 100-1000ft. and taking 5-20 minutes may be distinguished from 'features' which the British Film Institute defines as a film over 3,000 ft. or an hour long with a connected dramatic narrative. The early films were nearly all 'shorts' and they came in various categories. 'Scenics' were films of beauty spots and tourist attractions generally. 'Travelogues' were similar but generally included some dynamic impression of travel. 'Industrials' were films of factories and productive processes, while 'newsreels', or the earlier word 'gazettes' taken from the word used in pictorial magazines, represented current news items on film. 'Novel' or 'comic' films could be acted farces in front of the camera, or merely films exploiting the tricks of the motion camera like reversed action, stopped action and so on. 'Documentaries' is a larger term embracing all realistic films, long or short, and is usually differentiated from 'feature' films which are taken to be dramatic and non-realistic. However, more recently the distinction is being broken down by those who favour the term 'documentary feature' intending to describe a realistic film of over an hour long.
all imported from Europe or the east coast of the United States. Films longer than one reel (20 minutes duration - the average time for a vaudeville act) were unheard of, and most ran for only five minutes. Such a short actuality with no story was the Melbourne Cup (1896) which is generally taken to mark the start of film production in Australia.

Marius Sestier, the Lumière representative in Australia, had a machine that could both take and project moving pictures. While Hertz had been the first to exhibit moving pictures in Australia, the machine he possessed could not take motion pictures, and so the first Australian films were produced not by an American, but by a Frenchman, Marius Sestier, and they were of Australian pastimes and the national sport. According to Cato, in September-October 1896, Sestier took his camera down to Sydney harbour and made a series of short experimental pictures of the bays, the foreshores and the little paddle steamers. Then he photographed the people going aboard the ferry boats, his most successful being of the crowds arriving at Manly. Each of these films was about 60ft. in length. In his book, Cato describes how some of these first shots met with disaster in the developing room because of Sestier's ignorance. Arthur Peters, manager of Barnett's darkrooms constructed a drum upon which the film was wound and then rotated evenly through the chemicals. (89)

89. Cato, _op.cit._, p.116
From the lack of any mention in the daily press, it would seem that these 'first' Australian films were not shown immediately. When, later in the year, they were shown in Sydney, the Bulletin recounted how they had caused at least one male member of the audience some acute embarrassment. Innocently he had taken his wife to see the films and in the middle of one of them she loudly declared that she had recognized him disembarking from the Manly ferry with another woman. To be more convinced she saw the film fully six times with the aid of opera glasses, and although her husband denied everything and protested an 'extraordinary likeness', his alibi for that particular Sunday was far from watertight, so storms raged in the once contented home. As the Bulletin sententiously concluded; 'The possibilities of the cin. as a worker of mischief to supposedly upright people are great'.

Towards the end of October, Sestier and Barnett left their temporary 'Salon' in Sydney and travelled down to Melbourne to exhibit their films at the end of the third act of the musical 'Djin Djin' at the Princess Theatre, opening on 24 October. On 5 November they arrived early at Flemington and started to record scenes associated with the famous horse race. Sestier operated the camera.

while Barnett saw to the locations and organized prominent people to
walk before the camera. Distinguished visitors were in fact literally
'roped-in' to appear before the camera, and in his enthusiasm
Barnett himself appears several times in the picture. (91) The
Governor, Lord Brassey, was among those who were preserved forever
on celluloid by Sestier's camera. The Bulletin later recalled with
delight how, 'escape was impossible for the noble baron, so when he
found himself roped into taking a certain course, with the eye of the
apparatus gazing straight at him, he accepted the situation and
walked along somewhat like a cat on hot bricks, as shown in the
picture'. (92)

In some ways the result was disappointing since the film used
was too slow to take the horses galloping past the post and most of
the time was taken up by a monotonous stream of hats and umbrellas.

91. This is obvious in the film when shown today, but note the
comment by 'Lafayette' (from the inside) - probably A.O. Segerberg -
in The Bulletin, 23 March 1911:
'Sestier turned the handle, I steered the people away from the
front of the camera (everybody wanted to stop and look into
it) and Barnett 'stage managed' as he called it. He had got
himself up in a most conspicuous costume for the day. When
the machine started, he walked straight up to Mrs.Brough,
acting and talking for all he was worth; dropped her, raced
back through the crowd, grabbed Mrs. Maesmore Morris, marched
her up, tore back, and repeated the performance with the wife
of a Melbourne sharebroker. So three times in the minute and
a quarter you saw the same man march up to the camera with a
different lady!'

92. Ibid., 26 December 1896.
The *Bulletin* declared it an artistic success in some places and a moderate one in others since some of the pictures were painfully jumpy and others were hazy. However, the arrival of the train was considered 'beautifully realistic', and delightful also was the spectacle of Lady Brassey trying to rope in Newhaven with a blue ribbon while that noble animal pranced out of camera range. (93)

According to Cato, the exposed film was processed in Sydney by Arthur Peters, who years later recalled how thrilled he was when he first saw the atmospheric beauty of the Melbourne train arriving at the course with its lady passengers in filmy dresses etched impressionistically against the dark engine smoke and the bright sunshine. (94) The Melbourne Cup, 1896, had its premiere at the Princess Theatre, Melbourne, on Thursday 19 November, at a matinee given in aid of the Lady Brassey fund for the Blind asylum.

94. See Cato, *op.cit.*, p.117. The first press mention of the Cup film being screened anywhere is in the *Leader*, 21 November 1896—in Melbourne on Thursday 19 November—and later in Sydney in the week ending 28 November which Cato incorrectly takes as the premiere. See *Bulletin*, 28 November 1896. There is a problem of where was the film developed? and where was it first shown? It would seem logical that if the film was first screened in Melbourne on 19 November, then the film would have been developed there, since the occasion hardly seems important enough to bring the film back from Sydney. Therefore Cato is wrong when he says it was developed and first shown in Sydney. On the other hand, it is possible, if not very likely that the film was taken up to Sydney for developing and brought back for the 19th. In this case Cato would be right about the developing, but wrong—about—the—date—and—place—of—the—premiere.
The *Leader* called it 'a wonderfully clear and faithful photograph' and said that it brought before the audience 'all the bustle and animation of the race-course' as if they were looking upon the actual scene. Realism was reinforced as the orchestra, imitating the custom of the Flemington band, struck up the National Anthem as the vice-regal couple arrived at the course on the screen, and in the theatre the audience rose to its feet and cheered heartily. The show raised at least £176/19/- for the charity. (95)

This film, together with the earlier Manly ferry film, was first shown in Sydney at the Criterion in the last week of November 1896. (96) Both were so popular in that city that they ran for a full three months before moving on to other cities. As The Bulletin drily commented: 'It is something beautifully appropriate that the first Australian picture presented by the new machine should be a horse race. Of course it had to be either that or a football match'. (97) Film of the Melbourne Cup has been taken every year since 1896, but the first complete record of the actual race was only taken in 1904 by Franklyn Barrett who used three cameras stationed around the track to cover the course. He also filmed every

95. The *Leader*, 21 November 1896.
97. Ibid., 28 November 1896. See also J. Cato op.cit., p.117. 'Maurice and Madame-Sestier returned to Paris about six months later. Walter Barnett was no longer interested. J.L. Rouse bought the 2 Lumière cameras and one of them was used successfully for a while by Mons.A.J. Perier of the Baker and Rouse organization.'
Cup from 1904 until 1931. The original negative of the historic 1896 Melbourne Cup was jealously guarded by the French 'Museum Cinematheque', and it is only recently that a copy was acquired by the Film Division of the National Library. It was first re-shown to Australian audiences at the 1969 Melbourne Film Festival.

7. 1897-1900 DECLINE OF A NOVELTY

By early 1897, the exhibition sector of the business had settled down and there were fewer in the field. With the departure of the foreigners - Hertz and Sestier - early in the year, the leading exhibitors became the MacMahon Brothers at 237 Pitt Street Sydney, and Harry Rickards' vaudeville-film shows at the Melbourne Opera House and the Sydney Tivoli. There was also the occasional outsider who travelled through the capital cities making money from his machine and a few 'special' films. Except for the annual versions of The Melbourne Cup and the occasional short scenic, very few Australian films were produced in this period, and throughout these years attention to the new entertainment was to wane gradually, until by 1898 and 1899 there was hardly any mention of film shows in the Melbourne or Sydney press. But at least for the first half of 1897, the cinematograph continued to boom, and the showmen discovered that certain subjects would keep the public's interest alive. The MacMahons for example continued to do well with their films - coloured and in black and white - of
dancer's legs, while the first newsreels were also popular, and probably were responsible for the entertainment novelty staying alive long enough to become an art form. The first of these newsreels were the Greek Turkish, American-Spanish conflicts; then there was the perennial film of royalty as in the Jubilee Procession, and finally, and most popular of all with Australian audiences, was the Corbett-Fitzsimmons boxing pictures shown in September 1897.

January 1897 saw both MacMahon's and Sestier's show 'above ground' as the Bulletin put it, and the Lumiere cinematograph was now at 478 George Street, having moved from the Criterion in December 1896. By mid-January, two other cinematograph shows had joined them, the first: 'the latest and most improved graph' opened for business at 420 George Street (presumably in another ex-shop), and the other was an Edison Vitascope recently imported from America by the well-established Edison Electric Parlour of 162 Pitt Street. This latter show was so attractive, with music and colour effects thrown in, that according to the Bulletin, a special show in January was dignified by high ecclesiastical patronage which included two bishops. In usual satirical fashion where clergy were concerned, the journal commented:

'In that thirty minutes, the Church soaked up more graceful Annabelle, more boxer Corbett, more May Irwin's kissing, more Amy Muller's toe-dance, more dog-fight, more knife-duel, more buck-jump riding, more dance without skirt, than it had ever got in at any previous day and night of its existence'. (99)

MacMahon at this time was changing his programme fairly regularly; it would seem at least every two weeks. There had been a fresh series 'turned on' by 16 January and by the end of the month he had a new lot. The Bulletin found 'a view of a steamer rolling in a troubled estuary with big greenish waves wobbling by', the best of these and 'one of the best up to date'.

'It is a thing which no person addicted to sea-sickness could view with an easy conscience, and if only a drowned woman would bob to the surface on a wave-top for a second or two, and then go under again, the effect would be quite complete. The Bulletin recommends that arrangements be made for including that suicided woman at once'. The main opposition to MacMahon, and a show which did not receive as much journalistic space in the Bulletin, was the Lumiere cinematograph under Sestier, which was still showing the Melbourne Cup (1896) pictures 'in response to the popular

99. Ibid., 23 January 1897.
demand for horse, but sundry new military subjects are thrown in to vary the monotony of the noble animal'.

A fortnight later, in mid-February, MacMahon had changed his programme again: 'his latest triumph is a picture of the lakelet at Windsor Castle with the swans swimming on the placid surface and an interfering person chasing a crowd of long-legged birds on the shore'. In obvious appreciation of the certain realism of this rather trite (but to audiences of the time, intriguing) scene, the Bulletin added: 'There is no collusion about this picture, the birds aren't stiffened in any way and it is a very pretty piece of nature'. The Lumiere cinematograph had a new specialty in the shape of a high diving exhibition, so it is likely that the Cup pictures had been taken off by early February.

In February, 'the usual large quantities of Cinematograph was still filling a great public want', but the Bulletin anticipating the move towards newsreels, bemoaned the fact that no-one was showing a picture of 'the arrest of Butler' a notorious criminal of the day. Later in the month, James MacMahon reported that 'up to date, 120,000 people have called in at his cinematograph, and seen the skirt-dancing girl, and gone away refreshed in mind to...

100. Ibid., 30 January 1897.
101. Ibid., 13 February 1897.
hustle for a crust with renewed vigour'. The Bulletin found the calculation probable, and added 'anyhow, the show is good enough to deserve to be seen by twice that number'. The general success of MacMahon's exploitation of the new novelty evoked this semi-satirical comment: 'The Cin. came to Sydney as a passing show, that was ready to move on at any moment, but it has now settled down into a permanent institution, and taken root, and J. MacMahon will apparently stay on and grow a corporation, and in the course of time, become a solid, old-right-thinking person and a K.C.M.G.'  (102)

After six months in Australia, Sestier left in March 1897 to return to Paris, and the 'cinema' he and Barnett had established as the Salón Lumière at 478 George Street was vacated, and not filled by another machine. The Bulletin consoled its public by saying that 'as MacMahon's show and the Edison Electric Parlour remain indefinitely, the city has probably still as much cinematograph as it can assimilate.' (103) This Electric Parlour at 162 Pitt Street was one of the most comprehensive shows then operating in Sydney. Besides kinetoscopes, phonographs, and an X-ray apparatus that allowed the visitor to inspect his bones at the shortest notice it also featured 'the inevitable cinematograph'.

102. Ibid., 27 February 1897.
103. Ibid., 6 March 1897.
The latter includes a very large array of pictures, among them a prize fight, a bloodthirsty unpleasantness between two roosters, an express train, the whirlpool of Niagara, leg shows plain and coloured, camels, a breezy disturbance in a public house and many other things'. (104)

Perhaps taking a hint from the Bulletin about growing into a respectable corporation, James MacMahon took out another twelve months lease on his George Street premises in March, tacitly testifying to his belief in the durability of the entertainment. He, 'reckons on keeping the cinematograph a fixture till well on into 1898. With a view to this, he has laid in some new pictures with even more legs than usual in them, that astute showman having realized that, though other things may come and go, the demand for legs has no end, and the female extremity with the stocking on it goeth on forever.' (105)

By the end of March, another cinematograph had invaded Sydney, at the Crown Studios in 382 George Street, so it is clear that some showmen at least still thought there was still money to be made from showing films. The new show was considered a 'very fine one' by the Bulletin, and its special glory was a series of mountain views taken from an express train. This first example of the 'mobile camera' in Australia produced 'a weird effect'. (106)

104. Ibid., 13 March 1897.
105. Ibid., 20 March 1897.
106. Ibid., 27 March 1897.
According to the Bulletin, this made the 'sixth cin.' that has struck Sydney, and already 'another is rumoured'. (107) Six 'cines' may have been opened in Sydney since September 1896, but only four can be assumed to be operating at this time. They were, the MacMahon cine at 237 Pitt St; the 'latest and most improved 'graphe' at 420 George Street (although this one may have closed down since January) the Edison Electric Parlour's 'veriscope' at 162 Pitt Street, and now this new machine at Crown Studios.

On 3 April the Bulletin announced that the Corbett-Fitzsimmons battle was shortly to be reproduced with faithful details at the Edison Electric Parlour, as it had been cabled that the great fight had been recorded throughout by kinetoscope, and was soon to be despatched to 'the colonial branch of the Edison laboratory'. (108) By the end of the month, both MacMahon and the Vitascopie firm were anxiously awaiting their copy of the 'bashing-match' as the Bulletin scornfully called it. When the films arrived, they were to be shown simultaneously; 'then the showman whose picture makes the most realistic display of nose-bleed will 'come out on top'. (109)

107. Ibid., 23 March 1897.
108. Ibid., 3 April 1897.
109. Ibid., 24 April 1897.
By mid-June, there had been another programme change at MacMahon's cinema, and the *Bulletin* recommended a visit, while the 'Crown studio cin' had moved to new quarters at King Street, and 'by an improvement in the X-ray apparatus undertakes to show the visitor's bones in a more aggressively boney aspect than hertofofe'. *(110)*

By mid-1897, the first war films to be shown to the Australian public were on view in Sydney. 'One of them concerns a battle between Spaniards and Cuban insurrectionists, and others show some exciting scenes in the recent unpleasantness between the Ottomans and the Greeks'. This latter film allowed the *Bulletin* to vent its anti-war stand: 'The Australian in general is cordially recommended to study these views. Many of him[sic] has a vague craving for war through seeing Major Neild in his uniform, and the fact that it is a dirty, tattered, and gory thing, and has no brilliantine on its hair at all, can't be too firmly impressed on his mind'. *(111)*

Late in August 1897, the loyalist Melburnians had a chance to see the London Jubilee Procession (held a month or so before) per medium of the cinematograph. Although, as the *Australasian* pointed out, most Australians had become familiarized with the historic occasion by illustrated newspapers:


it was something fresh to see the show in actual motion, to mark the rise and fall of the horse's feet, the bearing of the men as the colonial troops filed by, to watch the carriage containing Sir George Turner and Mr. Reid come into view and pass (not before the public had been able to see exactly how our Premier waved his hand to the London crowd) and, above all, to be shown the Queen's stage carriage drawn up before the steps of St. Paul's. The Opera House audience, cheered wildly for some minutes at this spectacle, then, moved by a common impulse, burst into the National Anthem. (112)

It is interesting to note that the screening of the same film a month later in Sydney created no such patriotic demonstration. (113)

Also in August, Harry Rickards bought or leased a new American projector, the Biograph, and re-opened the Sydney Palace which according to the Referee had been unlucky as a theatre, but was small and particularly beautiful. The films he showed were all American, but as the Referee added in apologetic tone; 'they were sufficiently varied and interesting to arouse the enthusiasm of the audience'. (114) The machine itself presented the images on an unusually large scale and with extraordinary vividness, with few of the old disadvantages of the first cinematograph. The Bulletin said: 'Niagara' is the best and most thrilling picture yet produced, and the fire-engine race, 'shooting the shoot' - a giddy view of a

112. The Australasian, 21 August 1897.
113. The Referee, 22 September 1897.
114. Ibid., 25 August 1897.
boat going down a rapid at 60 miles an hour, and the sketch of a dude overboard are close up. The small, soapy nigger in the bath, however, seems to take best with the audience, and the encore which followed the infant African shook the building to its foundations'.

The big event of September 1897 was the arrival from America of George Welty with the pictures of the Corbett-Fitzsimmons battle, and on the 15th of that month, he took out a lease on the Royal Theatre to show them. It was the first multi-reel film to be shown in Australia, and thus was a precursor of the dramatic Soldiers of the Cross (1900) and The Story of the Kelly Gang (1906). According to the boxing paper, The Referee, the whole show which had been put on in Carson City in July, took about an hour to screen with about five or six reel breaks. The Bulletin called it an 'hour of gory carnage and soul-filling biff and raw meat'. The first reviews of the film showed the realism it held for the audiences of the time. The Australasian said: 'Crowds have flocked to see on screen what they would have been shocked to dream of looking at in real life, yet the difference is very slight. The entire 14 rounds are shown, from the preliminaries, where Fitzsimmons [white New Zealander] mooned about in his corner and Corbett [American negro] nodded pleasantly to the crowd, to the final smashes upon the heart and jaw with which the American was laid low'. Speaking of the exhibition, the Sydney Telegraph said"
'once there, the business proves fearfully fascinating. Two men are hard at it. It is a desperate, wicked, disgusting, entrancing battle almost to death. You may either take sides or not know one plugger from the other, but you must see it out'. (116)

The Bulletin quite accurately pointed out 'that there is almost certainly no other subject on earth that would attract so much money in Australia just now, and the Amurrikin gentleman who runs the business should find it a small gold mine'. This paper was impressed with the technical clarity of the films, and could only add that the realism of the show would be considerably heightened by the addition of suitable sound effects. 'If the management would hang up a piece of beef somewhere, and smite it with a bat every time a hit made it might make things more realistic, always provided the beef was smote at the right moment'. (117)

In October 1897, the Corbett-Fitzsimmons fight pictures left Sydney and opened what was to prove a most successful season at the Melbourne Royal. The Melbourne-based Australasian critic was so impressed with the fight pictures given by the Veriscope on a canvas screen stretched right across the stage, that he devoted nearly his

whole review - over half a column - to the phenomenon on 9 October. He regarded it as 'prodigiously wonderful that we should be able to watch a scene like this, crowded with movement, many months old. It means practically that action has ceased to be transient'. (118) A full minute-by-minute coverage of the filmed contest was given by this critic, but his enthusiasm was not shared by the Bulletin's Melbourne writer who found the proceedings 'short of reasonable expectation'. 'The fight, as it appears indistinctly on the big sheet, is a tame and rather tattered transaction, intersected by frequent intervals of five minutes'. (119)

The fight film only briefly revived flagging interest in the cinema, for the long-range trend was plainly down-hill, and the wiser entrepreneurs realized this and took steps to diversify their entertainment. Rickards had opened the Palace for mixed film/vaudeville acts, so the MacMahons took out a lease on the Sydney Lyceum in October for a season of melodrama ('At Duty's Call') and cinematograph. (120) It is difficult to tell just how many cinematographs there were in Sydney at this time. The Referee advertised another one of Rickard's at the Criterion on 20 October, and there was MacMahon's at the Lyceum, beside Rickard's other machine.

118. The Australasian, 9 October 1897.
119. The Bulletin, 9 October 1897.
120. The Australasian, 9 October 1897.
at the Palace with vaudeville. It is significant that with the exception of the Edison Electric Parlour, none of the cinematographs were playing in ex-shops by themselves; all had by now made the shift to the vaudeville music-halls or to legitimate theatres where they were often given bottom billing. For the time being their day had passed.

In 1897 horse-racing films were not as sensational as the first Melbourne Cup, but the Derby, Caulfield Cup and the Melbourne Cup films were all shown six hours after the event, and for the available communications and equipment of the day this was certainly a memorable achievement. Same-day portrayal of events led to the cinema evoking some remarkable mood-changes; the feeling of gloom which had prevailed at the course on Melbourne Cup day when the favourite lost was re-created that night and made the Melbourne Opera House atmosphere almost tangible. As the Bulletin said:

the picture did more than reproduce the beginning and end of the Flemington struggle. It reminded the audience of the gloom that prevailed when the numbers went up. There are not more than two hat-waving figures in the foreground, and the only person visibly enjoying himself is a harmless idiot who appears to have jumped up at intervals in front of the operator whilst the negatives were being reeled off .

121. The Bulletin, 13 November 1897.
By the end of November, the dearth of cinematographs in Sydney could lead the *Bulletin* to comment that the Cup pictures were good value for the money, because there were not so many cinematographs around as a few months before 'and that harried instrument is getting a chance to breathe as it were'. (122) In fact, it was shortly almost to expire.

The last month of 1897 saw very few films being shown in the various State capitals. The MacMahons were putting on a Christmas pantomime in Sydney but no mention was made of their films, and it was only the Corbett-Fitzsimmon's fight by 'Veriscope' that drew any interest when it was shown on Boxing night in Perth and in the Adelaide Theatre Royal. During 1898, the cinematograph literally fades from the Australian capital city scene for most of the year. Hardly any references for it can be found in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Brisbane or Perth. In fact, significantly enough for later developments, the sole *Bulletin* comment during the year was to a Melbourne Salvation Army cinematograph show on a Sunday, and that was only a passing comment and gave few details. (123) There were many mentions during 1898 of successful stage shows like 'Sign of the Cross', 'Robbery Under Arms' and the 'Kelly Gang' that were later to be made into films, but nothing

122. *Ibid.*, 27 November 1897
about Australian-made films themselves. 1899 was even more desolate. Except for a few Lumiere films being screened at the Melbourne Cyclorama as an insignificant adjunct to other side shows and illusions during the last quarter of the year, there were no other references to moving pictures.

* * *

This chapter has traced the beginning of Film in Australia. Films were introduced to Australia by foreigners – an American magician, and a French cameraman – with the help of some local promoters like Rickards and the MacMahon brothers. Australians were among the first in the world to see motion pictures, less than a year after their introduction, and films were quickly produced locally. Australians experienced great delight when they first saw motion pictures and the phenomenon made an immediate impact on the imagination of those living in Sydney and Melbourne. Nevertheless, the new invention was at first technically inadequate to sustain an audience's attention for very long. While it is likely that the cinematograph continued to be shown at odd intervals during the years 1898-1899, especially in country districts, it was not until 1900 that general interest in the phenomenon re-awakened in Australia.

* * *
CHAPTER 2.  FILM AS PROPAGANDA: THE SALVATION ARMY'S LIMELIGHT DEPARTMENT.

These means are employed by the worldling; they form a source of attraction in the theatres and music halls. Why should they be usurped by the enemy of souls? The magic power of light that can transpose these instantaneous flashes of light pictures upon the screen, is the creation of God, and it can only honour Him, and glorify His own handiwork, to utilize this invention for the salvation and blessing of mankind.

Herbert Booth in The Victory, Vol. V. September 1901.
1. HERBERT BOOTH AND THE AUSTRALIAN SALVATION ARMY

Two weeks after Hertz started showing films at the Melbourne Opera House, another man arrived who was to have a profound effect on the future use of the cinematograph in Australia. The Melbourne Argus in announcing the arrival of Herbert and Mrs Booth early in September 1896, drew attention to his face, white with the pallor of recent illness, and his brown eyes that betrayed something of the inner strength of the man. His tall, erect form in the quasi-military uniform with 'S.A' stitched in silver and scarlet on the collar gave him an impressive appearance. The Argus journalist found much in the son that reminded him of the father 'General' William Booth, although missing were the 'eagle features and trumpet tones of that fine old warrior'. (1) Herbert had been sent by his father to become the Commandant of the Salvation Army in Australasia.

Since its London beginnings in 1878, the Salvation Army under the autocratic control of its founder, General William Booth (assisted by his equally forceful wife, Catherine) had gone to the people. (2) Booth joyfully used every means of popular appeal, from banners, uniforms and parades to soup kitchens, brass bands and music-hall tunes to make contact with sinners and to convert the repentant. His domain was the large, sprawling, neglected industrial cities of 'Darkest England'. He believed in 'moving with the times', and en-

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1. Argus, 9 September 1896.
2. Garry Allighan, Four Bonnets to Golgotha (MacDonald, London, 1962), 'Authoritative government is the only proper form', Catherine Booth once said, 'they have it in heaven'.
1. HERBERT BOOTH AND THE AUSTRALIAN SALVATION ARMY

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1. Argus, 9 September 1896.
2. Garry Allingham, Four Bonnets to Golgotha (MacDonald, London, 1962), 'Authoritative government is the only proper form', Catherine Booth once said, 'they have it in heaven'.
listed whatever modern device would help the progress of 'the War', from telephones and typewriters to steam trains and magic lanterns. He created not merely a Christian army, but an empire with outposts flung to the far corners of the earth. And like the empire builders of old he sent his own sons to the farthest outreaches to keep them loyal to the centre.\(^3\)

In 1883, the Salvation Army first rolled up its sleeves and began work fighting the Devil in Australia. As always and elsewhere, the Army was prepared to muster any and every technological aid in its drive for souls. When William Booth left Australia in May 1899, after a triumphant tour of inspection, he reiterated the established policy of his organization with his fiery farewell message. 'GO FOR SOULS...Push the spiritual side of the war. Let this be your aim, night and day, and everywhere. No singing, praying, music, meetings, preachments or schemes of any description must be held to be satisfactory that are not adapted to lead up to salvation.'\(^4\)

This thinking had motivated the establishment of a 'Limelight Department' within the Melbourne Headquarters of the Australian Salvation Army as early as 1891, five years before his son, Herbert, assumed command. On his arrival, the son, with the same enterprise and purposefulness as his father, quickly appraised the potential

\(^3\) One son, 'Marshall' Ballington Booth was sent to New Zealand in the 1880's, and he was followed by Herbert Booth who was sent to Australia in 1896.

\(^4\) The War Cry, 20 May 1899.
of this novel means to salvation. With the help of the officer then in charge - Staff Captain Joseph Perry - he expanded the department in 1897 to produce and exhibit cinematograph films as part of his 'MOVE ON' policy which was announced three months after his arrival. This was only eighteen months after the first public screenings anywhere in the world, and three months after the first Australian screenings.

What sort of a man was Herbert Booth? His biographer Ford C. Ottman points out some of his failings, but stresses his strengths and his sincere religious convictions. Booth was a great orator, and on more than one occasion had people fainting and sighing during his 'lectures' and sermons. He was also an able administrator, and in the five years he remained in Australia he succeeded in winning sufficient personal support to make the Australian command his own unquestioned empire; when he wanted something done, it was done immediately. Lastly, he was described as 'always having an eye to the main chance', and his perspicacity led to his (considering the time, place and organisation) audacious use of the limelight lantern and moving picture.

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5. The Victory, September 1901.
7. War Cry, 29 September 1900; 13 October 1900 and 17 August 1901.
8. For example see the publication The Victory September 1901, entitled: 'Five Conquering Years' - an unprecedented acknowledgment of Herbert Booth's tenure of office as Australasian Commandant. A personal eulogy dedicated personally to him.
9. War Cry, 27 March 1897.
In 1901 he had a disagreement with his father over Army policy, and in 1902 he left Australia for America where he became a private evangelical. It was said at the time that there was a little soreness in Australia over the way he took credit for the film *Soldiers of the Cross* all to himself. Indeed this view is reinforced by the Salvation Army historian, Lieut-Commissioner Arch. R. Wiggins who said: 'Herbert Booth was a most complex character. Some thought him a saint; some didn't. I would describe him as a man who profited by picking other men's brains and taking the glory to himself'.

2. 'THE MAJOR'

Joseph Henry Perry (1862-1943) was an Englishman, born in Birmingham. With his parents (his father was a mechanic), he went to New Zealand as a lad of eleven. Although he learnt the trade of shoemaking, he was a fireman with the Dunedin (N.Z) fire brigade when he first made the acquaintance of the Salvation Army on April Fools' Day, 1883. From a window in the fire brigade building, he over-looked three Salvationists taking their stand in the Octagon in Dunedin. Unmindful of the rain, the little group were alternately singing, praying and exhorting the people within hearing to prepare for the final judgment. Joe Perry took careful stock of their dress, and of their sayings and doings. He was both interested and amused, more particularly as one of the party

10. Major Hasluck, (then 96) father of the present Australian Governor General, who saw Booth give the lecture and film *Soldiers of the Cross* in Kalgoorlie in 1901, as quoted in an article in
was endeavouring to shelter his comrades and himself under an umbrella which might have comfortably sheltered one person, but could never have protected three. He was later to recall his first impression that 'the meeting and those taking part in it suited the day very nicely'. (12)

A few days later, however, he saw the Salvationists in a newer and to him, more kindly light, as the same little group raised their hats and bowed respectfully while a funeral passed, thus muteley expressing their sympathy for the bereaved mourners. The following week one of his fire-brigade mates persuaded Joe to accompany him to a week-night meeting held in the Dunedin Temperance Hall. Attending that meeting was, as Perry later put it, 'the first act of religion' he had given expression to for years. It affected him so much that he 'gave a bob to the collection', a thing he could never remember doing before, and 'that shilling' he maintained, 'was given entirely as a result of the good feeling engendered in my mind by the meeting'. (13)

From the very beginning, the 'saved' fireman did his utmost to help the Salvationists in their soul-saving mission. By 10 August 1883 he had received promotion to the rank of Lieutenant.

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12. Full Salvation, 1 September 1894, 'A Limelighter's Experiences'.
13. Ibid.
He worked for the nascent Salvation Army in New Zealand around Timaru, Christchurch, Wellington and Nelson. He helped in the fight against alcohol, and in Wellington many fallen women were saved and brothels permanently closed, the Lieutenant helping to remove the furniture from two of them with his own hands. He also initiated mission work with the Maoris in Wanganui, and established an embryonic 'Prison-gate Home' for ex-convicts at Lyttleton. While at Nelson, Perry married his first wife, Annie Lawrenson, in January 1885, and their first child Eva was born in December that year. (14) There also he was promoted to Captain, and he received a cable from Marshall Ballington Booth asking him if he were willing to take service in Australia. He subsequently left for Sydney on 13 October 1885. (15)

He worked in Sydney for six months at the local Headquarters as an amateur engraver, and was then sent to the mining districts of West Maitland, Wallsend and Armidale in outback New South Wales. Within a year of arriving in Australia he settled in Ballarat as superintendent of the Army's Prison-gate home, and it was there that his two eldest sons, Orizaba and Reginald, were born in 1887 and 1890. (16) During his two year term in the gold mining city,

14. Marriage certificate of Joseph Henry Perry and Annie Lawrenson (her father was a hotel-keeper), at Christchurch, 15 January 1885, both aged 23 years. In possession of Mr. Reg. Perry, Adelaide, who also provided the birth-dates of Eva, Orrie and himself.
15. Full Salvation, op.cit.
16. Dates supplied by Mr. Reg. Perry. Both 'Orrie', Reg. and another son Stan. were to each play a prominent role in the Australian film industry of the first half of the twentieth century.
Captain Perry, who had always been interested in the practical and the mechanical, began experimenting with limelight lanterns. As a means of adding to the income of the Ballarat Home he bought his own lantern and established a photographic studio. His superior, Major Barritt, on an inspection tour of Ballarat noted the popularity of Perry's lantern screenings, and as a result Perry was ordered to Headquarters and told to bring his lantern with him. Major Barritt assumed command of the new Limelight Department on Boxing night 1891 when the 'Limelighters' made their first appearance at the South Melbourne Town Hall. (17) Their stock in trade consisted of the lantern and at the most fifty or sixty slides.

Three years later, after Barritt had been recalled to England, and Perry had taken over, there were at least 600 slides and several lanterns.

Despite some initial resistance from those whom The Full Salvation castigated for holding to 'the dry husks of religion' and who 'always cavilled at any fresh departure from the well-worn ruts which they conceive things ought to travel', the limelight lantern was quickly accepted by the Australian Salvation Army members (as it had been in England) and it proved immensely popular with the general public. (19) Nevertheless, in the hands of anybody else the lantern may have languished in Army circles as merely

18. Ibid., 1 August 1893.
19. Ibid., 1 June 1892.
another unfulfilled gimmick, but Joseph Perry was above all a show-
man par excellence, and it was he who was responsible for exploit-
ing the new visual medium to the greatest advantage of the
Salvation Army. It was he who imported up-to-date machines and
manuals, and taught himself the creative use of the polished wood
and shining lacquered brass lanterns - the 'Bi-unial and triple
lanterns' - with their special 'dissolving light' effects.\(^{20}\) It
was he who invented a special limelight retort called the 'Triumph'
which became standard equipment throughout the colonies, and
it was Perry and not Herbert Booth who first established the aims
and initial organization of the Limelight Department.\(^{21}\) He was
described by one Salvation Army publication as 'of dry humorous
tendencies, the Captain is withal, genial and hard-working, always
finding something to help him in his soul-saving work. He has a
genuine belief in the evangelizing work of the limelight and spends
more of his time experimenting in his laboratory than by the fire-
side. He is, in short, a Salvationist with scientific proclivities.'\(^{22}\)
A handsome, vigorous man with a high intelligent forehead and a
becoming debonair moustache, he married again in April 1893, after

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20. See special book once owned by Joseph Perry, now in possession
to the Management of the Optical Lantern, for the use of Entert-
tainers, Lecturers, Photographers, Teachers and Others', illus. n.d.
(probably late 1890's?) 2nd ed. revised throughout. (London, L.
Upcott Gill, 170 Strand, W.C)
21. See letter from Major William E. Blaskett to author, 10 October
1968.
22. Full Salvation 1 August 1893.
the death of his first wife in 1890. He had survived a rigorous apprenticeship in some of the toughest spots of two imperial outposts, so he knew the people he was appealing to, and he brought this valuable experience to his operation of the 'limelight lectures' with which he and his second wife (nee Captain Jessie May Lear of Port Fairy) toured with between 1891 and 1896. His methods and successes with the lantern should be briefly analysed here since they set the context for the Army's use of its successor - the cinematograph. It will be shown that the basic guidelines were already well-established for the development of the cinematograph in Army hands even before the arrival of Herbert Booth.

3. THE LIMELIGHT DEPARTMENT: EARLY YEARS.

The Limelight Department (so named because of the illuminant used in lanterns before electricity), at first consisted of Perry as operator and lecturer, his wife, who read the illustrated hymns and readings from the Bible, and an assistant, Captain Brodie, who was a fine tenor. Local Salvation Army officers in the towns visited, supplied the additional musical and vocal backing integral to these screenings. The tours were conceived by Perry and the Army authorities as morale-boosting operations to spur faraway outposts into activity, and to remind them that Headquarters had them constantly in mind; but the more immediate goals were to save souls and raise money, and in these objects they were always very successful. (23) Most of the funds raised went to the local area
PLATE 3  A relic of the past.

A Limelight Lantern.

Source: Everyones, 15 December 1926.
and this helped the Limelighters' publicity and welcome reception among the local Army corps. As Perry told a Full Salvation interviewer in 1892: 'The Corps benefits by the stimulus given to its work generally; its people are quickened, its funds assisted, and thank God! we are able to help souls to salvation as well'.

Perry later had other helpers under his control, notably Staff-Captains Williams, Roberts and Dutton, who conducted their own limelight tours all over Australia. In each case the procedure was similar. Perry and his colleagues would map out a tour of towns with more than 400 inhabitants, usually on a railway line. Then the proposed itinerary would be advertised a few weeks in advance on the back page of the War Cry under 'Coming Events' so that local Army officers could arrange billets and advance publicity. When Perry and his company arrived in a town, generally by rail,

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23. For example, in the three years 1891-1894, the company travelled an estimated 29,057 miles, visited nearly every Salvation Army unit in Australia, held 522 exhibitions, raised £1,784/12/10d (nett) and saved 469 'souls'. See Full Salvation, 1 September 1894. At prices of 6d. and 1s. an evening's entertainment could bring in £34 - a huge sum in those days. It is likely that the fund-raising potential of this department was the first thing that attracted Herbert Booth's attention when he arrived.

24. Full Salvation, 1 June 1892.

25. Staff-Captain Dutton (1866-1942) was probably the most significant as he joined the Limelight Department on three separate occasions, and was very instrumental in the slides and films made from 1895 until 1910. Another Englishman, he came to this country at the age of 21 and was attracted to the Salvation Army in Sydney because of the music associated with the services, but he soon became a dedicated officer. His first appointment was to assist the late Captain George Walker at the opening of the Dulwich Hill Temple Corps, but he later moved to Melbourne and was seconded to the 'Limelight Department'.
he and his company would be met by the local corps, resplendent in their bright uniforms and with their band proudly playing. It was not uncommon for the whole town to turn out and watch the company unload the strange equipment, and install themselves in the local hall. A tractor was often borrowed to tow the equipment up the main street, and after 1900, such tractors were used increasingly to provide the necessary traction for making the electricity that replaced limelight. If they arrived at night, there would sometimes be an elaborate torch-light parade to the local barracks, town-hall, mechanics' institute or theatre where the limelight slides were to be shown. (26)

This was a rigorous life for Perry and his young family. The thousands of miles travelled in all types of terrain, in all types of vehicles, the constant hustle and bustle that accompanied the ceaseless packing and unpacking, often with only minutes to catch trains; the strange billets every night, and the long hours of 'knee drill' (prayer meetings) with the occasional spice of a

26. I wish to acknowledge here a debt to Mr Reg. Perry, second son of Joseph Perry for permission to use material from the family scrap-book which has extensive cuttings about Perry's limelight and cinematograph tours taken from different country and city newspapers in all states.

27. See scrap-book, but note that at first Perry and his wife travelled literally hundreds of miles by bicycle at a time when this was not a socially acceptable mode of transport for women in the outback of Australia. *War Cry*, 28 November 1896. 'A great deal of stir has been caused in the various towns when we made our appearance mounted on bikes, Mrs Perry, of course being the centre of attraction... The morning was beautiful and Mrs Perry put up her first record, doing thirty miles without dismounting, and covering that distance in less than two hours.'
hostile reception, all helped to make the itinerant Salvation Army limelighters' life a challenging one during the early 1890's in Australia. Yet with all these difficulties, there is no evidence of Perry ever arriving late at a town, of his equipment being faulty, or his display being a failure. As far as the locals were concerned, the screenings proceeded like clock-work, and the local press from Bundaberg to Albany repeatedly applauded his skilful manipulation of the projector and his entertaining delivery of the lectures that could sustain secular, as well as religious, interest. (28)

The usual stay in a town was for two or three days, but if the crowds grew too great, as they did on some occasions for Perry's show was very popular, then the company would stay another night and even arrange to move into a bigger hall. Starting time was generally 8.00 p.m. and often as many as 200 limelight slides were shown over a two-hour period together with illustrated hymns and prayers. The screen was canvas 19ft. wide, and the figures were life size and crystal clear. Some of the slides would be of local scenes, taken on the previous visit with the aim of maintaining local interest, and often there were slides of the audience taken by flashlight on the earlier visit. Besides such locally oriented slides, the programme would usually include tragic, humorous, secular and religious elements. There were

slides illustrative of the General's 'Darkest England' slum scheme and the condition of 'the submerged classes'. There were scenes from the 'Pilgrim's Progress' and the Life of Christ, the latter embracing some beautiful views of the Crucifixion and Resurrection. Others were illustrations of such simple melodramatic stories as 'The Road to Heaven', 'Neddy's Care' and so forth. Perry also performed a public relations role for the Army by screening portraits of leading officers, their buildings, and their social work in the field. His slides were also educational as they included views from all parts of Australia, together with ethnographic photographs of the aborigines, and photographs of key primary industries. The themes of the later Salvation Army films were already present in these slide shows. Perry knew his public and did not alienate them by too heavy a concentration on religion. His audiences, whether they had come for religious enlightenment or just plain curiosity, usually departed satisfied and this was the essence of Perry's popularity.

On their return to Headquarters after each trip, Perry was responsible for the production of further slides based on religious topics. These slides were manufactured in a studio that he had improvised in the attic of 69 Bourke Street, Melbourne, and his family provided the models for many of these slides. His son Reg. can remember a photo of his sister Eva pathetically kneeling before

29.  *Full Salvation*, 1 June 1892.
a whisky barrel in a scene from 'Daughters of Ismael', while Reg. himself was a reluctant subject for one of the many slides Mrs Herbert Booth had made for her lecture on 'Slum Work' in the years immediately before 1900.

I was dressed in my best sailor suit and taken to Army H.Q. stripped to my pants, face dirtied, and put in a tub without water. Then Mrs Booth came in and knelt beside me with a dry sponge in her hand. I was supposed to be saying 'I don't want to be washed!' and apparently treated the whole thing as a big joke. Dad said 'If Reggie won't be serious we will have to pinch him to make him cry', which apparently had the desired effect.

(30)

More interesting, from the point of view of this thesis, were Perry's early experiments with motion on the limelight screen and with the expression of reality generally by colour and sound effects. Foremost among these experiments was the 'Chromotrope' - a device which when fitted to the lantern light housing, threw up a kaleidoscope of colour moving in all directions on the screen. One of Reg's first memories is sitting on his mother's lap in a Salvation Army hall, whilst his father operated the magic lantern with chromotrope. It was so real that Reg. thought the wall of colour would slide off the screen and engulf him. (31) Another favourite device was to put a gold-fish bowl with living frogs or fish swimming about in front of the light stream. Sometimes a fight between the fish would be described, and at the climactic

moment a few drops of cochineal would be dropped into the bowl to throw up a bloody background to the darting shadows on the screen. There are even other instances of Perry using two screens to give a split screen effect, and of moving slides up and down to represent the movement of angels. (32) By this time he was an expert in photographic effects and could, with the aid of his 'triple-lensed lantern' demonstrate a dissolving light effect by (for instance) first flashing a daylight photo of Westminster Abbey on the screen and then gradually changing it so that it represented 'Westminster Abbey by Night' with moonlight and the stained glass windows all lit up. When he showed how 'Jane Conquest Rang the Bell' to save her sea-faring husband, there was a muffled bell sound effect to heighten the realism of the story. Vocal and instrumental musical selections were given at regular intervals and audience participation was ensured by the singing of hymns or the clapping of hands in rhythm. In these and many other ways Perry was groping for a way to transcend the static medium.

By 1896 these Limelight tours had made Perry a smooth, competent lecturer of great ability who could hold an audience's interest while Mrs Perry and the local Corps members saw to their conversion. Moreover, his success at this particular form of proselytising, and his apprenticeship in photographic effects

32. Letter from Mr. K. Hogan to author, 1968.
meant that when the cinematograph finally came on the scene, he would be the ideal man to seize on the new medium and quickly appraise its potential.

4. THE SALVATION ARMY'S FIRST AUSTRALIAN FILMS

When Herbert Booth arrived, he very soon became interested in the operation of Perry's Limelight Department. In the words of the report prepared by the son for the visit of the General in 1899:

In the above year (1897) recognizing the immense blessing and the great financial help that would accrue from this particular source, both alike to the struggling officer in the field and our progressive Social Work, I determined to enlarge and so widen the influence and scope of the limelight. (33)

Where before 1896 there had been only Perry with one lantern and several hundred slides worth £100, by 1899 under Herbert Booth's patronage, the department had expanded to four officers (Perry, Williams, Dutton and Rumble), using three bi-unials, three cinematographs, six phonographs (with the latest Edison micro attachment machines) and three graphophones (a type of gramophone) worth altogether over £1000. Herbert Booth was to later claim that the idea was an old one of his, and that he always knew the lantern would be a great weapon in the Salvation Army armoury if only a great subject could be found for it.

33. Unpublished internal report on the Limelight Department prepared by Commandant Herbert Booth for the visit of his father in 1899. Papers in File No. 3, Salvation Army Head Quarters Melbourne.
For a long time it appeared to me that in the Lantern with its pleasingly forceful language, lay a new way to the heart... In Major Perry I found not only an experienced lanternist and photographer, but an enthusiast with a like faith. Then the advent of the Kinematographe at this time increased the value of the Limelight as a teacher. I decided to obtain one at any cost. I saw at a glance that the living pictures, worked in conjunction with life-model slides would provide a combination unfailing in its power of connecting narrative.

It is difficult to decide from the evidence available today, whether the Salvation Army's first cinematograph machine was imported by Perry or Booth direct from the Lumiere manufacturers in France, or was bought by Perry in Melbourne. Booth claimed that it was imported but that would have taken several months to finalize and would have involved considerable bother and expense. Mention is made in the War Cry of 'negotiations being carried on' and of Perry being 'deputed to make enquiries regarding the purchase', which seems to indicate a local acquisition, and there is also the fact that a cinematograph was then on the Melbourne market being offered for sale in a December 1896 issue of the Argus. But regardless of how the Army came by their machine, it is certain that they had one within the first months of 1897, for in the 13 March issue of the War Cry an announcement appeared stating that it would be shown at meetings in Western Australia scheduled for most of the following month.

34. War Cry, 18 August 1900.
35. 1899 Report, op.cit.
37. Ibid., 13 March 1897.
On 27 March 1897 a much longer article was published reporting Booth's farewell of Perry and 'the first Salvation Army cinematograph in the world' bound for the West. (38) Mentioning that Headquarters had just had a 'trial spin' of the 'new territorial cinematograph' the article went on to laud Booth for his initiative in glowing terms. The cinematograph was called 'the Astonisher of the Century' and a sharp contrast was drawn between the life-like natural movement of the cinematograph views as opposed to the static limelight slides shows. As the article concluded, 'the whole effect far exceeded our expectations'. (39) The Salvation Army members, already conditioned to acceptance of the limelight lantern by Perry's famous tours, quickly acclimatized themselves to the new invention and since William Booth had sanctioned the use of technology in the service of religion with his oft-quoted aphorism about 'salvation being scientifically spread', the cinematograph was seen as merely a new, if somewhat startling application of the old principle.

The usual Lumiere travelogues and views purchased with the machine soon began to tire the audiences, and Booth and Perry logically began to consider taking films of the Salvation Army's

38. Ibid., 27 March 1897.
39. Ibid., Note also that the effect of the cinematograph was reflected in the War Cry format itself, as from 21 May 1897 it had a newsy column entitled: 'The Social Cinematograph' with a drawing of a projector and film etc.
own activities. Booth imported the necessary equipment for
the Army to take and process its own films in the attic studio at
Headquarters which by this time had been expanded and modified by
the addition of a glass roof and sophisticated laboratory
facilities. Two years later, Booth was to proudly and truthfully
tell his father that 'In this branch we can honestly claim to be
in the foremost position amongst the leading operators of
Australia at the present moment'. By 21 August 1897, Perry
had a number of 75ft. 'films' in the process of preparation.

The first Salvation Army films made in Australia had their
premiere in May 1898 at the Melbourne Temple when they were
accompanied by Graphophone records and rousing hymns from the
audience. In between reel changes, records of such tunes as
'Yankee Doodle' and 'Comrades' were played on the graphophone and
limelight slides were shown. The first item on the programme was
a film showing the Melbourne Metropole woodyard with the un-
employed earning their bed and 'tucker' in a most energetic
fashion by chopping wood, wheeling barrows and so on. Other films
showed women cadets selling the War Cry and a recent Congress
March. When the popular Commandant appeared on the screen with
his tall form and military stride, he received a chorus of cheers.
The last film was the most interesting considering later develop-

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40. Ibid., 27 March 1897, descriptions of films of Paris streets
and French troops on parade.
41. Herbert Booth's 1899 Limelight Department Report, op.cit.
42. War Cry, 27 August 1897.
ments in the history of the cinema, because it was the precursor of the 'story' or fictional film. It was 'acted' reality. A hungry man was shown stealing bread, he was arrested and on his release, the Prison-gate Brigade were shown in action. (43) Clearly, Perry and Booth were quick to appreciate the 'public relations' value of the film in communicating their aims and methods to a public which in the 1890's was still largely unsympathetic to the Salvation Army. They also recognized the usefulness of the new medium in breaking down provincialism and in bringing isolated areas closer together. But besides recognizing the newsreel reporting functions of film, these first efforts demonstrate that Perry from the beginning understood that films could be used to convey a 'message' in story form. That hungry man being saved was the direct antecedent and inspiration of Soldiers of the Cross (1900) made three years later on a much more extravagant scale.

Later in 1898, further short strips of film were added to these first attempts, and possibly inspired by the immense success of Mrs Booth's series of slides on her slum work, which she toured and lectured with throughout 1898, Herbert Booth wrote what he called his 'Social Lecture' (1898) to accompany the 2,000ft. of miscellaneous film already exposed on the social activities of the Salvation Army. (44) An eyewitness of these films recalled two of

43. Ibid., 21 May 1898.
44. Ibid., 28 May 1898, for an advert of Mrs. Booth's 'Pathetic and Powerful Life-Model Slides'. See earlier section for Reg.Perry's reminiscence about posing for one of these slides. Note from
them. One depicted a herd of cows at the Salvation Army Bayswater farm coming in at milking time.

They were slowly straggling along very naturally and when some of them were passing the cameraman they stood still and had a good look at him and then went on their way to the milking shed... The other was more tragic. A young unmarried woman, because of her shameful experience, driven to desperation, decided she would commit suicide. She laid her baby, wrapped in a shawl, on the grassy bank of the Yarra, went to the water's edge. Then she returned, picked up the babe, kissed and hugged it and then went to the water's edge again. She repeated this several times, then in she plunged into the river. Another woman who saw her (a good swimmer) plunged in after her and helped her, until a man in a boat came along and rescued the both of them.

The woman rescuer was Adjutant Henley, an officer from the Training Home. (45) In 1899 films like these and the lecture earned over £1,500 gross. (46) The number, length and success of these initial efforts established the Salvation Army as probably the most important film producers in Australia around the turn of the century.

From late in 1898 until the end of 1899, Perry had three main duties as officer-in-charge of the Army's Limelight Department. He supervised the laboratories and studio he had established in the attic of the Melbourne Headquarters and built up a stock of

Herbert Booth's 1899 Report, op.cit., that her lecture recouped £700. Note also that since both Mrs and Herbert Booth were prolific lecturers and toured all over Australia, they were often at opposite ends of the continent lecturing at the same time.

45. Letter from Mrs Lieut-Colonel Anna T. Ede to author, 17 October 1968.
46. War Cry, 18 August 1900.
equipment and facilities for processing and printing cinematograph film. Also he bought and exchanged suitable films with local exhibitors for Army screenings, and commenced work on a new set of Salvation Army films with a Biblical theme, together with a number of newsreels. Lastly, he toured with the films himself, and supervised the tours of his assistants.

Despite their subject matter, these early Biblical films made by Perry and Booth were not 'feature' films in the full modern sense - they were too short and episodic for that - but they were the model for the longer production which followed. (47)

Like the Social Lecture films the precedent and inspiration for these Biblical films were the limelight slides that Perry had been making and exhibiting since 1891. It took a number of months, late in 1899 to produce the group called The Passion Films (1899) once erroneously known as Early Christian Martyrs (1899). (48) They were finished by December and Dutton took them on a tour of Gippsland in January 1900. The War Cry proudly described them as providing 'one of the most solemn and impressive Sunday evening's services it is possible to conceive'. They were thirteen films in

47. The British Film Institute defines a 'feature' film as one which is over 3,000ft. long, and which has a connected story, plot or narrative.

48. See for instance Jack Cato's book, and the list of Australian films in Film Weekly Motion Picture Directory (1969) Reg. Perry blames himself for disseminating this title and its supposed length of '100ft.' and that it was incorporated in Soldiers of the Cross. Vaguely remembering some earlier film before Soldiers of the Cross he thought it was called Early Christian Martyrs and the name stuck although there is no mention anywhere of films called this in the War Cry, and it can be taken as merely a synonym for Soldiers of
all, each approximately 75ft. long and with titles worthy of note because some of them were probably included in the longer Soldiers of the Cross (1900). They illustrated the Life and Death of Jesus Christ: 1) The Saviour's birth, 2) the Flight into Egypt, 3) The Raising of the Widow's son, 4) the Entry into Jerusalem, 5) the Last Supper, 6) the Garden of Gethsemane, 7) the Betrayal, 8) the Trial before Herod, 9) the Scourging, 10) the Ascent in Calvary, 11), 12) & 13) the Crucifixion. Perry was asked in this interview if Dutton was taking any other films with him, and he replied; 'Yes, some forty in all, the pick of our collection, including some views from the General's last visit, views of the departure of the Victorian contingent for the Transvaal, scenes from the Social Homes, and a variety of others interesting and instructive'. Some of these mentioned by Perry had probably been bought from outside manufacturers, but most of the forty he had produced because at this time Perry's studio and laboratory was assuming a commanding position in the Australian film trade. As he told the War Cry journalist with justifiable pride; 'We enjoy almost a monopoly of the business and manufacture films for all the colonies. Only the other day I took a photo of the second Victorian contingent in the morning, developed and printed a film 100ft. long and six hours later it was shown before a crowded hall amidst great applause.'

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49. War Cry, 27 January 1900: 'The Delights of Dutton'.

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The significance of the *Passion Films* (1899) must be emphasized, but not over-stated. They were the first story or dramatic films to be made in Australia, at a time when the commercial film producers of Australia were still only exploiting the film’s newsreel capacity. Since rolls of film at this time were from 75ft. to 100ft. long, the total of the 13 films would probably have been from 900ft. to 1,300 ft. and would probably have run for over 40 minutes if shown continuously, and at silent speed. It was a remarkable achievement for an isolated country, with such a small population and such limited technical resources as Australia in 1899; but it was not the first propaganda in the world, nor was it the first use of the medium for religious or propaganda purposes. (50) Sentimental chauvinism and inadequate research has led to many extravagant and erroneous claims being made for the early Salvation Army films, and it is time to put the record straight, so that the very real achievement of these two Englishmen in Australia can be seen in its true perspective. When Charles Higham, perpetuating the mistakes of previous secondary sources ad nauseam, declared blithely that in making *Soldiers of the Cross* (1900) 'The first religious film, the first feature film [and] the first spectacle film in the world had been born', he was wrong on all three counts. (51) According to Terry Ramsaye, in his seminal work *A Million and One Nights* first

published in the U.S.A. in 1926, there was at least one other evangelist utilizing the cinematograph for religious purposes shortly before, and contemporaneously with, Herbert Booth and Joseph Perry.\(^{52}\) Late in 1897, American cameramen filmed a 'folk presentation of the Passion Play at the village of Horitz in Bohemia', a sort of imitation Oberammergau. When the film was shown in Philadelphia, it was not regarded as very successful by Rich G. Hollaman, owner of the Eden Musee, then considered the centre of motion picture exhibition in the U.S.A. and he decided (because of Edison's patents) to film clandestinely another version in New York using costumes and sets discarded from an abandoned stage Passion Play sixteen years before. The script of this earlier show (which had been abandoned at the last moment at the insistence of offended New York religious elements) was revived and became what Ramsaye chose to call 'the first motion picture scenario'. The filming took place, under incredible conditions, on the roof of the Grand Central Palace, a building in Lexington Avenue. The cast of the production included Frank Russell as Christ, Frank Gaylor playing Judas Iscariot, and Fred Strong in the role of Pontius Pilate. An Englishman, William C. Paley who had built his own camera, and had so far escaped an Edison injunction, was hired as the cameraman, while the aging L. J. Vincent, stage director of Niblo's Garden Theatre, was employed as the director.

In December 1897 (nearly two years before Booth and Perry),

52. Terry Ramsaye, *A Million and One Nights*. 
shooting commenced, and despite snow in the Garden of Gethsemane, and difficulties with the senile director, the film was completed early in January 1898 in a total of 2,100ft. 'The most daring, and, in a practical sense, the only effort towards dramatic construction that the motion picture had made'. (Ramsaye) The film was first shown at the Eden Musee on 30 January 1898, and, significantly enough bearing in mind the later Australian films, it too was accompanied by a lecturer (in lieu of subtitles which had not been invented by then) and musical numbers were given in the two intermissions between the three reels for greater effect.

So far the film had been in secular hands, but it soon went on sale at $580 a copy. One of the first buyers was a Colonel Henry H. Hadley, a spectacular evangelist of the day. An ex-newspaperman and corporation lawyer, he was then a reformer against alcohol. Ramsaye said 'he preached a vigorous brand of damnation with a vast fervour'. 'These pictures', he was quoted as saying in words very reminiscent of Booth's spoken soon afterwards:

are going to be a great force. It is the age of pictures. See the billboards and the magazines and the newspapers; more and more pictures all the time. These moving pictures are going to be the best teachers and the best preachers in the history of the world. Mark my words, there are two things coming; prohibition and moving pictures. We must make the people think above the belt.

He showed the films at Ocean Grove, New Jersey, and at nearby Ashbury Park during 1898 (a full year before the production of the Australian Passion Films) with his tenor son Samuel singing 'Ave Maria', 'O Holy Night' and the Psalms during the breaks. In his
Crossed His Suspence. New York attorney and evangelist who made the Passage. Pity picture of the actor the first to seek the screen in aid to the pulpit.

second season in 1899, he opened with the Passion Play pictures at Young's pier, in Atlantic City and the following summer took them on tour, taking his message into many small communities that had never before seen a screen. As Ramsaye concludes: 'His was undoubtedly the first use of the motion picture for propaganda'.

While it cannot be definitely proved that Booth and Perry modelled their films; The Passion Films (1899) and Soldiers of the Cross (1900) on the earlier American versions of 1897 and 1898, it is at least very likely that Booth was aware of their existence. He left for the U.S.A. in 1902 and since the U.S.A. was closely watched by every evangelical eye in the 1890's, it is very likely that he was kept informed of developments on the evangelical front by American newspapers, correspondents or visitors to Australia. While the present author has been unable to find a definite reference to foreign Passion Play films being shown on Australian screens before 1900, there is one cryptic comment in the Bulletin for January 1901 that implies the Oberammargau films were in fact shown in this country before 1900, and if that is the case then it can be presumed that Booth would have seen them or at least heard of them.

The recent bio. pictures of the genuine Oberammargau Passion Play set one thinking of the audacious fakes which the late Orpheus M'Adoo introduced to Australia a couple of years ago. They professed to have been taken at Oberammargau, though the latest performance of the Passion Play up to that time had happened about 3 years previous to the invention of the biograph. (53)

But even if it is impossible to make a strong enough case for asserting that Booth definitely copied his idea from the American film, it is still possible to cast doubt on his claim to originality by pointing to the contemporary success of the Australian stage play 'Sign of the Cross' to claim that it was from this source that Booth received the idea to make a film about early Christian trials and tribulations. This play with its pagan Roman connotations, bloodthirsty sacrifices and martyrdoms was popular with both religious and secular audiences, and by 1898 it was into its 250th consecutive performance to packed houses in Melbourne. It would have been impossible for a man like Booth not to have known about the play, its subject matter and its great success. It is but one small step from this to the Salvation Army making its own version on film, especially if, as was probably the case, Booth had an enthusiastic subordinate officer eager to make bigger and better religious films. Nor can the passive role generally ascribed to Joseph Perry be accepted. The Perry limelight scrap-book still in the possession of the family shows in cutting after cutting the initiative, creativeness, and technical and showman-like expertise this man revealed in his administration of the Limelight Department from 1893 until 1910. Since it was Perry who kept up-to-date with visual innovations, and knew at first hand the potential of the moving picture, it seems at least feasible that it was he who suggested to Booth that they make such a long film, and Booth immediately seized upon the idea and took it from there.
5. EXHIBITION AND IMPACT OF SOLDIERS OF THE CROSS 1900-1920.

The very first mention of Soldiers of the Cross as a lecture appeared in a full page War Cry interview with Herbert Booth on 18 August 1900, entitled 'SOLDIERS OF THE CROSS, THE GREATEST THING EVER PRODUCED IN THE LIMELIGHT WORLD IS THE COMMANDANT'S NEW SENSATION'. (54) In this report, Booth described some of the films, told how he had first conceived of the subject, how he had exhaustively researched the 'lecture', and what its aim was. Of the 200 'life model' slides he said:

I have not been able to discover any such slides in the world. I predict for these pictures a great ministry. They will bring many tears and they will create an influence in the world which will tell marvellously for God. (55)

In this and other early interviews, Booth was careful to give due credit to his helpers in the project, and said that it had all been done for 'God's Glory'. He drew attention to the earnestness and sincerity of his actors when he said that while preparing the pictures they had all 'entered into the spirit of these noble heroes of the Cross, proud of the honour of perpetuating their memory, and bringing back their testimony from the long vista of centuries which have gone by'. Surely this was one of the first instances of 'method acting'?

54. War Cry, 18 August 1900.
55. Ibid., Booth probably did not realize how accurate his prophecy would be; the slides did in fact have a great long 'ministry' - they were still being regularly exhibited half a century later by his evangelist nephew Clibborn-Booth, from whom they were purchased by the National Library, Canberra in 1956. However the writer has serious doubts that all of these are genuine.

For the story and production of Soldiers of the Cross see Appendix I.
The next mention in the War Cry was a large advertisement on
the back page of the 25 August 1900 issue announcing the premiere.
Detailed reviews of the 'lecture' began to appear after the opening
night. The Age said: 'To have some of the most tragic episodes of
Christian history carried out in all savage but soul-stirring
realism is an accomplishment essentially of today'. It complimented
Booth on his 'novel and instructive lecture' and gave a synopsis of
the stories. \(56\) The Argus spoke of being transported to a 'chamber
of horrors' and in an almost identical eulogistic review stated that
'holy as the lecture was in conception, the illustrations were even
more daring.' \(57\)

It cannot be over-emphasized how scientifically structured the
lecture was to achieve its object; from beginning to end there was
a careful control of auditory and visual stimuli, and there was no
emotional let-down at any stage. The War Cry was quite aware of
this: 'It cannot fail to stir the minds and hearts of those who
see it. It is a great assault upon the conscience through eye and
ear gates. The lecture is a double-barrelled weapon, which cap-
tivates both sense of sight and sound, and enchains the mind, while
indelible impressions are made upon it.' \(58\) These were never
'silent films' as singing, or the music of instruments filled the
air when Booth's booming oratory ceased, while audience participation

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(as in the meetings of Billy Graham a half-century later) was ensured by the singing of choruses, or by clapping in time, 'the ten-stringed instruments' as Perry called them. The emotional fervour engineered by all this often had its effects in the number of those who averted their eyes from the realistic horrors on the screen, made involuntary moans, or even on occasion fell away in fainting fits. (59) There were also many converts, and Booth gained his 200 officers for the New Training Home, plus a great deal of revenue and a general raising of religious morale. On all counts the 'lecture' was a great and immediate success.

Next, the ingenuity of the various 'effects' must be admired. Despite the erroneous claims that Perry discovered and used 'stop-frames' motion when he showed a lion clamping his jaws on a Christian (manifestly impossible to stop a nitrate film with a strong illuminant as a fire would commence immediately), there can be no doubt that Perry had to invent techniques that were either in their infancy at that time or had not been used before. (60) Even if they had been used overseas it is unlikely that Perry was completely familiar with say the pre-1900 films of George Melies for instance.

In isolation then, Perry had to invent means of 'burning' Christians

59. _War Cry_, 18 May 1901: 'Not a few of the more tender-hearted closed their eyes as the realistic bioscopic scenes of bloodshed passed before them; also _ibid._, 29 September 1900; 25 October 1958.
60. _J. Cato, op. cit._, p.121. 'He invented the 'halted-action' whereby a Roman soldier thrust a spear into the side of Christ - and the blood poured from the wound.' Reg. Perry in a letter to the writer, August 1970, agrees that this would be impossible at the time, although the effect could have been simulated by the juxtaposition of slide and film.
at the stake, 'stoning' and 'drowning' and 'hacking' martyrs. He had to construct sets and costumes, and direct an often complex series of actions before the camera. In the closing shots of the burning of Polycarp, for instance, it would seem from the description in the War Cry that Perry used some form of mid-shot or close-up or some other device to emphasize the face of the martyr raising his eyes heavenward. (61) In another sequence, puffs of smoke were cunningly used as martyrs were forced to jump into the lime-pit, and the ingenuity with which the papier-mâché lion skin and a real lion were quickly inter-cut has already been mentioned. The 'fake' was made even more realistic by the occupants of the skin wagging the lion's tail and moving its jaws.

The ingenuity Perry displayed in actually making the slides and films was reinforced by his skilful manipulation of the finished products. By expert and rapid juxtaposition of slides and films he achieved a primitive 'cutting' or 'editing' effect long before the widespread use of such techniques, and could thus maintain an illusion of continuous film. This cutting flavour has been illustrated in the description of the stoning of St. Stephen and the Catacombs' massacre, but it is also evident in contemporary praise:

One of its pleasing features was its cohesion...Something too should be said of the precision with which without a single hitch, two hundred views, many of which had to flow in rapid succession were exhibited, always at the

61. War Cry, 18 August 1900; 22 September 1900.
exact juncture at which the lecturer required them. (62)

Another said:

Carefully watching the screen as the lecture progressed, and noting the rapid changes from one slide to another, from slide to kinematographe film, and then again from kinematographe film to slide, each appearing exactly at the right time, one could not help but admire the consummate skill with which Major Perry manipulated his elaborate and complicated apparatus. (63)

For more than two hours the congregation was kept interested and thrilled. It seems evident that the cumulative effect of swiftly and skilfully interchanging slides with films was to transcend the normally static nature of the slide medium, and to introduce a degree of 'modern cutting technique' into the lecture with the accompanying effects of greater dynamism and enhanced emotional states in the audience. This was accomplished by either cutting quickly from one scene to another, or by fixing on one scene, but using the moving film and then the static image to express it.

It was to be D. W. Griffith and Eisenstein who, twenty or thirty years later 'discovered' and perfected the cutting or editing effect and realized that the emotional response of the audience was in direct relation to the speed with which the images on the screen were changed. If Perry achieved even a little of this effect in 1900 then his work was revolutionary.

After the wildly successful premiere at the packed Melbourne Town Hall, when over 2000 people paid prices as high as 2s. to see

62. Ibid., 29 September 1900.
63. Ibid., 13 October 1900.
the lecture, Booth went on tour for a month throughout Gippsland and the Western District, as well as visiting some Melbourne suburbs. In October 1900 the lecture was being 'performed' in Adelaide. The response everywhere was immediate and enthusiastic. Nor had this enthusiasm waned by the beginning of the new year. In January 1901, Booth took the lecture to Launceston and Hobart, while in late April the first exhibition was given to a huge crowd at the Sydney Town Hall. Back in Melbourne, early in May, Booth organized a mammoth show at Her Majesty's for the Sunday preceding the eagerly awaited arrival of the Duke and Duchess of York, so that he could take advantage of the holiday crowds then flocking to Melbourne to see the Royal visitors.

As was the case with many of the early Australian films, there were some later additions and subtractions of films and slides, and the 'lecture', Soldiers of the Cross (1900) was not always the same. For the 1901 screenings there were at least some new films - notably the Roman soldier chasing the Christian woman over the plank sequence that has already been referred to by Mr Wright - that were not mentioned in the earlier reviews.

64. See initial program, ibid., 25 August 1900, and ibid., 22 September 1900 when some changes were made in halls to be visited.
65. Ibid., 6 October 1900.
67. Ibid., 18 May 1901: for review of the Sunday 5 May session.
68. Ibid. See also ibid., 29 September 1900. Note that although no 'ice' sequence with frozen martyrs was mentioned in contemporary reviews, Major Hasluck, Sunday Times op.cit., recalled seeing such a film when it was shown in Kalgoorlie in 1901. Often mentioned
By July, Booth was touring with the lecture throughout the main centres of New Zealand and his reception in that country was even warmer than in Australia. In August, he returned to Australia to give a final grand performance of the lecture to a gigantic gathering at the Melbourne Town Hall. His resignation as Australasian Commandant, due to his failing health, was already well-known. After this screening, Booth and the lecture went to Adelaide and Kalgoorlie before ending up in Collie, Western Australia, where Booth, by now mentally and physically exhausted, planned to have twelve months' rest. It was during his stay at the Girls' Home in Collie that he made his momentous decision to resign altogether from the Army because of a disagreement with his elder brother about the way the Army was to be governed. In 1902 he departed for the United States of America, taking the 'Soldiers of the Cross' with him.

Ottman in his biography, reproduced a letter Booth wrote at this distressing time begging the Melbourne Chief-of-Staff to sell him the 'lecture' for £300, which he considered a fair price considering the work he had put into it and the money it had already raised for the Australasian command. He estimated its cost at £550.

In secondary sources like that by Colonel Percival Dale, War Cry, 20 September 1950, but again not mentioned in contemporary reviews, is the supposed film showing the sinking of the 'Wairappa' in N.Z. waters, when Salvation Army lassies on board stopped panic by their singing.

69. The Victory, op.cit., p.266. See also New Zealand Times, 28 May 1901.
70. War Cry, 17 August 1901.
'including the wages of the Department in Melbourne while employed in making it', but thought his figure was a fair price:

Since it is entirely my own conception and production and cost me many nights of laborious thought, and since every picture was made under my own particular and immediate oversight. (72)

Whether Booth actually paid £300 for the 'lecture', or as his son and wife later declared he bargained with the Army and exchanged the rights to his early hymns in exchange for the lecture cannot be ascertained for certain. (73) In any case Booth toured with the lecture in America and England for almost a decade, according to Ottman, and when he returned to Australia in 1920 as a private evangelist, he brought the lecture with him (possibly as one eyewitness recounts, the film had by then been cut up into individual slides), and among other places, delivered the lecture in Newcastle and Melbourne. (74)

Rigorous attempts were made to locate the film throughout the world in the 1950's by Mr Rod Wallace, an officer of the National Library of Australia, but without any success. Wallace did interview the Booth family lawyer, but he got no further as far as the film was concerned. However, during the 1950's contact was made with a nephew of Herbert Booth's named Clyde Booth-Clibborn, a

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71. See reminiscences by Major Hasluck, Sunday Times, op. cit. Also F. Ottman, op. cit. passim.
73. See File No 3, Salvation Army Headquarters, Melbourne, letter from Henry Booth to the U.S.A. Salvation Army Commandant, 23 January 1952.
74. Letter to writer from Mrs Ana Ede, 8 October 1968.
modern American evangelist who was still using the original 'Soldiers of the Cross' slides. After negotiations these slides were purchased by the National Library, and shortly afterwards Mr McAnally donated the 'original musical score'. This is all that remains of 'Soldiers of the Cross'.

6. BIORAMA TOURS AND THE LIMELIGHT DEPARTMENT 1900-1908

After Booth's ignominious departure for the United States, Perry and the Limelight Department tried to carry on as before under the new Commissioner McKie. However, with Booth gone, enthusiasm at the very pinnacle of power within the organization was missing and there was a gradual erosion of interest in the benefits of the Department. On Booth's departure, the Army possessed 50,000ft. of film and this staggering amount had been produced since the purchase of the Army movie camera in 1897. To assess the full significance of the Limelight Department, these films and the others made before 1909 need to be taken into account, and so too should the successful 'Biorama' band and moving picture tours, especially those to New Zealand in 1903, 1906 and 1909. Other commentators have rarely taken into consideration the films made before or after Soldiers of the Cross and this has led them to a false emphasis and a belief that nothing further was accomplished by the Limelight Department after Booth's departure. (76)

75. The Victory, op.cit., p.443.
76. This is the view expressed or implied by Cato, op.cit., Higham op.cit., and in The Pictures that Moved, op.cit.
Some of the films that we have a record of Perry taking, include: (1) Scenes around Warrnambool coast, 1900. (77) (2) The Port Fairy Fishing Fleet putting to sea, 1900. (78) (3) Film of the 2nd Victorian Contingent leaving Melbourne for the Boer War, 1900. (79) (4) The Naval Contingent leaving Melbourne for the Boxer Rebellion, 1900. (5) The visit of the Duke and Duchess of York to Australia, 1901. (80) (6) The Inauguration of the Commonwealth, 1901. (81) (7) Various scenes in New Zealand, including the Timaru breakwater and Pelorous Jack — a friendly dolphin, 1903. (8) Views of Gembrook, Ferntree Gully etc. for the Victorian Government, and of the Chaffey Irrigation system, and the MacRobertson sweet factory, pre-1909. (9) Visit of the American 'Great White Fleet', 1908. (82) These films reveal a strong realistic or documentary side to the Limelight Department’s interest, and thus help to correct the misconception that the Salvation Army only made acted biblical dramas.

Joseph Perry organized at least three tours of New Zealand with a special 'Biorama' band and his moving pictures and slides

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77. War Cry, 24 November 1900; 'Peregrinations of Major Perry, with the Biorama Company', by Mrs Perry.
78. Ibid.
79. Age, 13 January 1900.
80. The Victory, op.cit., p.443.
81. Ibid.
82. War Cry, 22 August 1908. Note that Perry had operators in New Zealand and Sydney recording the visit of the Fleet to those two places and this was later joined with the Melbourne footage to make quite an impressive cinematic record. Unfortunately it no longer exists.
in 1903-4, 1906-7, and in 1909. Members of these travelling companies could often play two or more instruments and many were vocalists. There were also operators and advance publicity men. All wore Imperial (khaki) uniforms with chocolate facings and 'Biorama' on red bands around their Kaiser caps or slouch hats. (83)

Frank Ford in a letter to Reg. Perry recalled how he had joined the 'Silver Biorama' of 1906 and had been put in charge of the mobile electric light plant; a petrol engine. Together with Mr and Mrs McAnally, he and many others toured the East Coast of Australia using the first set of silver instruments imported from the Salvation Army manufacturers in London. These instruments were awarded a first prize at the 1906 Exhibition in New Zealand. (84)

Although Reg. did not accompany his father on the 1903 visit, he can clearly recall the 1906 trip. 'We arrived in New Zealand at the same time as the first moving pictures of the San Francisco Quake, April 1906, and we showed them in the Auckland Army Barracks around May. We were in Blenheim for Christmas and then went on down the South Island to finish at Invercargill.' While at Blenheim, Joe Perry showed that he had not forgotten his training as a fireman, when he was first on the scene with a hose at the Blenheim Hotel fire. As his friends quipped, it was the first time a Salvation Army Captain had saved a hotel instead of closing it down. (85)

84. Letter from Mr Frank Ford to Reg. Perry, 3 August 1951.
The lighting equipment was either the tank system of 'lime light' or as time went on a portable electric plant. One company was called 'The Electric Biorama'. The whole plant was transported from town to town by railway van. There was no special box for the operator whose plant stood in the central aisle amid the crowd; a hastily hung white bed sheet served as a screen and halls were darkened with black cloth slung over windows. \(\text{(86)}\) Modern 'talkies' were anticipated by a combination of bioscope and gramophone. At first the synchronization was at the judgement of the operator and often left much to be desired. Later a clock hand revolving in the left hand corner of the picture was geared to an illuminated hand in a motor in a metal box. \(\text{(87)}\) The format of these Australian and New Zealand film shows was similar to the early limelight screenings and the more famous exhibitions by Herbert Booth. They would generally commence with a rousing hymn like 'Rock of Ages', and then the officer of the local town would ask God's blessing on the 'entertainment'. By 1906, they were often started with a rip-roaring comedy, and these and other films were bought or exchanged from Baker & Rouse (forerunners of Kodak) at so much per foot. The show would close with a prayer meeting.

7. **HEROES OF THE CROSS AND SCOTTISH COVENANTERS, 1909.**

From 1905 onwards, within the Salvation Army, there was a re-awakening

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\(\text{86. Notes by Colonel Percival Dale, File no 3, op.cit.}\)
\(\text{87. Ibid.}\)
of interest in films as a means of religious instruction, and the Limelight Department was expanded accordingly. This Department was responsible for taking films and increasingly its role also became one of a film exchange; importing direct or buying from local agents the films necessary for the growing number of suburban Army film shows. Perry had also patented and marketed the Army's own retort, known as the 'Triumph' and since it was very popular with projectionists throughout Australasia, the income from this source also helped the expansion of the Department.\(^{88}\)

In July 1908, when a War Cry interviewer visited the Department he found it a very busy place. Some assistants were helping Perry to pack limelight retorts, while the newly-appointed A.D.C. to Perry - Major Dutton - was packing his things for Sydney where he was to supervise the filming of the Great White Fleet in that city. The interviewer sought Dutton out and he discussed the growing work of the Department that had led to his re-appointment - for the third time. Since Dutton was last in the studio, 'a remarkable alteration had taken place in it'. 'We now do a very extensive business in hiring out films; in fact, if it came to measuring what we have the total length of films would be represented more by millions, I think, than by thousands of feet; and we have arrangements for a regular supply by every mail.' Dutton even referred to a scheme then being mooted for the manufacture of the Army's own pictures. 'It will be necessary to have a studio replete with

\(^{88}\). See letter to author from Major William Blaskett, op.cit.
everything for taking moving pictures either by day or night.'
Dutton thought that the subjects of these films would be all phases
of Army work, with a special concentration on Social work. Finally,
the interviewer commented on the large undertaking then in hand -
the filming of the Great White Fleet which had been commissioned by
the New South Wales' Government. Dutton obligingly unrolled a map
of Sydney harbour showing the various positions on steamships and
on the rocky heads where the Salvation Army had been allotted
camera positions. As Dutton said; 'This is a big undertaking', but
he also had another job on his northern trip, and that was to
establish a limelight depot in Brisbane under Lieutenant Berghofer.
This new depot was to carry out similar work to that being
accomplished by Adjutant Weisbach in Sydney and by others in Adel-
aide, and Christchurch (N.Z.) where bioscopic exhibitions were
given in churches, lodges and kindred societies as well as in Army
barracks. By 1908, there were many skilled men attached to the
Limelight Department, competent with both limelight and electric
illuminants, and prepared to help any branch that wished to augment
its income by giving film shows.\(^{89}\)

Perry himself took the Melbourne footage of the sixteen
American warships as, in a huge cloud of smoke, they steamed up
Port Phillip Bay, watched by thousands who lined the beaches in a
great eagle shape from Williamstown to Brighton with its body at

\(^{89}\) War Cry, 26 July 1908. 'Light on the Limelight, A Chat with
Major Dutton'. 
St. Kilda. One Salvation Army observer likened it to the coming of Jesus, as he too would 'cometh in clouds'. By this time films of the fleet's arrival in New Zealand were at hand, and they were first exhibited in Adelaide late in August 1908.

It was probably the success of this Great White Fleet (1908) film, plus the obvious heavy internal demand for suitable films that led Commissioner McKie to announce sometime late in 1908 that a new Biograph studio would be erected and equipped in conjunction with the Limelight Department at Headquarters. By February 1909, this had been accomplished under Perry's supervision, and when at the beginning of February, the Commissioner and the Chief Secretary visited the new studio in Khartoum St. Malvern they were able to 'witness the production of several scenes in an illustrated lecture', then in the course of preparation. According to the War Cry report:

'The whole arrangements were splendidly carried out by the various artists engaged in the work, and most effective scenes secured in moving and set pictures'.

In a May 1909 issue of the War Cry appeared the first full description of the new and fully-equipped Caulfield studio in Khartoum Street. The writer of the article was clearly impressed and compared the interior of the building to a modern 'man-of-war vessel', with canvas, ropes, pulleys, entrances, exits, and all the

90. Ibid., 5 September 1908.
91. Ibid., 22 August 1908, also ibid., 5 September 1908 and ibid., 19 September 1908.
92. Ibid., 13 February 1909.
paraphernalia of the photographer's cult. The immense glass walls, painted scenery, wooden floor, large dressing rooms, costumes, 'stage properties' and cameras were all described in minute detail. At the rear of the building were the dark rooms, carpenter's shop for set construction and a generating room complete with marble switch-board, dynamo and powerful motor-engine. (93)

After inspecting the entire studio, the reporter returned to the front and watched the production of some films destined to be incorporated in Perry's Heroes of the Cross (1909). Special attention was drawn to the degree of fine detail in the dress and background sets of the Roman scene that made the scene so realistic. A moving picture camera and a still camera were simultaneously in use and great care was taken in rehearsal.

One picture introduced the Procurator, seated on a dais with the bodyguard of soldiers at right and left, in complete armour and armed with their respective weapons. A petitioner was introduced. He was of the nobility and was praying the pardon of some condemned Christian. The entire action of the scene was rehearsed, improved and corrected over and over again, until the Officer instructing was satisfied and then everything had to be repeated with the two cameras, so that every movement and expression was caught. After this the execution of prisoners was shown in a most graphic manner. They were all burned at the stake; each surrounded by a pile of flaming faggots, each tied to their stake; and each welcoming death bravely. (94)

It is very likely that the forthcoming 'Mammoth Congress' coupled with the farewell celebrations for Commissioner and Mrs McKie were additional inducements towards the completion of some

93. Ibid., 1 May 1909.
94. Ibid.
big Salvation Army film. In any case it is amongst plans for the Congress that mention of the film 'Heroes of the Cross' (1909) first appears. In the 10 April 1909 issue of War Cry appeared a full interview with Brigadier Perry concerning this film, and another; The Scottish Covenanters (1909) that he had been engaged upon for 'months past'. (95) The journalist had to travel eighteen miles out to rugged Buller Gorge to speak to Perry, and this is significant because his detailed description of the scene they were then shooting (the Roman soldier pursuing the Christian girl across the plank bridge) confirms the fact that this was in fact a new film (or at least had a lot of new footage) and was not merely a re-editing of existing material from the earlier Soldiers of the Cross (1900), the only copy of which was apparently then with Booth in the United States of America.

Five thousand feet of film was used in the production of Heroes of the Cross and the story as Perry recounted it had almost identical items in it as Soldiers of the Cross.

There are stirring scenes in Jerusalem, the stoning of Stephen, and other Scriptural scenes. Then we will show the thrilling tragedies of the arena in Rome, the arrest of the Apostle Peter, murder of Senator Julian, fights with gladiators confronted by wild beasts. The drowning of Calepodius, the murder of the venerable Bishop Polycarp, and many others, such as the burning of Rome by Nero, and the Christians being thrown into the lime-kilns. 'Hiding in the Catacombs', 'On the Rack', 'The Dice-thowers', 'Early Youth and old age', 'The Story of the Twins' etc.

These films were to be supplemented by a number of still pictures

95. Ibid., 10 April 1909.
PLATE 5

"SCENE FROM "THE HEROES OF THE CROSS."

Photographed at the Salvation Army's Cine-Theatre in Melbourne.

Source: Lone Hand, 1 October 1909.
of the very highest order, and altogether Perry hoped that the whole affair would be worthy of the best houses that Australia 'can give us', and that his film would considerably deepen the devotional spirit of the Congress by stirring the heart of every Salvationist with the thrilling scenes of the early Christian period. (96)

The first screening of 'Heroes of the Cross' took place at the Melbourne Town Hall on Tuesday 11 May 1909, and by 7.30 p.m. there was 'standing room only'. By 8.00 p.m. when the meeting was scheduled to begin, the Police had to come in and clear the aisles. When Commissioner McKie appeared there was a thunderous burst of applause, and soon after the huge building reverberated to thousands of lusty voices singing 'All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name'. Prayer was then offered by the Chief Secretary, Colonel Hoskin, imploring a blessing on all the efforts for good and a special blessing for this Farewell Congress. Most of the Commissioner's following remarks were drowned out by applause, especially when he said that within a week he would be leaving Australia. The Commissioner then handed proceedings over to Brigadier Perry who was to give the verbal description of the films. First the audience sang a hymn that was projected on the screen, and then the opening scenes started to appear. (97)

The initiative and responsibility for completing this film can be firmly attributed to Brigadier Joseph Perry. Heroes of the Cross

96. Ibid.
97. Ibid., 22 May 1909.
(1909) was his creation, and his alone. He conceived the idea and completed the necessary extra research; he also performed all the tasks of directing, photographing and processing the film. Naturally these tasks were made the easier because of his experience in the filming of the earlier Soldiers of the Cross (1900). It is strange that no mention was made at the time concerning the duplication of most of the scenes once included in 'Soldiers of the Cross' (1900). Either this was because loyal Salvation Army personnel did not wish to arouse interest in Herbert Booth's name again after his defection, or else they genuinely thought the two films were quite different and indeed it is likely that new members knew little of what had been produced nine years before. Whatever the explanation, there can be little doubt that the two films were almost identical as even a cursory glance at the two stories will reveal. The similarities and differences are, however, worthy of close attention.

The opening scenes in both films were set in Jerusalem, although it is likely that Soldiers of the Cross (1900) devoted more time to the closing events of Jesus' life than did Heroes of the Cross (1909). The first martyrdom shown by both films was 'Stephen being stoned', but it would seem that Heroes of the Cross (1909) included a little extra detail since it showed him preaching, being apprehended, his arrest, his trial before the Sanhedrin, his conviction and his 'being hurried without the walls to be stoned to death'.

In Soldiers of the Cross (1900) on the other hand, it

98. Ibid. gives a full summary, scene by scene, of Heroes of the
seems that more reliance was placed on slides, and although the
trial was shown and the stoning (by film), no mention was made of
his preaching, his arrest and ecstatic vision. One interesting
comment in the review about Heroes of the Cross (1909) stated that
'Saul's presence in charge of the clothing of those who stoned was
clearly indicated'. This seems to imply some sort of editing or
cutting device, even possibly a close-up, to show the significance
of Paul near the clothes as distinct from the stoning action
taking place at the same time. In Soldiers of the Cross (1900)
this was conveyed by a slide at the end of the sequence showing
Stephen lying murdered on the ground and Paul gazing contemplatively
at him.

Both films had views of Rome, and showed the Catacombs, with
approximately the same scenes of massacre. Similarly the views of
Nero (probably exaggerated in the latter production) and the burning
of Polycarp and the drowning of Calepodius were represented in both
films. Also the arena scenes, the lime-pit sequences and the woman
escaping the pursuing Roman over a creek were all identical with
those of the earlier film. Heroes of the Cross (1909) did not in-
clude a specific reference to 'Perpetua', but made up for it by
extra sequences dealing with the story about two boys and their
Christian tutor, the slaying of Senator Julian, 'the dice-throwers'
and the victim on the rack. It could perhaps be concluded that
Cross as first shown, but was too long to be included here.
Perry wisely repeated those scenes that had proved the most popular with the earlier *Soldiers of the Cross* (1900), for instance the drowning of Calepodius, the burning of Polycarp, the massacre in the arena, and the escape of the Christian mother from the pursuing Roman, as well as adding a few new scenes of his own invention.

The greatest difference was plainly in terms of technique. *Heroes of the Cross*, from all accounts was a true 'film' (with possibly some slides) and was joined in a connective narrative, whereas *Soldiers of the Cross* was merely a lecture illustrated by short films and other visual material. This made Perry's task with the later 'film' more demanding in many ways, as he had to tell the story in visual terms and provide film linkages between the action. For instance, in one continuous film, St. Stephen would have to be shown preaching, then he would have to be shown being arrested, being taken for trial before the Sanhedrin, being condemned, taken outside the city walls, and finally stoned. All this time Saul would be skulking in the background. To tell such a story would have involved some primitive form of editing the action, and possibly close-ups or other devices for conveying dramatic significance and so on. It is a great pity that this film does not exist today as it would prove revealing about the degree of sophistication of Australian film production at this time, in comparison with, for example, Pathe Freres who in the same year had established a plant in Melbourne.

Because of the absence of the film, it is impossible to make
anything but the vaguest conjectures about its artistic or cinematic quality. Since it was not widely shown, does not appear to have had any commercial distribution, and both within and without Army circles has always been 'shoved under the carpet' or confused with *Soldiers of the Cross*, it may be assumed that it was not of a great artistic standard and thus languished justifiably. (99) Evidence on these two films is scanty. The greatest living 'authority' on Joseph Perry's films is his son Reg., and Reg., until recently was not aware that his father had made another film based on *Soldiers of the Cross* (1900). The only non-Salvation Army publication reference that the present writer has found is a brief comment in the *Lone Hand* for 1 October 1909, as part of a long article on film-making in general:

Some dramatic pictures of merit - *The Heroes of the Cross* and *The Scottish Covenanters* - have been created at the cinematograph theatre of the Salvation Army, located in a suburb of Melbourne. Here the dumb-show dramas were staged with as much care as a Pathé production. 'Properties' and costumes were made on the premises. The film of each gloomy drama is 5,000ft, which unconscionable length is due to a lack of concentration in the action of the story and of quickness in the performance. These are now being taken through Maoriland by the Army's cinematograph showman, whilst the 'blood and fire' actors employed in the productions have resumed ordinary 'army' work. (100)

This seems to establish that two separate films, each 5,000ft, called respectively *Heroes of the Cross* and *The Scottish Covenanters*

99. *Lone Hand* reference implies this, and Mr Frank Curtis, a Salvation Army bandsman who toured with the Biorama Company in New Zealand in 1909, said that the film was rarely shown because it was considered of no great merit: *conversation with writer, October 1970.*
100. *Lone Hand*, 1 October 1909.
were in fact made and shown before October 1909, but in the absence of any full published review of the second film, severe doubt must fall on its existence. If it was made, and several people, including Reg. are adamant that they either acted in *The Scottish Covenanters*, or saw it being produced, then we may assume that the story of this film concerned those Christians who signed a covenant of freedom to worship in 1638 and were hunted down and martyred by the English King. (101)

8. CLOSURE OF THE LIMELIGHT DEPARTMENT

According to one eyewitness, by the time Perry returned to Melbourne from the New Zealand tour early in 1910, there was already a primitive form of 'censorship' set up within the Melbourne headquarters to vet those films permitted to be screened in Salvation Army halls. What may be taken as an official explanation of the closure of the Limelight Department claims that this action was taken because a stage had been reached where a number of local centres had acquired their own projectors and 'some misguided individuals' were hiring commercial films that were more of a hindrance than an aid to evangelistic work. (102)

101. The theme of 'The Scottish Covenanters' was a popular one with Salvation Army lecturers, see for instance *War Cry*, 10 July 1909; an address by Lieut. Colonel Birkenshaw in Sydney of this name. For details of the probable plot of the film, see the serialized stories published in the *War Cry*, 17 May 1902; 7 June 1902; 28 June 1902; 5 July 1902; 12 July 1902; 19 July 1902; 9 August 1902; 16 August 1902; 30 August 1902; 6 September 1902; 20 September 1902; 4 October 1902; 18 October 1902; 1 November 1902; 22 November 1902; 6 December 1902; 27 December 1902. I am indebted to M. S. Wassen for this information. 102. Letter from Capt. T. Hubbard to writer, 31 July 1968.
Quite a lot of Pathe Freres' French films had been imported into Australia, and many Salvationists had been shocked at seeing a modern version of The Life of Christ with its French 'angels' dressed in 'tights'.

Commissioner Jason Hay decided to discontinue altogether the practice of showing motion pictures in Salvation Army halls and the Limelight Department was disbanded. This was a bold step as many Corps relied on the weekly shows to finance themselves and it took a considerable time of re-adjustment to get things on a workable level again.

One of the several Salvation Army officers who resigned as a result of this directive was Brigadier Perry. He had given the best years of his life to the ideal of keeping the Cinema from the Devil, and when the Devil was declared the winner, he had to choose between his beloved films and a Salvation Army that did not wish to use his special talents any longer. He joined the film firm of Johnson & Gibson in Melbourne, and after the formation of Co-operative Films and Australasian Films Ltd., he became their representative in the Dutch East Indies from 1918 until 1930, when he retired to live quietly in Sydney with one of his daughters. He died on 28 April 1943 at the age of 81, 'the Father of Australian Cinema'.

9. CONCLUSION

This chapter argues for the recognition of a strong thread of

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103. Letter from Major William E. Blaskett (R) to writer, 10 October 1968.
104. Ibid.
historical continuity when discussing the films of the Salvation Army, and claims that this has not always been acknowledged in journalistic accounts. Traditional reports have generally skipped lightly from one high point in Australian film history to another, and thus it was not realized that the Limelight Department had been active as early as 1891 and that Perry had creatively moulded it in a certain form with a certain function that remained basically unchanged after Booth's arrival. Consequently, previous writers have exaggerated the role of Booth, beginning their story with his arrival and ending it with his departure, with Joseph Perry having the role of 'carrying the bags'. This chapter has tried to correct these impressions by showing how the cinematograph efforts of the Department grew out of, and were similar to, the earlier slide shows given by Perry, with the result that in this account Perry has been credited with greater initiative. This credit is justified on three grounds. Booth invented nothing new in theme, for Perry had already been making slides of social and biblical subjects and it would have been a natural progression for him to have graduated to social and biblical films without Booth's presence. Nor can it be said that Booth established or radically changed the Limelight Department, because Perry's creative organization of the Department's functions before, during and after Booth's arrival was more than merely competent, it was very resourceful and he was obviously exploiting to the maximum the possibilities of the new medium. Again, the fact that Perry could initiate and execute the
larger productions of *Heroes of the Cross* (1909) and *The Scottish Covenanters* (1909) without Booth's assistance, seems to indicate the possibility that Perry was responsible for much more of the earlier film than has generally been recognized. There must have been occasions when Booth's ill-health, his other pressing commitments, or his plain technical ignorance would have left Perry more or less in charge.

This chapter has also attempted to establish the true revolutionary nature of the Salvation Army's film achievements; not by making such extravagant claims to world 'firsts', but by a statement of exactly what was involved in producing these films, their aims and effects. Whether or not they were the first to use film for propaganda purposes, theirs was indeed a very thorough and revolutionary use of the medium, that may even have involved some very sophisticated techniques of cutting and editing. In a way, Booth's lecture was much greater than the American *Passion Play* film of 1898 because it transcended the medium and introduced a new dimension by creatively combining slides and films, an aspect which the Americans do not appear to have exploited.

New evidence has been presented here of further films made by Perry and the Limelight Department after Booth's departure. Previous writers seem to be only dimly aware of these films. They knew of something vaguely called 'Scottish Covenanters' being made in '1907' but nothing about a remake of *Soldiers of the Cross* in 1909. This meant that they took for granted the accounts of many eye-
witnesses, and even assumed that certain photographic material belonged to the earlier *Soldiers of the Cross* (1900), when in fact it really pertained to *Heroes of the Cross* (1909). Besides proving the actual production of these two new feature films with some degree of accuracy, this chapter has also tried to indicate that they deserve greater attention from film historians. *Heroes of the Cross* (1909) and *The Scottish Covenanters* now deserve greater attention than *Soldiers of the Cross* since less is known about them, they were true films, were longer, and were possibly more sophisticated. They also represent a clear achievement by Joseph Perry as an individual and the record should be set straight so that credit is given where it is due.

But what did it all achieve? It could be claimed that the Salvation Army's film-making marks an interesting, if somewhat oblique chapter in Australia's film history and hence is worthy of study for its own interest. It seems somehow strange that while the first Australian film was of a horse-race, the first serious use of the motion picture camera in this country was for religious purposes. From a religious beginning, the Australian film soon went over to a strongly secular usage.

Claims could also be made of various 'film firsts'. It could be asserted that the use Perry and Booth made of the motion picture five years after its inception, was quite original and significant in itself, as in a way they were years before their time. It is not the aim of this chapter to emphasize this aspect, as it is
clear that it has been exaggerated in the past, and will be again in the future. However, even allowing for this nationalistic exaggeration, one cannot help but admire the ingenuity with which, in an isolated vacuum, cut off from the mainstream of cinematic development, Perry and Booth conceived such a 'grand' idea, and then went ahead to develop the necessary techniques and 'gimmicks' to hammer home their message. Their was a fairly impressive achievement by contemporary world standards, even if they were not the first.

Their efforts were also significant in the heritage they handed on to other Australian film-makers. Such an early production of multi-reel films of such a high artistic and technical competence could not help but make it easier for imitators. It is probable that, because Soldiers of the Cross (1900) was so long and sophisticated for its time and because it told a story in dramatic terms, The True Story of the Kelly Gang (1906) was made in such a revolutionary form. If there had been no long, dramatic Australian precedent it is more than likely that the Kelly film would have followed world precedents and been no longer than Edwin S. Porter's Great Train Robbery of 1903. The American film tradition in the first decade of the twentieth century was for short films and 'short stories' in film content, whereas the Australian tradition, thanks to Soldiers of the Cross (1900) was for long films and 'dramatic novels' in film content.

In addition to this artistic and technical bequest there were
all the hidden intangible benefits. The Salvation Army in Melbourne developed two fully-equipped laboratories and studios at a time when such facilities were not in existence in Australia, and many men who later became famous in the Australian film industry received their training within this Department or from men who had worked with Perry. They in turn trained others, so the effects are incalculable. Finally it could be postulated that in a very real sense, the Limelight Department helped to keep the Australian film scene from becoming extinct in the very dark days of its life between 1899 and 1903. At a time when the private, secular side of the industry was stagnant, great developments were still taking place within the Salvation Army, and it became in its own right a great producer of films patronised by Government and private enterprise, as well as a great market for films and equipment. Their activities helped to keep the Australian film market operative until technical improvements and a renewed interest led to the movies' boom from 1908 onwards. It is ironical that at the very time the 'boom' was gathering impetus, and foreign producing and distributing firms were entering the Australian market, the earliest consistent producer, distributor and exhibitor of Australian films should have closed.

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CHAPTER 3.  FILM AS COMMUNICATION: THE NEWSREELS OF 1900-1905

One day in the far future we shall have our illustrated papers in the form of animated photographs, and a Biograph Salon will be a permanent institution in every town in the civilized world. The previous week's or month's events, near home or in distant lands, will be brought to us in actual moving photographs, perhaps even taken in their natural colours.

Table Talk, 10 December 1900.
1. BOER WAR FILMS AND OTHERS, 1900

In the first few years of its existence, from 1895 to 1898, the cinematograph was used indiscriminately to record reality; any reality. The amazing machine was directed towards significant events like The Melbourne Cup (1896), and at insignificant phenomena like waves crashing on a seashore. The motive at first was simply to express and record motion; to film something in action was enough and the subject matter of the film was generally irrelevant. This use of the moving picture camera as a mere gimmick soon palled with most of the world's audiences, and in Australia there was a long slump from 1897 to 1900 when relatively few films were shown in the major urban centres and interest in the new medium seemed to have died down. The exception of course, was the continuous and creative use of the cinematograph by the Melbourne Salvation Army during these years. Yet to recapture the commercial public, it was necessary for the camera and projector to be technically improved so that the images were clearer, steadier, brighter and without the eye-irritating flicker of the earliest films. By 1900, many improvements had taken place, and the reviews of the following years often commented upon the continuing improvement of the image on the screen.
Also, Australian audiences were becoming more discriminating. It is true that certain films of pure action (such as the one taken from the front of a speeding locomotive in 1900) would continue to bring the public to the 'cinemas', but to hold their patronage permanently it was necessary to have film of important people and events. To satisfy this demand the moving picture had to go to War, had to attend the doings and dyings of Royalty, and had to become a constant ring-side companion of major sporting events. One of the first primitive functions of the moving picture camera was thus one of the realistic 'documentary' or 'newsreel'. It was to be nearly a decade before the 'story' or acted fictional film was accepted and demanded. In the meantime, the gap between the first novelty films of action, and the later story films of fiction was bridged by documentaries, newsreel 'gazettes', scenics or travelogues, 'industrials' and comic or trick films. These were the intermediary stages!

Australian interest in film re-awakened in the first year of the twentieth century, and this was largely because of the Boer War films that started to flood into Australia in the first six months of 1900. Public interest in the progress of the war was running high in loyal Australia, especially after the Australian
contingents departed for the Transvaal. Those at home would clutch eagerly at any news media, be it newspaper cable, illustrated weeklies or the cinematograph. Films were both fake and real, but irrespective of their legitimacy they were all popular. The people who took most part in showing these films were the independent entrepreneurs Messrs Wyld and Freedman with their 'Genuine British Biograph', and J.C. Williamson's 'Anglo-American Biograph' under the management of Harold Ashton, and later W.J. Lincoln. Temporary or converted 'cinemas' like the Athenaeum hall in Collins Street, Melbourne were opened for the exhibition of these films, and extensive tours were undertaken by these showmen. Towards the end of the year as interest in war films started to wane a little, the subject matter was varied by the addition of some boxing films showing the battle between Corbett and Jeffries of that year. There were also films of English scenic spots, Royalty, and such novelties as a film taken from the front of a train racing through the Derbyshire hills. With the exception of a few gazettes of departing troops, and Australian scenic spots by Joseph Perry, there was very little Australian film production in this year, and as for many years to come, the market was nearly all taken up by foreign films from Europe, supplemented by some from the East coast of America.
For the first three weeks of January, films continued to be shown at the Melbourne Cyclorama, past home of such spectacles as 'The Battle of Gettysburg'.\(^1\) In mid-January 1900, the 2nd Victorian Contingent left to fight for 'Queen and Country' in another land.\(^2\) Their departure was immortalized by at least one cinematographer, for Joseph Perry took films of them as they crossed Princes Bridge and these were shown in Melbourne that same night.\(^3\) The first films taken at the scene of the war arrived in Melbourne early in February, and on the 17th, the first Transvaal War Pictures were screened at the Bijou. The Bulletin, pre-warmed by its foreign cables of the ease with which war subjects could be faked, was sceptical of these films from the beginning. This change of mind required some mental gymnastics because the popular misconception about photography that had endured for half a century stated that 'the camera could not lie', and indeed for the first decade of its life the moving picture was often criticized if the events depicted looked too obviously 'rehearsed'. In cool disdain, therefore, the Bulletin's Melbourne

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2. *Table Talk*, 18 January 1900.
correspondent remarked that the war films had been added 'without eclipsing the rest of the show', and that while five of them looked 'alive', and two even had the appearance of having been 'filmed' in South Africa, the film that showed a spy emerging from a shanty and being shot down by six hazy Tommies was undoubtedly a fake acted by sordid imposters who had fallen down 'for eighteenpence and a pot of beer by special arrangement with the photographer.' (4)

In the following week the same republican and at that time violently anti-war journal, had discovered some usefulness in the films since they demonstrated graphically 'the unpleasantness of getting wounded and bandaged for the country of one's alleged ancestors.' (5) But the seed of doubt about the veracity of the films continued to grow, until finally one correspondent expostulated; 'I cannot help regarding all these war cinematographs as put-up things'. To him it seemed impossible that a film could be taken in the middle of a battle, since he knew that to photograph an important event one had to know where the action would take place, be there in plenty of time, and be left unmolested to set up the machine and take the film. He said 'the parties mustn't rush too far away and spoil the focus, nor must they trample over you and the instrument'. This was all possible in a boxing match for instance,

5. Ibid., 24 February 1900.
where the action was confined and friendly officials would help the cameraman to set up his apparatus, but war was 'a disobliliging thing though, and happens suddenly, anyhow, anywhere, sprawling all over the shop, disappearing behind kopjes, galloping right over you, and putting its big hoof through your machine'. Despite these critical reservations, the films were obviously very popular with the public who were sorry to see them leave after three weeks at the Bijou. Rickards had added more films to the original set, which had been shown between the many other vaudeville acts at the Bijou, but the demand was for 'more and more'. The special success of the first weeks of March was the departure of the 'Bushman's Contingent' which aroused a frenzy of applause.

As the war films left Rickard's Bijou, another lot, advertised as the same as those recently shown at the London Palace, started a season at the Melbourne Athenaeum Hall. War films were also being screened during March as part of the J.C. Williamson programme at the Melbourne Princess, in among the 'lively legsome ballet' and the 'all-round gorgeousness of Little Red Riding Hood'.

7. Table Talk, 15 March 1900.
9. Ibid., 31 March 1900.
This two hours of 'entertainment' was considered very realistic and without the usual flicker of vibration which was 'so trying to the eyes'. As an indicator of the increasing importance of Film as an information medium for Australians, Table Talk solemnly warned the public that to 'miss them is to lose touch with the events that are now taking place in South Africa'.\(^{(11)}\) The Bulletin thought that the finest was a view of the Spion Kop district, with Buller's ambulances-and stretcher bearers wending their weary way down from the 'abandoned graveyard', while some of the seascapes were considered 'photographic marvells'.

But the most exciting incident for this reviewer was the film 'where the cavalry horse blunders at an exercise jump and rolls over its rider'. This was particularly 'thrilling' for the rider, 'who escapes every time with a severe pain in the ribs'.\(^{(12)}\) Table Talk also congratulated the two entrepreneurs for bringing the films to Australia, and said: 'the pictures are shown with a clearness of detail and a vivid realism that makes it hard for the spectator not to imagine that the events are being enacted in reality before his eyes'. 'It especially commented on the bombardment of Colenso with siege guns and the splendid views of English scenery taken from the front of a railway engine'.\(^{(13)}\)

10. Table Talk, 17 May 1900.
11. Ibid., 31 May 1900.
13. Table Talk, 7 June 1900.
War films have always been popular with Australians, and they proved a bonanza for their first promoters. Indeed, so many different war films were showing at different times in Sydney and Melbourne during 1900 that it is difficult to keep track of them all. By the beginning of June the film show at the Melbourne Athenaeum was a sell-out with matinees every day at three o'clock as well as the evening performances, with musical selections given by an 'efficient orchestra' during the reel breaks. (14) It was so popular that when Mayor McEacharn tried to buy out the house for a private viewing, he found that the proprietors refused his request. (15) By the end of June they had finished at the Athenaeum and commenced what was to prove a successful tour through some Victorian country districts and South Australia. (16)

In Sydney at the end of June, J.C. Williamson had entered the field by sponsoring a film show including a ten minute condensed version of Cinderella at Her Majesty's. Of this, one of the first story films, the Bulletin scathingly commented that 'the result is so distinct and convincing and such a marvel of compression that it suggests a new field for the Biograph. There is no visible

15. Ibid., 28 June 1900.
16. Table Talk, 19 July 1900.
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reason why Compressed Drama and Corned Farce shouldn't go as well as compressed meat'. (17) True, the experiment was so successful that the 'firm'in July opened the Lyceum 'which had been shut up a good deal of late', and started showing films described as 'The Anglo-American Bio Tableau; with Roberts to Pretoria'. The Bulletin said that it consisted of the same films that had already been shown in instalments at Her Majesty's together with some new ones. 'It never gets to Pretoria, in fact a large percentage never gets anywhere near there. A good part of the time and space is occupied by the same old visit of the Queen to Dublin; also the same much-respected lady inspecting troops; also her stout and less-respected son inspecting more troops'. (18) This last obsession of the biograph was particular detested by the republican Bulletin which could find nothing at all interesting in the 'picture of one man staring at another man, or at a lot of men'. It bitterly condemned 'a certain painful tendency to put on pictures of a monarch arriving somewhere or leaving somewhere'. (19)

After a 'most successful tour through Adelaide, Broken Hill, Ballarat and Bendigo, where the company did phenomenal business', the Wyld and Freedman 'War by Biograph' show returned to the

18. Ibid., 14 June 1900.
19. Ibid., 4 August 1900.
Athenaeum for four nights and four matinees in mid-July. Ten new films had been added and they included 'Her Majesty's visit to Ireland in April last; Entry of Buller into Ladysmith; the Powerful; and courageous naval boys marching to Windsor Castle to be received by the Queen; the Gordon Highlanders on their way to meet Buller previous to his entry into Ladysmith; and the bringing in of the wounded from Grobler's Kloof'. It was regarded by Table Talk as 'without doubt, the most startling and novel entertainment ever witnessed in Australasia'.

The Sydney Lyceum war films were joined by a further series at the Palace late in July, and the management of this 'Only Genuine Biograph of the Boer War', promised that the pictures would not wobble and that all the films were authentic. This last claim was an attempt to counter the unfavourable propaganda of the Bulletin and other papers who were delighted to learn that many so called Boer War films being shown to the gullible public were in fact 'fakes' acted out in fields near New York and London. In July for instance, the Bulletin published a report from a New York paper that claimed that the taking of one Boer War picture 'which had since been greatly appreciated for its accuracy and life-like character - that of the Battle of Colenso - had led to serious trouble'.

20. Table Talk, 19 July 1900.
It had been taken at Orange (New Jersey, U.S.A.) and the director had hired an immense number of British 'soldiers' in new uniforms with guns, and Boers with guns and false whiskers; but just as the armies were drawn up, and the struggle was about to begin, the 'Boers' had struck for eight shillings a day. 'Not getting it, they put their whiskers in their pockets and sat down. The British troops also struck and threw their guns over the fence; and it was only by the exercise of great managerial tact that there was any battle at all'.

Another film that was probably equally a fake, or if not, then a grim statement of modern War's brutality, was one entitled 'Shooting a Boer Spy in Ladysmith'. According to the Bulletin the officer in charge was seen to go up to the spy and cuff him before giving orders to shoot. After the firing, the officer walked up to the dead body and fired at it with his revolver. Unlike the films of World War One, the first films from this front do not appear to have been officially censored.

By the end of July, there were two different lots of war films being shown in Sydney; at the Lyceum (closed in mid-August) and at the Palace. Early in August, the Palace biograph included some new films of the Pope's life in the Vatican, another early.

22. Ibid., 21 July 1900.

23. Ibid., 27 October 1900.
favourite of the medium that was taking the world's leaders to the people. The Bulletin quipped that Science 'had got there at last, with Salvation per camera' as the Pope blessed the camera lens, but it was not to know that at that very moment the Salvation Army in Melbourne was mounting the biggest effort yet for religious propaganda on film. The Bulletin reviewer noted sadly that contrary to the entrepreneur's boastful advertisements, the Palace biograph did have a flicker and occasionally wobbled 'got up and shook itself and lay down in a different place', yet it was still a 'less agonising flicker than any other biograph' this writer had seen, and it 'seemed a distinct improvement'. Even if they shared the technical failings of presentation of all cinematographs at the time, he thought that these films were at least genuine, since none of the thrilling military episodes appeared to be the obvious work of a 'lot of dressed-up supers in a circus'. Some of them he thought beautiful, and one - the view from the front of a fast-moving locomotive in English hill country, in which bridges, tunnels, cuttings, curves and 'sundries' rushed headlong at the spectators in alarming fashion - he thought very charming indeed. His comments on this film suggest that even after four years of film shows, the occasional documentary could still evoke a temporary sense of enveloping reality. 'The way the longest

24. Bulletin, 11 August 1900. Note that just as vice-regal patronage was accorded such films as The Melbourne Cup (1896) in
and darkest tunnel throws itself head first at the audience, wraps its blackness around them like a garment and then dissolves again is a thrill in itself'. This writer said that he had 'done a spin' on the front of such an engine, and in his own words 'the graph gave exactly the same sensation, all except the breathless rushing of the air, the lost hat, and the cinder which got into my eye'. As a joy, a work of art, and a scenic effect, he considered the railway picture superior to a view of 16 monarchs arriving somewhere, or one monarch leaving 16 places at once. (26)

Towards the end of November, the Lyceum was reopened when the 'American Cineograph and Stereopticon Co.', started screening the American film of the fight between the New Zealander Corbett and the negro Jeffries for the world championship. It was recorded by the Bulletin as 'the least flickersome thing of its kind up to date'. The 23 rounds of the fight were shown,

Australia from the beginning, so too was high ecclesiastic patronage accorded such films of the Pope. See for instance Referee, 8 May 1901, and Leader, 4 May 1901, recording the attendance of the Sydney Roman Catholic Archbishop at some film of Pope Leo X. The stamp of approval early given by such leaders of Australian society meant that the middle and upper classes of Australia were early patrons of the cinema, unlike their counterparts in England. See R. Low. A History of the British Film Industry, Vols. 1 & 2. passim.

26. Ibid., 4 August 1900.
including the knock-out, all to the accompaniment of soft piano
music, beginning appropriately enough with 'Behold the Honest
Coon'. The female journalist wrote; 'Corbett is a tall, graceful
performer, like the hero who wins the fight in the sensational
play, while Jeffries is the square, large-jawed personage who
invariably loses it; nevertheless, for all Corbett's pretty ways,
his step-dancing, his seemingly numerous successful attacks, and
his beautiful black hair, it is he who is finally carted from the
ring looking like a fallen statue out of the Botanical Gardens'. (27)
The audience on this occasion was small and predominantly masculine,
and after only a week in Sydney the manager took the film on a
tour of the country.

The last film show given in Melbourne in 1900 was at the
Athenaeum. It was sponsored by the J.C. Williamson management
with a new outfit called 'the most up-to-date Anglo-American
Biograph', but the film subjects were the usual ones of the Boer
War, the Queen in Ireland, and some sensational episodes of a real
bull-fight in Spain. With monotonous regularity over the next
five years, these topics reappeared in the Australian film-shows;
they were literally 'run into the ground'. One film pioneer

27. Ibid., 1 December 1900.
showman was later to recall that the scratches on one of his Boer War films were so bad after repeated screenings that in country districts he often had to apologize for the 'shrapnel' before screening it. On Christmas Day 1900, an American film of the Passion Play at Oberammergau was shown and Mr. Wallace Brownlow sang 'Cavalry', 'Nazareth', and other sacred songs. Matinees and evening performances were given daily, and it was one of the most popular holiday attractions in Melbourne. (28)

2. CEREMONIES AND PROCESSIONS RULE SUPREME: THE FILMS OF 1901

1901 was a great year of processions, ceremonials and royalty for Australian cameramen and film showmen. Against a general atmosphere of patriotic fervour partly engendered by the continuing films from the Boer War, Australians in twelve months saw the opening of their new Federal government on 1 January; sustained the death and funeral of Queen Victoria later in January; and shared vicariously in the triumphant tour of the Duke and Duchess of York in May, all per medium of moving pictures. Crude patriotism was also given a fillip by the appearance of an ex-stage personality turned travelling film showman called George H. Snazelle, who toured with English films making up a 'lecture' he called 'Our Navy' concerning Britannia ruling the waves.

Showing a rare concern for posterity, the N.S.W. Government...

28. Table Talk, 27 December 1900.
former business associates should combine to produce the best possible record of this great event. Thanks to them, Australia is one of the few nations of the world that has a cinematic record of its foundation.

The Baker & Rouse cameraman, Albert J. Perier was a Frenchman born in 1871, who, like another French-Australian cameraman, Maurice Bertel, came to Australia as a youth. The Perier family arrived in Australia in 1884 and the father became a teacher of French and moved in respectable circles. Thus, by 1891 Albert was one of the three tall young 'society' men who carried spears onto the stage as an atmospheric background for Sara Bernhardt's first Sydney performance. Long interested in photography, in November 1892 he was invited by J.J. Rouse to become a member of staff at the new photographic store of Baker & Rouse, and over the next decade he became prominent in that firm's activities in N.S.W. and a first-rate photographer. (29)

Being based in Sydney, Perier, in liaison with the various officials, was responsible for most of the organizing

29. For much of this information on Perier I am indebted to the article by K.B. (Keast Burke, Kodak film historian) entitled 'I was There - Celebrating the ninety-first anniversary of the birth of A.J. Perier', in Australian Popular Photography, May 1962, pp.29-33.
late in 1900 made arrangements through the Government printer, W.A. Gullick, to have a film record taken of the Inauguration of the Commonwealth procession through Sydney and the ceremony in Centennial Park. He approached the two most active Australian motion picture organizations of the time, Baker and Rouse in Sydney and the Melbourne Salvation Army. At first sight it may seem an incongruous partnership; between a worldly enterprise and an organization that was mainly concerned with the state of Man's soul, but in fact the 'Limelight Department' under Joseph Perry had always maintained a close working relationship with commercial photographers. Baker and Rouse (the fore-runners of Kodak Australia), besides handling the Eastman products then coming from America, were also the Lumiere agents and it was from them that Perry had bought his machines, together with the great majority of his raw film stock, and the occasional finished subjects that supplemented his programmes for Salvation Army exhibitions. By this time Perry's expertise as a cameraman, and the sophisticated laboratory facilities he had established at 69 Bourke Street were well known throughout Australia. Since at this time the various Australian governments had no facilities for taking or developing moving pictures, it was natural that they should turn to such acknowledged experts in the field, and even more natural that the two
associated with the making of this film. Using new techniques for recording continuous events that probably had their origin in the solution to the problem of filming horse-races from start to finish, he and his assistants set up about eight or nine well-built pyramids about twelve feet high at strategic positions early on the day of the procession. From the evidence available today it would seem that only one (or at the most two cameras) was used, since Perier in a 1955 letter to Jack Cato made much of the fact that a roving camera had to be rushed between the camera posts by the only vehicle that would command respect in the crowded streets - a horse-drawn fire engine with a Salvation Army officer riding shot-gun.\(^{(30)}\) When the camera was finally handed up to Perier in his commanding position outside the G.P.O. in Martin Place, he only had time to take a short amount of footage as the camera was urgently required at Centennial Park where the highlight of the occasion - the swearing in of Lord Hopetoun as Australia's first Governor-General - was to take place.

As was usual with the films of this time, nearly all were under 100ft. in length, but together they added up to about 1,000ft.

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of film, and according to Perier, all the spools were taken away for processing by Perry in Melbourne. They were subsequently shown at the finale of the pantomime Australis at J.C.W's Her Majesty's theatre (Sydney) towards the end of January. Perier, who was in charge of the projector at the back of the stalls, in an enclosed tent away from the eyes of the public, was to recall fifty years later, what hot work it had been standing over the light-house of the projector feeding the film into the gate while his assistant George Mitchell took up the film as it spilled out.

The Sydney Morning Herald in its review of the programme thought that 'the views of the procession changed too frequently... so that the effect was rather fragmentary, but on the other hand many different aspects of the picturesque cortege were given.

The audience warmly applauded the appearance of the Highland and Indian regiments as they wheeled under a triumphal arch, and there was also given a vivid glimpse of the Governor-General in his state carriage. But the best films, this paper thought, were those given of the swearing in at the pavilion. Here the arrival of the

31. 816ft. of this film in original 35mm was bought by the National Library for £100 in 1952. For a full description of the scenes see Australian Photographic Review, 23 January 1901: when they were advertised for sale by Baker & Rouse.


33. Quoted in the Australasian, 26 January 1901.
Governor-General with his 'brilliant staff', the scene in the pavilion with the Archbishop reading prayers, the actual signing, and then the departure of Lord Hopetoun with Sir F.M. Darley by his side, aroused 'overwhelming enthusiasm'. While the pictures were being shown, the orchestra under Mr. George Hall played some dashing martial music, inducing the occupants of the upper circle and gallery to join lustily in 'Soldiers of the Queen' and some other favourite songs.

The revolutionary technique of 'editing' a film (i.e. cutting from one action to another, and finally combining certain short sequences to tell a story) probably had its origin in such documentaries as this one, and it is interesting in this context to read contemporary reviews complaining of the 'disjointed' and 'fragmentary' nature of this film. Audiences of the time, in Australia as elsewhere, were conditioned to a static concept of cinema and they were unprepared for the seemingly amazing capacity of Film to be in many places 'simultaneously'. They were used to a camera that was set up directly in front of the action, and which refused to budge to follow the action, therefore recording only what passed immediately in front of it. They equated the camera with its lens to one person and his eyes. Just as a spectator could not be in two places at once along the route of a procession, so too did they expect the camera to stay rooted to one spot.
Consequently, they were unprepared for the imaginative leap required to 'read' a film like this one that had been assembled from different films taken from different vantage spots. As with every dynamic innovation in cinema technique, there is evidence that Australians also initially resisted this 'speeding-up' and greater camera mobility.

Also in January 1901, the Anglo-American bio-tableau was still showing films under J.C. Williamson's management and was regarded by the Leader as 'one of the best that has been exhibited here, both in the clearness of presentation and the selection of the pictures'. (34) This early J.C. Williamson exploitation of moving pictures was the beginning of a continuing interest by this firm in the stage's greatest rival. When they came to make their own films in 1915, it was not so much a precipitous temporary aberration, as the fruition of a long interest and association with moving pictures. Harold Ashton was their first touring manager and he was succeeded by W.J. Lincoln, who was to write the scripts and help to direct many of their 1915 features. In 1900-1901, Ashton travelled with the films from Kalgoorlie to Charters Towers sometimes in one big jump of 7,000 miles. (35) These country tours.

34. Leader, 5 January 1901.
were interspersed with short stays in the capital cities - at the Melbourne Athenaeum, and at the Lyceum or Her Majesty's in Sydney. Early in January, a special show was given at the Melbourne Athenaeum for members of the acting profession and the press, and the applause on that occasion showed how popular the entertainment was becoming with show business people. (36) Perhaps it was only natural that a theatrical enterprise would be one of the first to provide realistic accompanying noises to the films exhibited, but in any case it is true that the Williamson Biograph was regarded as 'strong in realistic sound effects'. When the bullock-drivers on the South African veldt were seen to crack their whips, the noise of a whip-crack accompanied the picture. Cannon-smoke on the sheet happened simultaneously with gunpowder explosions behind the scenes, or drum booms in the orchestra pit, and so forth, all to the intense satisfaction of the patrons. One commentator even questioned the loud sobs that broke the monotonous buzz of the projector while the Passion Play films were being shown on Christmas Day, believing them to have been cunningly supplied by the zealous management. (37)

36. Australasian, 5 January 1901, also Leader, 5 January 1901.
On 19 January, a theatrical entrepreneur, ex-actor and opera singer named George H. Snazelle came to Melbourne and opened at the Athenæum with a series of films he entitled 'Our Navy'. According to the Bulletin, this show, which 'appealed to the Higher Jingoism by showing what is best in the character of the Union Jack', was divided into two parts. The first part dealt with a 'blue-jacket's career in the service', showing first the raw recruits, and then taking the audience through every phase of his training, work and play; while the second dealt with 'life on board H.M.S. Jupiter, one of the great 15,000 ton battleships of the Channel Squadron during the manoeuvre of 1900'.

Some of the films, which had been taken by the 'well known naval photographic artists Messrs. West and Son', that particularly appealed to the Leader reviewer were those showing sail being furled on the training brig Nautilus, cutlass drill, gun boats firing, torpedo mining and diving work, and 'the marvellous trials of the torpedo boat destroyers', some of which travelled at the astounding speed of 40 knots. Sailors dancing the hornpipe, H.M.S. Victory heaving the lead, a sailor's funeral, and a sailor's homecoming were also admired. Snazelle, who had last been seen

38. Ibid., 5 January 1901.
39. Leader, 26 January 1901.
in Melbourne during the 1870's as a star of the Carl Rosa Opera Company and was fondly remembered by many in his audiences, helped the show along with a bright descriptive lecture, the odd humorous yarn about the 'whistler', and sundry recitations and songs. The Bulletin thought his bass voice had lost a little of its volume, but 'the unctuous melody was still there, and the songs were lusty sea-songs, like Henry Newbold's ballad of Drake's Drum'.

When he moved to the Sydney Palace early in May, the Bulletin in its review betrayed the prevailing subconscious hunger for true documentaries when it satirically pointed out what the films did not show:

They don't show his food, his salary, his prospects, the kind of language his officers use to him, his thoughts and education, his sleeping accommodation, his crust-stand, the amount of money he is able to save up for his old age, the size of his pension, how his officers take it when he wants to get married, and his chances of being able to keep a wife, the sort of house his wife lives in while he is away, and the washing she lives by - in fact 'Our Navy' shows only a spectral and extraneous Jack, and from the nature of things, that is all it can show.

An excellent description was given of Snazelle by the same writer in these words: 'Snazelle, with his greyish hair and his frosted mustache, poring anxiously over his manuscript by lamplight at a corner of the stage, says little, but he sings one or two songs in a voice that is not very much the worse for wear'. His other
films were also accompanied by vivid sound effects, as the Bulletin put in praising his stage management:

it is not till after the boxing-match is over that one remembers that he heard the biff as well as saw it. Someone in the background—pours corn on a sheet of galvanized iron, or something of the kind, as the cinematograph ironclad rushes through the waves, and the hissing of the waters is consequently quite audible. And when Snazelle or his underling yells to the shadowy Jack on the white sheet to do something, the shadow does it right away. This looks impressive. (40)

As the same journal concluded three weeks later when the show was still going; 'thanks to the talent of Snazelle and the punctuality of the man behind the scenes who makes the water swish and the cannon bang at just the right moment, 'Our Navy' has been arousing steady interest in the jewel-like theatre opposite Sydney Lyceum'. (41)

Amidst all the 'fake' films, his were regarded as authentic; 'Nothing will persuade a peaceful harbour or a jug of hot water to look like that', declared the Bulletin, 'you can't forge waves'. (42)

From the Palace he moved to the Sydney Queen's Hall where he refreshed his initial offering with additional films, and stayed on there until late June. (43) After a Brisbane tour, he left for

41. Ibid., 25 May 1901.
42. Ibid., 15 June 1901.
43. Leader, 6 July 1901.
Melbourne, and in October was homeward bound on a London mail steamer, planning to retire from the lecture platform for a time and reside on his hop farm in Kent. His successor was Captain Edwards R.M. who continued the tour under the management of Charles MacMahon at the Queen's Hall, Sydney.\(^{44}\) In December they were in Melbourne, and they followed up the initial success with an equally popular show called 'Our Army' showing British military life.\(^{45}\)

The films of the first few years of the twentieth century were concerned with the Imperialist pre-occupations of the old century and the foreboding murmurs of the coming World War. Interest in dreadnoughts and the British Army was ominous, while the films of royalty (the first film 'stars' for the Australian public) were examples of the super-human aura national leaders were to assume as they were filmed and shown to millions all over the world.

The first 'Royalty' film of 1901 was a rather macabre one; it was a long saga of Queen Victoria's funeral. Towards the end of January, news of her death had staggered the 'super-patriots' of

\(^{44}\) *Australasian*, 5 October 1901.

\(^{45}\) *Referee*, 18 December 1901.
Australia; although her death had been expected, it still came as a shock. Theatres were closed for a day in mourning, and J.C. Williamson who had advertised an exhibition of the films taken during the Inauguration of the Commonwealth, was forced to postpone their screening. (46) The Williamson management, however, was one of the first to exploit the sovereign's death by showing films 'depicting the memorable events in the life of the late Queen Victoria'. (47) Since it was impossible for films of the funeral to reach Australia until a month had passed, Australians had to be satisfied with such old footage as could be resuscitated in the interval.

Late in March, almost exactly a month after the events depicted, films of Queen Victoria's funeral caused a stir of excitement when they were shown for the first time in Melbourne at the Athenaeum. They were advertised as the same set as those then showing at the London Palace. First the cortege was shown on its way from Osborne House to Cowes Pier, where the Royal yacht Alberta was waiting to take the coffin through the assembled fleet from the Isle to Portsmouth. 'In London, the funeral procession was shown as

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46. Leader, 26 January 1901.
47. Ibid., 2 March 1901.
it emerged from the Marble Arch and curved around into Edgware Road, and on to Windsor, with the gun carriage manned by the handy men of the Naval Brigade'. The latter views in Windsor were adjudged the most brilliant of the series, but all were so definite on this first screening that individual dignitaries could easily be identified. (48)

A week later in April, Messrs Wyld and Freedman, who had been so successful the previous year with their Boer War films, returned to the Athenaeum with 'a new series of up to date pictures including the Queen's funeral pageant, and films of the Duke and Duchess of York's children, Prince Edward, Prince Bertie and Princess Victoria. Light relief from all this royalty was provided by the Kansas City fire brigade, the Paris exposition, the International Yacht Race, the trial trips of H.M.Torpedo boat destroyer Viper cruising at 32 knots, life-boat practice and many others. (49) Nevertheless it was plain that the cinematograph was firmly fixed in the patriotic rut, for the time being at least.

The sacrilegious Bulletin was quick to make fun of the Queen's funeral film, presented twelve times a week with unfailing regularity to audiences that watched with hushed solemnity. This

48. Ibid., 23 March 1901.
49. Ibid., 6 March 1901.
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48. Ibid., 23 March 1901.
49. Ibid., 6 March 1901.
weekly had been growing steadily more exasperated with constant films of monarchy, and the exaggerated respect paid this film called forth the following satire:

ladies wept loyally with bright-hued evening dresses and with their hair done up in the newest style... The hall was dark and the cinematograph pictures were dark, and the rain pattered drearily outside while somebody on the platform described the wanderings of what he called the 'cauffin' around various parts of London. An hour or so of funeral procession is about the most melancholy entertainment possible, and it is sad to realize that the people who tried to brighten the dirge-like music with applause were rebuked by the man who said 'cauffin'. Later the Queen of Holland was married per Cin. and the social atmosphere cleared somewhat. (50)

One of the correspondents to 'Poverty Point' even recounted with delight the macabre sense of showmanship displayed by the Melbourne management that advertised on local trams with long canvas streamers; 'The Queen's Funeral! The Queen's Funeral! Two hours of Solid Enjoyment!' (51)

The Bulletin was also quick to report one of the first cases of official censorship, when it declared that the Australian film was not identical with the one that had been shown at the London Palace theatre:

51. Ibid., 18 May 1901.
For one night or for two or three nights only, the apparatus which cannot lie revealed the fact that the coffin bearers let their half-ton burden slip to the ground as they were trying to lift it from the gun-carriage. This thrilling incident was cut out of the picture by order of the Crown, or the Police (which are one and the same thing for suppression purposes) and subsequent reproductions give no inkling of it.

The Bulletin felt that the Genuine British Biograph could swell even further its large receipts if it slipped the missing incident back into the ceremony, since 'the public do so like to feel shocked in moderation'.

Royalty remained uppermost as a film topic for the rest of the year because of the preparations for, and actual visit by the Duke and Duchess of York, following their New Zealand tour. In mid-May their impending visit was proclaimed by a film show at the Melbourne Bijou illustrating their departure from England. Among the photographers who took film of the royal couple in New Zealand and Australia were Joseph Perry and Franklyn Barrett. With their arrival in Melbourne the illustrated magazines carried full photographic coverage at the same time as films taken of their Melbourne visit were shipped interstate for the patrons hungry for

52. Ibid., 20 April 1901.
53. Referee, 15 May 1901.
up-to-date information. The Australasian reported that films of the gaily bedecked procession down Bourke Street were shown late in May at the Centenary-hall, York St., Sydney 'and proved very attractive. The photographs were unusually clear and every movement of the many thousands of persons included in the field was said to have been faithfully recorded'. (54) The Bulletin said: 'The Duke as in real life gives the impression of a small nervous man with a strong tendency to become invisible'. (55) The films do not seem to have been shown in Melbourne until August, when they appeared for a short season at the Aquarium. (56)

Interspersed with the programmes of the visiting royalty were films from England showing the Queen lying in state, and King Edward opening Parliament in the snow and fog to stately music from an invisible source. The Bulletin continued to be disgusted with the whole thing; 'it looks as if all our entertainments in this line are to be clogged by Royalty and its various deaths and burials'. (57) But a month later the writer.

54. Australasian, 1 June 1901.
56. Leader, 24 August 1901.
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54. *Australasian*, 1 June 1901.
55. *Bulletin*, 1 June 1901.
brightened as the thought occurred to him that the cinematograph
would be the greatest anti-monarch argument of all time:

As a slow, persistent, corroding argument, the cine. has no equal. When the public come to realize
that an invention which ought to be showing them the
wonders of the earth and sky and humanity, is being
utilized more and more to bring before them long,
dreary processions of dead monarchs, and long, dreary
processions of living ones, painfully nod-nod-nodding
to great masses of shadows, the public is liable to
grow tired. (58)

Local films, besides the Inauguration and the Visit of the
Duke and Duchess, continued to be produced during 1901, but they
were mainly of a frivolous or gazette nature. For instance, some
film was taken by Williamson's agents at the Collins Street
'Block' and crowds milled around the cameraman, while Hugh Ward's
'grotesque dance' in the stage production 'Florodora', then on in
Melbourne, was photographed, and favourably compared by the
Bulletin to a film showing the same dance scene in the London
'Florodora'. (59) Of a more serious nature were some of the first
ethnographic films taken in the world - those made by Professor
Baldwin Spencer of the dances and customs of central Australian
aborigines in March 1901. (60) In 1968 when the Commonwealth

58. Ibid., 22 June 1901.
59. Leader, 9 March 1901, Bulletin, 16 March 1901; 27 April 1901.
60. Baldwin Spencer, The Northern Tribes of Central Australia
(MacMillan & Co. Ltd. London 1904) p.ix, x. I am indebted to
M.J. Wasson for directing my attention to this book.
Film Unit was making *The Pictures That Moved* about early Australian film history, the producers came across Spencer's original film and gramophone records in the Melbourne Public Library where they had lain unmolested for over half a century.

The films were reasonably clear, but because he had no 'panning' device on his tripod he could not follow the action as the aborigines danced in and out of view, so much of the film is filled up with uninteresting scrub background. (61) Nevertheless, the film and the wheezy music of the circular records is a valuable record of the customs of Australian aborigines before these were destroyed by the white man.

3. CONSOLIDATION OF A NOVELTY, 1902-1904

The years 1902-1904 witnessed the steady consolidation of a new entertainment medium. Certainly, public attention was no longer focussed directly on moving pictures, there were fewer references to them in the press, but this did not mean films were no longer being shown. In fact the very opposite was taking place. The absence of significant events to photograph meant that more energy was put into exhibition rather than production. Films which had already

61. *Commonwealth Film Unit production; The Pictures That Moved* (1968), *op.cit.*
seen hard usage were taken all over the countryside, and it is
during these years that most Australians had their first experience
of film shows. The following comment about a typical bush audience
comes from the Bulletin:

It was in the prickly-pear district on race night, and
the crowd was full of beer and good humour. The pictures
were of the usual ten-a-penny order - 'Bobs', Queen
Victoria &c.&c. The remarks of the lecturer were drowned
by general cheering, and he presently gave up trying to
lecture. The audience cheered every picture indiscriminately.
When a seedy sketch of the dead on a cold, battered
battlefield appeared these bushmen cheered for the dead.
When the late Queen Victoria appeared, they cheered for
the late Queen Victoria. Then the weary, spotted, blotted
biograph of Queen Victoria's funeral transpired, and they
cheered for the Queen's funeral. The showman tried to
remonstrate here and explain the seriousness of the
situation and they cheered him. Finally, he sang
'Gorsave' in a husky voice, as a hint the show was over,
and the audience cheered on general principles. (62)

The early films were brought to the bush-folk by touring
showmen like the commercial Corricks, or the religious Perrys, and
there were also the occasional tours of J.C. Williamson's Anglo
American Biograph or the Genuine British Biograph of Wyld and
Freedman. Their big job, no matter who they were, was to dispel

any public prejudice against the new invention, and to cultivate an air of acceptance and indeed of indispensability. Film came to be accepted not just as a novelty, but took on for Australians an immediate and special role as educator and travel guide. Many Australians were stuck in the capital city of their birth, other moved freely interstate, or were nomad workers in the great outback, but all desired to know more about the places that it was impossible for them to visit. It was this 'digging-in' and 'softening-up' of the market that occurred imperceptibly during these years that explains the continuing endurance of Film in Australia before 1910, when, all over the world it was a shaky novelty. It was also this great untutored outback public who were to be a great market for the first Australian films, and indeed it was for them, and about them, that many of the films were made.

As proof of the Film's continuing impact on the public's imagination, the outstanding success of the stage play 'The Lady of Ostend' could be cited. First performed in September 1902, the play told the familiar story of the man who innocently took his wife to the pictures, only to be betrayed by a film on the screen showing his liaison with another woman. (63) It is not

63. *Table Talk*, 4 September 1902.
clear from the reviews whether or not an actual film was shown during the play for heightened realism, as seems to have been the case with later plays like Besieged at Port Arthur (1906), but in any case the popularity of this play illustrates the continuing hold the moving pictures in a social context exercised over the Australian public.

The onset of the 1902 Spring racing carnival and the forthcoming summer holidays, saw the biograph back in the capital cities. At the Melbourne Athenaeum, amusing films of Ally Sloper visiting Brighton were shown to the intense delight of the children, while the adults found much to interest them in the Coronation procession, a grand review of Indian troops and a ten minute trip through London. (64)

During January 1903, the 'British Biograph' returned to the Athenaeum with conjuror Clive O'Hara in daily matinees as well as evening exhibitions. (65) A Bulletin writer hinted at the alleged destruction of the eyes wrought by constant biograph viewing, and referred to an eminent oculist friend who assured him that he was already getting the first crop of 'Biograph eyes' from the flicker. (66) Curiously similar arguments were advanced when

64. Ibid., 13 November 1902.
65. Australasian, 10 January 1903.
television first came to Australia in the late 1950's.

Reversing the overseas trend, the coin in the slot film show became popular in Australia after moving pictures had been shown on the screen. It is true that as early as January 1896, in Adelaide, Charles MacMahon had put on show his kinetoscope machine which was an Edison patent, combining moving pictures with sound, but after a fleeting popularity, nothing much was heard of the peep-show after the advent of Hertz with his cinematograph. (67) In 1903 the American Mutoscope company started flooding Sydney with numerous machines, each with their individual program for an audience of one. The company importing the machines had two stands in Sydney in April, and was also exhibiting the machines in various suburban and country towns. Its big advantage (as had been claimed by all its successors) was that it had none of the sight-wrecking flicker of all other cinematograph shows. (68) These machines are by now familiar to all who have visited 'Luna Park', but at the time, the copper penny that made connection with the battery and light, and the automatic thumb that released the hundreds of picture cards at just the right pace, seemed very intriguing to the Sydney public.

67. Adelaide Advertiser, 1 January 1896; 18 January 1896.
However, the crowds who queued to see the various 'films' denounced with one voice the way the picture would go dark and the penny drop ominously just as something interesting was about to happen. The Bulletin even called for some 'Mowser' to protest about them:

> Waiting for some reverend howler to open up a crusade against the mutoscope. In 'Sylvia undressing', 'Peeping Tom', 'Who owned the corset' etc. the spectator who has invested a penny is just thinking he is going to see something shocking when the light goes, and the penny, which has been acting as a joint in the circuit, falls down into the cash box with a sound like a fat chuckle. 'Great is the Art of Finishing'. Why doesn't some parson arise and denounce the machine for leaving off in this villainous manner?  

(69)

According to the Bulletin a few weeks later, a Mr. G.E. Ardill of the 'One of the 'Ope' evidently took the hint and at a 'Conference on Public Morals' spoke very severely of 'the fleeting penn'orth'. (70) In Melbourne, the following year, the Mutoscope company was fined for indecency, even though its managers protested that their company was patronised by the Pope whose picture was shown in their machines. (71)

69. Ibid., 11 April 1903.

70. Ibid., 23 July 1903.

71. Ibid., 14 April 1904.
The behaviour of the people using these machines was curiously indicative of the future preferences of motion picture audiences. They plainly preferred acted fiction with some glamour rather than filmed reality:

Watching the public at the Mutoscopes, [1] came to the conclusion that the machine labelled 'High Kicking', 'Peeping Tom', 'Maiden's Midnight Romp' &c. would soon break down through overwork, whilst those entitled 'Riding with Kitchener', 'Coronation Scenes' &c. will probably die of starvation. As I possessed a penny at the time, I had a look at one of the first-mentioned and was shocked. When I have another penny I am going to get shocked again. (72)

From the second half of 1903, the cinematograph revived in the main commercial centres. By October, the 'Great American Vitagraph' was at the Queen's Hall in Sydney demonstrating that the American film had been well and truly introduced into Australia before the advent of Cozens Spencer in 1904. The film that impressed the Bulletin critic was called Shooting the Chutes at Coney Island, and it showed holiday-makers by the boatload careering down a chute into a bank of water, ploughing its way out of sight amid spray and much applause. 'It is as enjoyable as is the feel of a horrible nightmare or the hearkening to a fearsome ghost story; yet even the sensitive watcher wants it all

72. Ibid., 6 August 1903.
done again'. Other films were shown; of a Maori haka, a few
sad and a few comical films, while incidental music supplied a
suitable background.\(^{73}\)

In Melbourne in November 1904, films similar to the old
magic lantern trick of projecting the moving image of insects
and other small phenomena were filling the Opera House on a
Saturday evening. The inhabitants of the insect and reptile
world, magnified in some cases 10,000 times were displayed to the
wondering gaze of a somewhat incredulous audience by the
'microbioscope'. The busy bee at home, the corpuscles in a drop
of blood, and the mites in what the Bulletin called 'a mossel of
cheese' were all shown going through the day's work. Also on
the same show was a vaudeville act including Irving Sayles, a
coloured comedian of original talent.\(^{74}\)

4. THE CHAOTIC YEARS IN EXHIBITION 1904-1905

It is difficult to categorize, or even take cognizance of,
all the different film-shows that toured the Australian capitals
in these two years, with or without accompanying vaudeville acts. 
Nearly every major 'music hall' (if one can use the term in the
Australian context) programme included moving pictures, sometimes
at the top and sometimes at the bottom of the bill. Some of the

\(^{73}\) Ibid., 8 October 1903.

\(^{74}\) Australasian, 7 November 1903.
big names that were to dominate the exhibition and productions aspects of the business emerged in this year, and it is clear that some shows - like the Williamson Bio-tableau - were more important than others. These touring showmen exhibited mainly realist films with the occasional short French or Italian story film, and hardly any Australian films, although it is clear that there were operators active in Melbourne and Sydney recording some significant local events.

1904 began with a biograph at the Athenaeum hall in Melbourne. Over the next few years, this old hall was to become the main moving picture centre in Melbourne, as the Lyceum became for Sydney. The films were accompanied by incidental acts that changed every week - later it was to be the other way around, with films changing every week and other performances remaining the same.

In the first week of January 1904 it was 'a not unpromising young man who imitated Mel. B. Spurr in a small way'. The following week it was a conjuror named Clifford Eskell.\(^75\)

During March, the play 'The Lady of Ostend' continued its popular performances at the Sydney Criterion, and at the Tivoli, films of the Test match showing Warner winning the toss from Noble were warmly applauded during the current 'cricket fever'.\(^76\)

\(^75\). *Bulletin*, 14 January 1904.

September, more films were being shown in a strong vaudeville programme at the Melbourne Opera House, while at the Town Hall, John Tait was managing a gramophone recital with fourteen records by Nellie Melba played on the 'largest and best gramophone imported to Australia', and personally endorsed by the singer herself. In addition, films were shown of 'recent stirring events in Europe, America and the Far East'.\(^{(77)}\) This was to be the beginning of the Tait brothers' interest in films. Two years later they were to be responsible for the world's first feature film, *The Story of the Kelly Gang* (1906).

In October, the Athenaeum was re-occupied by 'Williamson's Bio-Tableau', with films allegedly of the Russo-Japanese conflict, and others entitled 'Life in Every Clime'. The attentive Melbourne audience saw views of the Czar attending High Mass at the Winter Palace, St. Petersburg, the sinking of a Japanese torpedo-boat, the Chumulpo survivors, the Second Imperial Japanese Guards leaving for the front, the great Toronto Fire, the Gordon-Bennet motor race, the Italian exhibition at Earl's Court, the great temple procession at Nikko, winter sports throughout the world, and many other items.\(^{(78)}\) The manager was W.J. Lincoln, a young

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78. *Leader*, 22 October, 1904.
Melbourne playwright who had turned touring showman, and who, a decade later, was to write the scenarios for, and direct some of the 'firm's' own Australian features. The machine was said to have been bought by Mr Williamson himself on his last American trip, and the films were the most up-to-date available. (79) Two performances were given daily, and according to the Referee the show was a 'veritable boom' from the opening night, with many having to be turned away. (80)

Interest in the Russo-Japanese War was intense in Australia, partly because of fears of the 'Yellow Peril' and the expansionist aims of the Japanese that had been inculcated over the previous decade by the Bulletin. In December 1904 in the Exhibition grounds, Melbourne, the first of a series of pyrotechnic displays was given, elaborately reproducing in miniature the bombardment of Port Arthur, a tableau which was reported in the Leader as taking up 6000 superficial feet of space. (81) In such an enthusiastic atmosphere, the films shown by Lincoln in Melbourne until mid-November and in Sydney over the Christmas holidays, could not fail to be well attended. Its superior technical presentation was also favourably commented upon by several journals, as was the variety of its programme and the

79. Referee, 30 November 1904.

80. Ibid., 26 October 1904.

81. Leader, 24 December 1904.
constant additions of such new films as the *Melbourne Cup of 1904*,
the Battle of Liaovang, and a bull fight from Seville. (82) The
war films, showing the siege of Port Arthur, and the marching of
the combatants on both sides (for at this time the war cameraman
passed freely from both sides of the front), were said by the
*Leader* to 'bring vividly before one's eyes some of the dangers and
difficulties which war creates'. (83) But the most interesting
scenes for this writer were not of the war, but of the travelogues
in wintry climes and the spirited portrayal of the fire brigade at
work during the great Toronto fire. The wide range of subjects
kept the audience's attention for the two hours of the
entertainment and the time seemed to pass quickly.

The *Melbourne season finished at the end of November, and
Lincoln made his way to Sydney where he opened at the *Queen's Hall*
on 10 December. (84) Before leaving, he tried out in Melbourne the
novel experiment of having a woman behind the screen singing some
of the illustrated songs that were projected on the screen. Because
the anonymous lady possessed an excellent voice, this action was

82. *Ibid.*, 29 October 1904; 12 November 1904, also *Referee*, 30
November 1904: 'a remarkable improvement on anything of the kind
that has yet been seen in this country', also 14 December 1904,
'Taken generally a better set has never been seen here'.
much appreciated. The entertainment was of such quality that prices as high as 3/- were charged, and even the minimum was 1/-.

In December a film appropriate to the pantomime holiday season was exhibited called 'Submarina' or the 'Old Man and the Sea', and from the description of settings, princes, princesses, demons, sprites and ballet, it would appear that this was one of the Melies films then being churned out in their hundreds at his Paris studio. The picture in 18 scenes and 30 tableaus was said to have been one of the longest in the world. It was probably nearly as long as the 20 minutes 'Train Robbery' film (the Edwin S. Porter American version, 1903) that was shown at the Adelaide Town Hall in early November. Recent films of the 'Dogger Bank outrage' were shown, and the Referee thought them remarkable enough to assert: 'It is certainly something of a record that within a bare 2 months of the occurrence, a reproduction of features should be projected in Australia'. Films from Europe then took 6 weeks to 2 months to reach Australia; the time lag was to shrink to 4 weeks by 1910 as the ship service improved and film distributors became more efficient in shipping significant films all over the world.

85. Ibid., 9 November 1904.
86. Ibid., 21 December 1904; 28 December 1904.
88. Referee, 28 December 1904.
In January 1905, the biograph and gramophone were giving two performances daily at the Athenaeum Hall, Melbourne. The films were of marine welfare, and were accompanied by booms from the rear of the sheet, while the voice of Melba was later disseminated from the huge funnel of the record player. The cost of admission was a shilling and the proprietor was probably one of the active Tait brothers. (89) Melbourne's entertainment at this time seemed to be shared between the legitimate theatre, vaudeville, moving pictures at the Athenaeum, and open-air shows like the Cyclorama, circuses, and Princes Park. The latter was a prototype of the later 'Luna Park' and stood on the south side of the Yarra just over Princes Bridge. It was there that a Miss Annette Kellerman was nightly performing in a specially constructed diving and swimming tank. In March, Table Talk referred to a new idea her managers had of lighting up 'the mermaid's water tank with electricity, while she herself now wears a beautiful electric silver and green fish-scale costume, so that every one of the swimmer's graceful movements can be seen under water'. (90) With all this electricity and water around, she was lucky to be able to leave for England in mid-April, and subsequent fame in Hollywood spectacles like Neptune's Daughter and The Daughter of the Gods. (91)

90. Table Talk, 9 March 1905.
91. Ibid., 6 April 1905.
At the Melbourne Cyclorama during April-May 1905, was an extravaganza of lights, paintings and mirrors entitled 'The Battle of Gettysburg', guaranteed 'to reproduce the illusion of the turmoil of battle'. It is not surprising that moving pictures were also part of the offering in such an appropriate place of amusement. (92)

The Cyclorama was soon to go out of business - partly, as with the waxworks, and vaudeville - because of the popularity of moving pictures which could do it all so much better, more easily and cheaply.

In mid-May, W.J. Lincoln, touring biograph manager for J.C. Williamson arrived in Melbourne from N.Z. and Tasmania where his show had been immensely successful, and immediately set about arranging for an Australian tour to take in most of Victoria, N.S.W. and Queensland over a five month season commencing in Seymour later in May. As an indication of the travels and successes of a touring show, Table Talk said:

Since the bio-tableau was with us [the previous November], its stock of films and effects has been largely augmented and added improvements of a mechanical nature have been fitted to the machine, bringing it as near perfection as is possible. In Sydney there were eighty-two consecutive performances, Thirty-six towns were played in N.Z. where, in addition to rail and sea trips, the company did fully three hundred miles of coaching. Business throughout has been so good that Mr. J.C. Williamson may count the Bio-Tableau among his most profitable ventures. (93)

92. The Player, May 1905.
93. Table Talk, 18 May 1905.
Towards the end of June the first advertisements for Cozens Spencer's show, the 'Theatrescope' started to appear in the Sydney papers. By the beginning of July, the 'House Full' sign was put every night at the Lyceum. He began showing mainly American films, and they were generally story or fictional films of a greater length than those coming from Europe. An example was The Blacksmith's Daughter shown during the week ending 19 July. Spencer came armed with favourable New Zealand press reports, a 3,000 candle-power electrical arc in his machine, a full orchestra, sound effects and most important, films of the Russo-Japanese war, a tragedy in mid-air, a struggle between cowboys and Indians (the most popular), a chase after smugglers on the Cornish coast and humorous and tragic domestic scenes. He apparently did not intend to stay for long in Sydney, but ended up staying for eight weeks. Right from the beginning he demonstrated his superior showmanship by having films taken of the local Championship Boat Race (1905) and shown the same night with much fanfare. The result was a full house with receipts £20 more than on the opening night. People were appreciative of the promptness with which they could see current events, and for future reference Spencer took careful note.

94. Referee, 28 June 1905, See Chapters 5 & 6 for a detailed study of Cozens Spencer, the showman.
95. Ibid., 5 July 1905.
96. Ibid., 19 July 1905
97. Ibid., 28 June 1905.
of their enthusiasm. (98) While it had not been mentioned at the
beginning of his stay, by mid-August it was announced that he was
showing The Train Robbery, the Edwin S. Porter classic that
probably did more than any other film to establish Spencer's
financial security in Australia, as it did for many other showmen
throughout the world. (99) But at this time, Spencer could not
extend his lease at the Lyceum, or he chose not to, because at the
end of the eight weeks he packed up and left for an Australian
tour, promising to return in time for Christmas. (100)

J.C. Williamson's 'newly constructed bio-tableau and All-
Star Picture Show' was re-introduced for a season of 11 nights
at the Palace early in October, with Russo-Japanese war films as
the main feature. This show promised 'a world of pictures and
pictures from all over the world', and the patrons were not
disappointed. The war films, and some coloured or tinted tableaux
of Napoleon, and of fireworks — were especially praised, and the
Referee was moved to announce 'there is no question but that the
picture show craze has a grip on all civilized countries, and
possibly to the natives of the uncivilized regions it would be
equally popular. (101) Table Talk called it 'a programme of

98. Ibid., 26 July 1905.
99. Ibid., 16 August 1905.
100. Ibid., 23 August 1905.
101. Ibid., 4 October 1905.
entertaining diversity', and its review stressed the way it was possible for respectable, law-abiding patrons to settle themselves in a comfortable seat in their own home town and observe on the screen 'the manifold moves that are made in this dread game of nations'. All was visible to the eye. First were shown the preparations, the drilling of Japanese troops, the commissariat and transport organizations, and the praying of priests. Then came the 'fascination of ordered martial movements on prancing chargers, and the infantry advancing in mathematic squares into the fallen city'. The realism of the images was further heightened by skilful sound effects. 'As the barrel-shaped motor cars sweep along the road in clouds of dust the hissing noise of the engine is pleasantly produced, and the regulated thud of marching troops will invest the war views with additional realism'.

(102) But for the faint-hearted in the audience, the advertisements were quick to point out that war films were only a minor feature of this 'world-embracing entertainment', and recommended the beautiful selection of colour tint studies, especially the firework display by Brock at the London Crystal Palace. Altogether 300 films were advertised to be shown in Melbourne during 11 nights, with some of the following titles:

The Life of Napoleon, A Trip to the Sun, A Christmas Dream, A Woman's Road to Ruin, The Strike, The Condemnation of Faust, Australian

102. Table Talk, 12 October 1905.
Cricketers in England, the Liverpool Grand National, and International Winter Sports. (103)

The Bulletin was indignant about the Japanese films of victory and exclaimed in exasperation; 'The march past the saluting point of the victorious Jap troops at the review held by General Nogi, after the fall of Port Arthur beats all ordinary processions out of sight. One wonders as the line stretches out past the crack of doom were any of the Japs killed, or were any absent in hospital, or was it no one's day for doing hari-kari?' (104)

The same paper thought the show left nothing to be desired, except perhaps a toning down of the noisy sound effects. 'The accompaniment is so tumultuously performed that at times the whirring of the apparatus in the balcony is but a small circumstance - a mere drop in the ocean of din'. (105) The managers of the show also knew their public, for by mid-October they too were presenting an excellent series of Australian views which they claimed had been taken over for an English syndicate over two years at a cost of £1,000. They showed 'typical incidents' in Australian life such as

103. Ibid., 5 October 1905.
104. Bulletin, 5 October 1905. The film of the war called 'The Siege and Surrender of Port Arthur' was to become important later as part of Bland Holt's stage play 'Besieged at Port Arthur'.
105. Ibid., 19 October 1905.
sheep drafting, cattle droving, buckjumping, besides moving pictures of the capital cities. (106) The educational aspects of the show were also made very plain, for as Table Talk pointed out, by watching films it was possible to be educated without strain.

'One charm about the Bio-Tableau is that you get a vast amount of information in such a pleasant way that you hardly realize that you are being educated as well as being amused, and the introduction of comic pictures also adds to the pleasant deception'. (107)

By early November, the management announced 'a striking effort in picture realism' for Cup night; films were to be taken of the race and shown that same night. (108) When the film was run showing how 'Blue Spec' emerged victorious, the public was ecstatic. (109) Soon, however, it was time for this show to move on, as had all previous cinematograph shows.

The perennial fight pictures were on at Sydney Queen's Hall in mid-November 1905. They were the Britt-Nelson fight pictures taken earlier that year, and they were shown by Mr Will Herbert, head of the syndicate which purchased the picture rights of the fight. The Referee said; 'The highly willing sixth round and the actual knock-out in the 18th. on Monday, aroused almost as much excitement among those present as if they were looking upon the historic struggle.

106. Table Talk, 19 October 1905.
107. Ibid., 26 October 1905.
108. Ibid., 2 November 1905.
itself. Mr Dan O'Connor describes the contest as it proceeds'. (110)

After this successful Sydney debut, the show moved on to Newcastle
before commencing a four night season at the Melbourne Bijou. (111)

One of the interesting diversions of this year was 'Gavin's
Great Wild West Show' at the Cyclorama from October to November. This
was put on by a tall, lanky Australian named John F. Gavin, destined
to become one of Australia's most prolific early film producers. At
this time he was putting on acted extravaganzas based on stories of
'Buffalo Bill', cowboys, gold robbers, and even late in November, the
exploits of the Kelly Gang. (112) All this was a good apprenticeship
for his later Australian films, and for the Hollywood films he acted
in just after World War One. The Cyclorama, built to house such
spectacles as 'The Battle of Gettysburg', with paintings, fireworks
and effects, was quite big enough for the manoeuvring of his horses
and actors, and most of the press complimented him on the excellence of
the production. (113) At the end of the year, Spencer, true to his
promise, returned to the Lyceum for an even better Christmas season
than his earlier visit, and this time he specialized in films of
Revolutionary Russia. (114)

110. Referee, 15 November 1905.
111. Ibid., 22 November 1905.
112. Table Talk, 10 October 1905.
113. The Player, 15 March 1905; 15 April 1905, Table Talk, 2 November
1905; 16 November 1905.
114. Referee, 13 December 1905; 20 December 1905.
J. F. GAVIN, Producer.

PLATE 6

Source: Australian Variety & Show World, 10 May 1916.
By the end of 1905, there was already a primitive
distribution system for films. Some of the first distributors
and sellers of cinematograph equipment were the firms of Baker &
Rouse, and that of Osborne and Jerden, opticians, of 393 George
Street, Sydney. (115) Some of the leading exhibitors of his
period; Spencer, and Williamson imported their films direct from
the overseas manufacturers, buying them outright at so much per
foot, but the already established system of weekly programme
changes, meant that they had a lot of films to get rid of, and a
lot of films to find. These were the preconditions for a thriving
hiring system, and this in fact is what developed from the primitive
pass-on or sale of second hand films that evolved in the beginning.
Besides the large number of mixed film and vaudeville shows
requiring large quantities of films, there was also a body of
smaller showmen eager to buy or exchange second hand films for tours
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5. CONCLUSION

This chapter has concentrated on describing the films that
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years of the twentieth century. Generally, they confirm the
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115. Ibid., 13 December 1905.
of pervaying information, just as the films of the Australian Salvation Army had broken new ground by propagating values. Films of the Boer War and the Russo-Japanese War informed Australians of the vivid realities of modern warfare and brought home to them the cost of Empire, while films of royalty - living or dying - made them feel closer to England and intensified local patriotism. Films of significant events - whether Toronto fires, or the Czar taking Mass in St.Petersburg - all helped to make Australians feel part of a wider environment and tended to diminish distance by compressing time. But these were only some of the subjects represented on Australian screens; there were many others with subjects ranging from Maori hakas to aboriginal corroborees and from insect life to boxing matches. Australian audiences were educated and informed, as well as entertained by such films.

Local films were relatively unimportant quantitatively at this time, although those that were made tended to register the same preoccupations as those coming from overseas. Australia had her own films of royalty in the Visit of the Duke and Duchess of York (1901), and Perier and Perry were on hand to record The Inauguration of the Commonwealth (1901). Local films of horse-races and cricket matches soon became an accepted part of vaudeville entertainment, and these were an important source of information for those living in the backblocks or in capital cities not blessed with such important events.
Indeed, Australian films of local industries, beauty spots and current affairs were an important ingredient in uniting disparate states and making Federation a reality. By the end of the period, the 'gazette' or primitive newsreel was immensely popular, although it had yet to assume its final form of a weekly chronicle of events; that development was to take place in the next decade.

In addition to an examination of some of the films exhibited, this chapter has also introduced some of the personalities (for example the Taits, Spencer and Jack Gavin) who were to become important in later years. It has also begun the task of describing the nascent procedures and techniques by which films were exhibited and distributed. These techniques, and the constant modifications made necessary by the changing nature of films, audiences and economic conditions, will form much of the basis of later discussion, because they establish the frame-work within which the Australian films were made and shown.

The next chapter continues the analysis of the early exhibitors - the so-called 'film showmen' - as a preliminary to the first story or 'feature' films like The Story of the Kelly Gang (1906), which these men often sponsored and exhibited in their cinemas.

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CHAPTER 4.  

FILM AS DRAMA: KEY SHOWMEN AND THE KELLY GANG FILM
1906-1908.

The arrival in Ballarat of the Kelly Gang pictures was followed by the uprising of five Ballarat kids not yet in their teens who broke into a photo studio and stole a cash box containing £8.10s. Next day two of them armed with loaded revolvers, bailed up some school kids in the best Kelly style while the other comic opera desperadoes went through the kid's pockets. The Children's court will consequently have before it five infant burglars who are sorry they did it. Nobody has suggested arresting the Kelly Gang pictures for inciting to a felony.

Bulletin, 2 May 1907.
1. **FORMATIVE YEARS: 1906-1907.**

The years 1906-1907 were the truly formative ones for the film business in Australia. In 1907, the first permanent exhibitors settled down to show films constantly in one theatre - at least in Melbourne and Sydney - and in that year also, true distributors were established whose sole business was hiring out films. In 1906, the first story film to be made in Australia, and the first feature film to be made in the world was produced; *The Story of the Kelly Gang*. So that in all three facets of the industry, the foundations were laid for development.

Cozens Spencer, who had arrived in Australia only six months before, began in 1906 at the Lyceum where he was showing *The Life of Nelson* in 14 separate tableaux, together with numerous other films.\(^{(1)}\)

As in the previous year, he again only stayed at the Lyceum for eight weeks, and then went to Adelaide for a short season, and on to Perth.\(^{(2)}\) These early tours showed him the potential market for films in Australia, and gave him the necessary experience to make wise decisions when he started to expand his business later in the decade. In June, he returned to the Sydney Palace (since the Lyceum was occupied), and in July he exhibited films of the recent 'Frisco earthquake, supposedly taken by his brother in America.\(^{(3)}\) These films were very popular, and he had either the good luck or the skillful judgement to follow them up with a topical film of *A Tragedy in*

\(1\). Referee, 1 January 1905.
\(2\). Ibid., 7 February 1906; 14 March 1906.
\(3\). Ibid., 6 June 1906.
a Train. (4) At the end of July, he and his wife left for Queensland, beginning a tour of that state in Townsville. (5) As he had promised he was back again at the Sydney Lyceum in mid-December in time for the highly lucrative holiday season that enabled him to pay an incredible £65 per week for this broken down old hall, with its cantankerous religious management. (6)

Probably the most successful show this year was not Spencer's but the Tait's picture show run by John H. Tait at the Melbourne Athenæum. He began there in mid-January, yet it was not until the end of that month that his brother Nevin in London sent him the film called Living London (shown at the Melbourne Town Hall) that was to make their fortune, and keep them interested in the film business for a decade or more. (7) They followed this up with impressive films of Frisco Fallen and Burning at the Melbourne Bijou later in the year against opposition from West's film The Doomed City Before the Fall and After at the Town Hall. (8) Later in the year also, the Taits were engaged in the production of their mammoth The Story of the Kelly Gang shown on Boxing Day 1906, and toured extensively throughout 1907.

Living London was the first of a whole series of 'Living'

6. Ibid., 19 December 1906. Bulletin, 20 December 1906 - he has problems with the management.
8. Ibid., 28 June 1906.
cities and countries, including *Living Sydney* (1906) and in the following year *Living Scotland*, *Living Paris* and *Living Ireland*.\(^{(9)}\)

It was first shown on the 25 January, at the Melbourne Town Hall, and the *Bulletin* in its review said that it had virtues and faults. Among its virtues were its enhanced technical presentation for it was largely without the usual eye-shattering flicker of most films shown at the time, and its subject matter was also more interesting. 'Pictures of market places full of life and spiced with humour', as the *Bulletin* described them, although it felt that there were times when a judicious pruning would have improved the overall effect. 'A succession of omnibuses loaded with cockneys soon begins to pall upon the flickered eye, and one narrow, crowded street looks very like another.' The comment that the 'film wants an editor armed with a pair of scissors' reveals the practice of film-makers then including everything that had been photographed.\(^{(10)}\) It was to be a long time before producers appreciated the need to discipline themselves and discard their poorer shots, a lesson that took some Australians even longer to learn.

*Living London* was withdrawn from the Town Hall at the beginning of February so that it could be sent to Bendigo and Ballarat and other provincial, and presumably equally patriotic centres, that

\(^{9}\) Referee, 25 April 1906; also Australasian 28 April 1906. *Bulletin*, 9 May 1907; 23 May 1907; 28 November 1907; also Leader, 11 May 1907; 18 May 1907; 25 May 1907; 31 August 1907; 7 September 1907. *Bulletin*, 13 June 1907; also Leader, 15 June 1907; 22 June 1907.

\(^{10}\) *Bulletin*, 1 February 1906.
would pay well to see a glimpse of 'home'.

In March, it had a brief revival at the Town Hall, then went on to the Sydney Lyceum with a lot of new films of Switzerland and Building a British Railway, under the managerial control of F. Stetson. After the Taits had produced Moving Melbourne in May 1906, it and Living London travelled together, until the Frisco Quake films eclipsed them. In addition to their general theatrical business, the Taits (or some of the brothers) continued to show films for most of the year at the Athenaeum or the Melbourne Town Hall, when they were not out on country tours. After the 'Frisco films, in November, they had a film of Flemington on Cup Day (1906). In 1907, they seemed less active themselves in the business of screenings - in Melbourne at any rate - apparently preferring to send out touring operators with their 'Kelly Gang' film or with the scenic additions to Living London, like Living Scotland.

In the first half of 1906, there were numerous touring shows with films. Sometimes there would be just one entertainer with films as a sideline. Jay Winton, for instance, was at the Sydney Centenary Hall in April 1906 with films entitled Living Italy, Living Spain and Living France, while the comedian and story-teller R. G. Knowles was at the Sydney Palace with biographs through February 1906 and at the Melbourne Princess in July. Magicians

11. Ibid., 8 February 1906.
15. Leader, 22 June 1907.
like Czerny at the Sydney Criterion during July 1906, also preferred to travel with films as an adjunct to their act, and enterprising entrepreneurs like Rickards continually offered films among his assorted bill at the Melbourne Opera House and Sydney Tivoli during 1906. (17) In other instances there were mixed vaudeville-film performances, and probably the most enduring of these troupes was the Corrick Family of singers and entertainers who had been touring Australasia since 1900. (18) The Fisk Jubilee Singers also showed some films of the 'Frisco earthquake in their show at the Sydney Centenary Hall during June-July 1906, and Clay's Vaudeville Co. playing intermittently throughout 1906-1907 at the Pavilion Theatre, Sydney, showed such films as The Life of an American Fireman. (19)

Sometimes there were just straight specialist touring film shows like MacDermott's Biograph; 'Peerless Picture Coterie', which had a short season showing New Zealand films at the Sydney Lyceum in June 1906, and the 'Frisco Films' at the Melbourne Gaiety during July 1907. (20) But probably the best known of these small exhibitors was Best and Baker's 'Living Pictures', which on occasion gave the big

16. Referee, 4 April 1906; also Bulletin, 4 April 1906. Referee, 24 January 1906; also Australasian, 24 February 1906; Bulletin, 26 July 1906. This may have been the same R. G. Knowles who was so tragically wounded during World War One, but still returned to the vaudeville stage.
three (West's, Spencer's and Tait's) spirited competition. Throughout 1906, they alternated with the Taits in sharing the Melbourne Athenaeum, and in 1907 they spent much of their time touring with occasional stopovers in Melbourne and Sydney. (21)

During 1907, the proliferation of exhibitors continued, with such names as Coward's Picture Concert (Melbourne Town Hall, October), Sudholz's Bio. Tableau ("Living Paris" and others in Melbourne during August), Cook's Pictures and the All Blacks (another musical group with films from New Zealand at the Melbourne Town Hall during May), and Edison's Popular Pictures (managed by Frederick Andrews, at the Sydney Lyceum during January, and the Queen's Hall during April with America at Work and Play, and the 1906 Melbourne Cup). (22) All these shows seemed to make money in the boom days of motion pictures, but there was a high turnover, with new companies replacing older ones as they withdrew. All had to find films from somewhere, and since few had either the resources or the inclination to import direct, most of them hired or bought second-hand films from the more established exhibitors. Behind this second rank of exhibitors stood a third, small, but steadily growing group of country exhibitors who bought

14 July 1906; 28 July 1906; 29 September 1906.
21. Bulletin, 4 January 1906; 11 January 1906; 20 September 1906; and Australasian, 13 January 1906; 8 September 1906; 15 September 1906; 29 September 1906; also Leader, 31 August 1907; 7 September 1907; 12 October 1907; 7 December 1907; 14 December 1907.
their films at third-hand and toured the more inaccessible reaches of the continent.

T. J. West, destined to become perhaps the biggest exhibitor in the pre-1910 field, arrived in Australia in 1906. West brought with his film show a musical troupe called 'the Brescians'. They commenced in mid-March 1906, at the Sydney Palace Theatre, amid glowing praise that their films and acts brought 'London to Sydney'. The films were of the King and Queen; and Japan after the war, so their topicality ensured packed houses throughout March and well into April, when local films were added. The programme was called by the Referee 'probably the best set of biograph pictures seen in Sydney'.

West demonstrated his knowledge of showmanship from the beginning in at least two ways, both destined to become favourite techniques of enterprising Australian showmen. In April, he opened on holiday nights at the Town Hall (ten days cost him £200), as well as at the Palace, and hence had two places going for the price of one programme. He would use the singers - the Brescians - in the first part of the programme at one theatre, while films were on at the other, and then at interval interchange them. Also, he delighted local audiences by including some local films in his programme - taken probably by him or his cameraman. This latter ploy was to become a particularly easy way of raising funds for enterprising show-

23. Table Talk, 18 May 1905; 28 September 1905; Referee, 21 March 1906.
24. Bulletin, 5 April 1906; Referee, 28 March 1906; Bulletin, 19 April 1906; also Australasian, 28 April 1906; Bulletin, 5 April 1906. Referee, 25 April 1906; also Australasian, 28 April 1906.
men, since Australians were always eager to see themselves on the screen. West's first films were shorts - *The Audience Leaving the Theatre Royal* after the Daley Matinee Benefit, and views of the big Fire in Clarence Street. They presaged the weekly newsreel that West later helped to make an accepted part of a night's film entertainment. The *Bulletin* thought this first series excellent and quipped; 'no doubt some persons will recognize themselves coming out of the theatre, and looking much uglier than their mirrors had led them to believe'. With the popularity of local films proven, West made or had produced a longer travelogue called *Living Sydney* which was screened at the Palace during the week ending 25 April, and this marked the start of his many films about Australian cities.

According to the *Australasian*, the Brescians took their name from the fact that the leading singer, Miss Domenica Martinengo, came from an old Italian family which was originally settled in Brescia. (25) Her two sisters, Adelina and Antonia, Miss Nellie Lamert, Miss Sara Hendy, Mr Rudall Hayward and the comedian Fred Mills, also helped with various acts, and all were extremely versatile. After a ten week stay in Sydney, the troupe and the films went on to Melbourne. They went overland, and paid for their trip by giving performances in provincial towns like Goulburn. (26) They arrived in time to compete with the Taits who had been showing *Living London* and other films at the Melbourne Town Hall. The press

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received the West show well, and many commented on the films in 'natural colours' (really tinted films) that they showed at the Athenaeum. The Bulletin thought their presentation 'almost perfect specimens of biograph work', since they did not flicker and rarely wobbled. Sound effects were minimal, for which this journalist was heartily grateful, and instead some superb singing and instrumental performances were given by the lady violinist and contralto. (27)

It is plain that their combination of music and films was welcomed by critics and audiences alike, who felt as the Australasian did that even good films by themselves became monotonous, but a highly satisfactory entertainment was provided when the 'panoramas' were accompanied by a concert programme provided by artists of undoubted talent. This critic delighted in the charming performances of the three sisters, finding Miss Adelina's repetition of Paganini's trick of playing on one string of the violin, the most engaging act, but the jokes of Fred Mills and the other acts made it a comprehensive show. (28) The Bulletin commented: 'The Brescians, introducing musical relief midway in the show, have the virtue of moderation. They arrive when they are wanted and they don't stay too long.' (29)

West soon employed the same techniques he had experimented with in Sydney; by taking films of Melbourne events for topical interest. His first local film was of the visit of the Japanese warships in Melbourne. (30) Either spontaneously, or as a result of

27. Australasian, 12 May 1906; 19 May 1906; and Bulletin, 17 May 1906.
28. Australasian, 2 June 1906.
West's moves in this direction, the Taits also now went out for some local colour, and bought or produced one they called 'Moving Melbourne' calculated to be an obvious rejoinder to Living Sydney. They started filming it on 9 May, and Collins Street was thrown into wild excitement as pictures were taken from a motor car of the thousands of people who had gathered outside the Stock Exchange and persisted in making ludicrous attempts to ensure that their face was captured forever on celluloid. During May, West again demonstrated acute understanding of his public when he delighted Melbourne audiences with special Empire Day films showing naval warfare, and the King. By the end of May, it was announced that West and the Brescians had come to stay and by then they were showing films of New Zealand called Marvellous Macariland.

Early in June, West transferred to the Town Hall for the holiday to take advantage of the bigger space, and then moved back to the Athenaeum. In mid-June, he took probably the first film of a Melbourne football match, and showed it at the Athenaeum to enthusiastic fans. They were of the Victorian football premiership match, and the management promised to send it to America where efforts were then being made to publicize the Australian game. West was also wise enough to realize the importance of constant variety, and the Australasian thought he carried this to a fault,

30. Referee, 16 May 1906; and Australasian, 19 May 1906.
32. Australasian, 26 May 1906.
34. Australasian, 16 June 1906.
because by the time people had made up their mind to see a particular film, it had vanished. (35) Throughout the remainder of 1906, their stay in Melbourne was a tranquil one, and in October they returned to the Sydney Town Hall and showed Canada As It Is for one week before departing for New Zealand, planning to return again in the new year. (36)

The subjects of the films shown in 1906 can conveniently be broken into two groups; those taken locally by Spencer, Taits and West, and those imported. Of the imported films, the most successful were probably Living London and its successors exploited by the Taits, and America at Work and Play exploited by an individual named 'Professor Andrews', and shown at the Sydney Lyceum during much of September and October. (37) This show was notable for a number of innovations. Its screen was larger than usual - 28ft. square - and two machines and two operators were employed to eliminate waits between reels. It was to be many years before this system became general, but from all reports the procedure was successful from the beginning, and the 'House Full' sign appeared early at the Lyceum.

In November, this same management of 'Edison's Pictures' ran foul of

35. Ibid.
36. Bulletin, 4 October 1906; and Referee, 17 October 1906.
37. See Referee, 19 September 1906; 3 October 1906; 5 December 1906; 12 December 1906; and Bulletin, 27 September 1906; 11 October 1906; 1 November 1906; 5 November 1906; 20 December 1906. The title of this film is interesting, because around 1905 a showman named Erskine Scott had the idea of taking films of notable Australian industries and touring with them as a form of industrial propaganda. When the show finally got off the ground in 1910, it was called Australia at Work.
the religious Lyceum owners (Methodists), when it sent two operators
to Melbourne to secure films of the Cup at a cost of over £50, and
then found that they were prevented from showing them in the Lyceum,
and had to hire the Queen's Hall. (38) This was the first of a
succession of incidents between the Lyceum management and film show-
men. In December, 'Edison's Pictures' went to Adelaide with some
new films, making way for Spencer who had returned from his tour. (39)

Other foreign films popular this year, ranged from the sacred;
the Passion Play at Oberammergau at the Melbourne Exhibition Build-
ing on Good Friday 1906, with Roy Redgrave lecturing; to the profane,
the Britt-Nelson Boxing Match of 1905, accompanied by a lecturer
with an appropriate American nasal twang, which continued to be
shown, until it caught fire in Charters Towers in March 1906 and
caused damage estimated at £4,000. (40) There were a few document-
aries and newsreel films made this year by the exhibitors Spencer,
West and the Taits, but with the exception of The Story of the Kelly
Gang made towards the end of the year, and the strange case of
Besieged at Port Arthur, which appears to have combined film and
play, there were no story films made in Australia. (41)

38. Bulletin, 15 November 1906. This was probably a different
Melbourne Cup film to the one shown by J. & N. Tait at the Melbourne
Town Hall on 10 November 1906.
39. Referee, 12 December 1906; and Bulletin, 20 December 1906.
40. Australasian, 14 April 1906. Referee, 15 November 1905; 22
November 1905; 28 March 1906, also Australasian, 24 February 1906.
41. Long enshrined in the film Weekly list as an Australian film,
it is unlikely that this was indeed a film: if anything it is more
likely to have been a play that included some film clips of the war.
'Besieged in Port Arthur, or Allies and Enemies', is a difficult
'film' to explain because the press references are so ambiguous.
1907 was chiefly remarkable for the wild success of the Tait's production 'The Story of the Kelly Gang' which was taken by no less than five touring companies through the main centres of population. Spencer returned to the Sydney Lyceum over the summer holidays, with new pictures, and he must have looked with deep interest at the spectacle of a local Kelly Gang film pulling in the money at the Sydney Palace during January-February.\textsuperscript{(42)} The lesson was not to be lost, as he started making Australian story films himself three years later. Late in February 1907, he left for a tour to Adelaide and Fremantle, and in March on his return to Sydney he left for Europe and America to investigate modern developments in the film business, deciding to return by the following Christmas.\textsuperscript{(43)}

Spencer left the field to West and the Tait brothers. West and the Brescians had returned from New Zealand in time for the

On 19 April 1906, the Bulletin, in its Sundry Shows column said: 'Bland Holt is back at the Sydney Royal, and this time he brings an amazing succession of pictures, living and otherwise, which he calls 'Besieged at Port Arthur'. There are certain characters running through the pictures, and the remarks that they make to one another give a sort of semblance to a play, but in reality, it is a panorama.\textsuperscript{;}'

Then followed a synopsis of the plot which largely revolved around the honour of a British surgeon stranded in Port Arthur during the siege and how he borrowed money from an old Japanese to pay a gambling debt. The climax comes when the hero saves the Japanese heroine from being shot by the Russians. The play had a longer history; it was first performed in August 1905 by Bland Holt at the Sydney Royal, when the Bulletin, 31 August 1905, was hostile to the play because of what it considered its pro-Japanese flavour. In October 1905 there was at least one documentary of the war circulating in Victoria called The Siege of Port Arthur, and it seems likely that if films were indeed used then this was the one. See Theatre, 16 October 1905; also Table Talk, 19 October 1905; Bulletin, 26 April 1906; 3 May 1906.\textsuperscript{42.}

\textsuperscript{42.} Referee, 27 February 1907. See Appendix 2 for story of
Easter holiday crowds at the Sydney Lyceum, and could therefore just neatly fill the spot vacated by Spencer. During April, they were showing films of the New Zealand Exhibition that West had taken while in New Zealand. The Bulletin described the audience as 'glued together in its packedness'. West again instituted a rapid change system for the films, and by the following Saturday he was showing films of Scotland with one showing the King walking in the grounds of Balmoral. At first he had to share Sydney with another touring group: 'Sydney Cook's Pictures and the All Blacks', but by June they had left and West had Sydney all to himself. By then, he was exhibiting films recently taken in England at a naval display given for the visiting Colonial Premiers. It was shown with appropriate patriotic flourishes. In July, he decided to move his troupe to the Melbourne Athenaeum, where the naval pictures continued to be shown, but he also kept his film show going in Sydney at the Lyceum. He thus followed Rickards and McMahon as one of the first showmen to straddle two interstate capitals with films and vaudeville.

In August, he concluded his show in Sydney, and shortly afterwards left the Athenaeum to travel on to new ventures in the Adelaide Town Hall. He was replaced at the Athenaeum by Best and Bakers Pictures. From subsequent events it is clear that all

The Story of the Kelly Gang (1906).
43. Ibid., 13 March 1907.
44. Bulletin, 28 March 1907.
45. Ibid., 4 April 1907.
46. Ibid., 6 June 1907.
47. Ibid., 20 June 1907.
48. Ibid., 4 July 1907.
this year West must have been thinking closely about where he was to finally settle, as a film business could now be supported continuously by one community, and the supply of ever-changing films meant that a showman could settle in one spot and change his films regularly instead of having to move constantly. His trips to New Zealand and all over Australia appear to have been partly exploratory or market research oriented, for the result was that in December 1907 he announced he would take over the leases of both the Sydney Glaciarium and the Melbourne Olympia, spending £10,000 a year for new films to show in these theatres alone. (50) This was a momentous decision for one of the key Australian exhibitors, because his success and that of Cozens Spencer, initiated the trend to permanent cinemas that was to become pronounced in the years 1910 and 1911.


Long films were produced early in this country; a long time before films of a comparable length were made elsewhere. At least two reasons for this could be advanced; the 'internal' argument and the 'external' argument. Within Australia there were a number of favourable internal conditions that made possible a progressive use of the new medium. Australia in 1906 lacked the economic and legal controls that were already creeping into the American film business, and so film-makers here were freer to experiment with new techniques. Australians at this time had before them the precedents of Soldiers

49. Leader, 31 August 1907; and Referee, 4 September 1907.
of the Cross (1900) and there were present a number of very skilled cameramen, and perceptive entrepreneurs eager to expand the public's appetite for something different in the way of motion pictures. Film-makers in the U.S.A., England and the Continent at first believed that audiences would not sit through long films, and this belief hardened into dogma in the U.S.A. where the all-powerful Edison Patents company prohibited films longer than one reel until after 1912. Finally, Australian film-makers at this time had none of the 'artistic' stage-oriented concepts of producing films merely as an adjunct to the older medium of the stage, or vaudeville. Free of restrictions, and with a number of creative individuals eager to experiment it was only a matter of time before Australians would make longer and longer films, until they finally produced a 'feature film'.

The first of these 'features', The Story of the Kelly Gang (1906) did not come completely unheralded; for nearly all the important elements of this innovation had been present in Australia before 1906. Nevertheless, it was a great effort and to the best of my knowledge, was the first story film to run for an hour. The other Australian features that followed this pioneer were similar in length and theme. Robbery Under Arms (1907), Eureka Stockade (1907) and For the Term of his Natural Life (1908) had many features in common with the Kelly Gang precedent. Not only were they also 'aggressively Australian', they also tended to have less of the melodramatic stage 'hangover' about them than later Australian films
of the twenties made in studios and imitating a Hollywood 'ideal'.

Sometime in 1906, Sam Crews, an old theatrical personality, suggested to the Taits that a film of the long-running play 'The Kelly Gang' would be a smash-hit. The time was ripe, for the year before had seen the success of such Australian plays as 'Thunderbolt' at the Theatre Royal, and Alfred Dampier's 'Robbery Under Arms' at the Criterion. Cowboy dramas from America like 'The Squaw Man', and extravaganzas like Jack Gavin's 'Wild West Show' at the Melbourne Cyclorama, also hinted at the success a film of a rip-roaring Australian bushranging story, would become. Indeed it is possible that the Taits were won over to the idea by observing the success of 'Thunderbolt' at the Melbourne Theatre Royal in September 1906, produced by William Anderson with his wife Eugenie Duggan and George Cross in the leading roles.

W. A. Gibson, of the biograph firm, Johnson & Gibson, had independently come to the same conclusion about the same time after he witnessed the success of the Kelly Gang stage play in a New Zealand town where he was trying to show Living London. The Tait brothers put up most of the money and drew up a script, and then they approached Johnson & Gibson to act as their cameramen and to take a share in the venture. On odd weekends over a few months,

51. The suggestion for initiating the film is traditionally ascribed to Sam Crews.
52. Bulletin, 26 October 1905. Ibid., 2 November 1905.
53. Australasian, 30 June 1906. Bulletin, 6 September 1906; and
Australasian, 8 September 1906.
54. Everyone, 29 July 1931.
the cast consisting of an unidentified actor as Ned Kelly, John Tait as the schoolmaster, Mrs Charles Tait as Ned's sister Kate, and Charlie Tait, his children and his brothers Frank and E. J. Tait as extras, together with Sam Crews, went out to Eaglemont and Chartersville estates at Heidelberg to re-enact the most famous exploits of the Kelly Gang. (55) The whole company including Frank Marden as production manager, would journey the fourteen miles out and back in a horse-drawn drag, taking their picnic lunch with them.

Production technique was so amorphous and informal at the time - both here and overseas - that it is not surprising that details about personnel and their roles has been confused and differs from one eyewitness account to another. Yet it would seem pretty clear that W. A. Gibson, with or without Millard Johnson's help, looked after the photographic side of the production. It was he who cranked the handle and took the moving pictures of the actors, and possibly on occasion, as was the wont of such cameramen in those days, gave orders to the cast to move in a certain direction and so forth. To this extent he could also be called a director of production. Charles Tait should properly be called the producer, since he put up most of the £400–£1,000 (reports vary) involved, organized the actors, properties and locations, and kept the schedule of production. It was probably he or his two brothers John and Frank,

55. For much of the information on this film I am indebted to Lady Tait for permission to use information contained in a family book; Index to Actors, Plays, Musicians and Concerts, 1885-1932, the property of E.J. Tait; which has several comments written in ink opposite the entry for 'The Kelly Gang'.
W. A. GIBSON.

PLATE 7

Source: Picture Show, 1 August 1920.
who did most of the directing, although the Tait family records give
the credit for direction and scenario entirely to Charles Tait. The
cast was formed by the Tait family with a few amateur and pro-
fessional actors who came along on different occasions; for instance
the man playing Ned Kelly was said to have received £1 per day for
acting.

Various stories, most of them apochryphal, have been repeated
about the filming. (56) Some stories recount how the Taits borrowed
the original Kelly armour from Sir Rupert Clarke, how they were
given a train and gangers at Eltham rail terminus and allowed to
pull up part of a side track, how telegraph wires were cut, and
'Aaron Sherrit' was 'shot' outside a Mitcham cottage, while a local
bank and lock-up figured in the film as one stuck up by the Kellys.
But the favourite story, and one which has been directly denied by
John H. Tait, recounted how an old building labelled 'Glenrowan Inn'
was burnt down just off Whitehorse Road, after a fight involving
local toughs who became too boisterous with the free liquor dis-
pensed by the producers. (57)

56. See for instance, The Herald, 10 October 1929, which is largely
inaccurate. Daily Telegraph, 9 November 1946, 'Our Film Industry,
Ned Kelly Started It!', by Josephine O'Neill, some inaccuracies. Film
Weekly, 17 December 1959, article by Chris Collier; 'Our First
Feature was a Blockbuster' - some original research.
57. See for instance the article by Jack Percival, 'Kelly Gang Film
Began Era of Feature Pictures', in the Sunday Herald, 9 October 1949.
In a letter replying to F.W. Daniell, John H. Tait said on 11 October
1949 that this article was not totally correct. He affirmed that
Johnson & Gibson did have some financial interest in the film; that
Sam Crews was the person who first suggested the idea to Charles Tait,
and that Mrs Charles Tait played Kate Kelly because she was an
excellent horsewoman. However, he took exception to 'the statement
Before looking at the story of the film, its historical antecedents should be noted; not to lessen its importance, but to put it more truly in context. It has already been noted that the story of the film fitted within a then well accepted genre in another medium; the stage. It was also a well-known legend, and had already been given concrete form in a very popular stage play, so it is not true to say that it was an original film story. As with the earlier *Soldiers of the Cross* (1900), the story for the film was suggested to the producers from outside; they did not have to think up an original scenario for themselves. In one sense they were merely translating the story of one medium into another. While a long 'dramatic', 'fictional' or 'story' film of this length was unknown at the time (with the exception of *Soldiers of the Cross* which it could be claimed was only a dramatised version of the Bible and therefore not a 'story' in the commonly accepted sense), there had been some very long documentary films - like boxing matches - that had run for as long as an hour as early as 1897. So technologically, there were plenty of precedents for the physical task of putting together such a long film. Indeed, it is possible that the producers - the Taits and Johnson and Gibson - thought along the lines that if the public would sit through an hour or more of boxing, why should they not sit through an hour or more of intense dramatic action? It

that a group of 'toughs' were engaged for a brawl scene at the Glenrowan Hotel', because it was just 'a piece of journalistic colouring'. He maintained that no 'toughs' were engaged, and that members of the Tait families were principals... National Library, Canberra, F. W. Daniell papers, MS. 1634, item 161.
was also not the first film made by the Taits or by Johnson and Gibson; all of them had been concerned with the production and exhibition of local films - albeit of a more modest scale - before they tackled the Kelly Gang film.

Having said all this, it must still be recognized that it took great courage and initiative to invest so much money in such a potentially risky venture; they had no guarantee that the public would sit through it, and Gibson later said that as the film neared completion he grew more and more apprehensive that when it was exhibited the public would walk out before the film had finished. But at the end their hunch was completely vindicated; the public liked their film, and the stage was set for future long films climaxing in the eight hours or more of the Russian film of War and Peace (1969).

A small booklet was printed for the initial screening entitled, The Story of the Kelly Gang by Biograph, compiled by F. S. Stetson. Costing 6d. it gave a synopsis of the film, and backed it up with much documentary evidence taken from contemporary newspaper reports about the gang's exploits. The synopsis was vital because at first no lecturer was provided, and there were no subtitles - only continuous film. Think for a moment how revolutionary it must have been for a 1906 audience watching intensely exciting images for over an hour without the distractions of subtitles.

58. Picture Magazine, 1 June 1920.
59. In possession of Lady Tait. For a summarized version of the synopsis giving the story of the film, see Appendix 2.
From the synopsis it is possible to visualize the strong images that would have composed the film; it is also possible to see that this was indeed a feature film in the sense of depicting a continuing connected narrative. It had strong dramatic qualities with various exciting highlights culminating in the climax. At the end of the synopsis the producers apologised for taking 'liberties' in depicting all the police in uniform when in fact they had nearly always been dressed in plain clothes. This had been done, they explained, to preserve the dramatic interest, since without such a distinction, the onlooker would not know which were the Kellys and which were the police. The producers also earnestly hoped that their endeavours to please the public would be appreciated as they had gone to considerable trouble to 'give as nearly a correct location' as possible.

A record was later claimed for Gibson, that he photographed, directed, developed and projected the picture on the screen. The 'interiors' were acted out in front of a canvas back-drop forming an outside stage at the back of Johnson' & Gibson's St. Kilda Junction chemist-shop, while the story is told that Gibson had to develop the film in his bath. (60) The film opened at the Melbourne Town Hall and then shifted to the Athenaeum on 26 December 1906. (61) The Australasian was grateful that the gramophone had not been combined

60. See for instance article by Anthony Buckley, 'Celluloid Kelly', in Masque, June/July 1969.
with the film as it feared that the Kellys would talk with a strong American accent. At first the film was said to run for only 40 minutes and was probably between 3,000-4,000ft. long, but when it was shown in Adelaide and Sydney during February 1907, extra footage about the Jerilderie hold-up had been added and the film then ran for 'upwards of an hour', and was definitely advertised as 4,000ft. long.\(^{62}\) It was at the Athenaeum for nearly a month before it had to leave to make way for the painters who were redecorating the theatre.\(^{63}\) It went to Adelaide for a six night stand in February and stayed 4 weeks, and a similar successful season was spent in Sydney.\(^{64}\)

By mid-January 1907, a lecturer was explaining the scenes from the side of the screen, while sound effects had been employed from the beginning, and drove one Bulletin reviewer to complain; 'There is a deal too much racket in connection with the show - sometimes you can't see the pictures for the noise of horses, trains, gunshots, and wild cries; but, all the same, it is the sort of bellowdrama that the lower disorders crave for, and two thirds of Australia will want to see it - the two thirds that believe Ned Kelly was a greater man than George Washington.'\(^{65}\) This established the tone of the Bulletin in its comments on the film; mildly approving, but also a little stand-offish and uncertain whether to endorse the film

63. Ibid., 7 February 1907.
64. Referee, 6 February 1907; and Bulletin, 7 February 1907.
65. Bulletin, 14 February 1907, 'and the only item that wants sand-bagging is the hard indistinct Voice that explains things from
uncritically or to slate it. Generally the critics were favourable to the film. The Argus for instance, said; 'The incidents are given for the most part realistically and they present a very fair record of the exciting career of the four noted outlaws. An enormous amount of labour has been expended in obtaining the scenes.' The Age review stated; 'a conscientious, and, on the whole, a credible effort has been made to reproduce the tragedies as they occurred, and, if there are any imperfections in detail probably few in the hall had memories long enough to detect them.' The Herald called it 'undoubtedly one of the finest things in the way of cinematograph views placed before the public. The Kelly Gang is depicted in a remarkably realistic manner'.

However, right from this first feature film, the local critics revealed their future hyper-sensitive approach to Australian films. With foreign films they would suspend their critical judgement; but closeness to home made them exact sticklers for truth. The Argus critic for example, was prepared to forgive the producers their use of uniformed troopers instead of plain clothes men, but could not find it in his heart to forgive the absence of spear-grass which he knew was abundant in the Wombat ranges where the real killings took place, but which was lamentably absent in the film.

Some of the Bulletin contributors were ambiguous in their attitude to the film. Their Adelaide correspondent felt that the behind the scenes. Bulletin, 24 January 1907.
66. Quoted in article by Chris Collier, op.cit.
film was cumbered with too much detail and needed editing, while he found the story anti-Kelly. \(^{67}\) In January, under 'Sundry Shows' the opinion was given that Kate Kelly was the heroine because she declined to purchase the safety of her brother Dan by kissing a policeman, and that audiences in general had no enthusiasm to spare for the schoolmaster who spoiled the Kelly arrangement for wrecking the train. \(^{68}\) By mid-January, besides the Voice telling the story from behind the screen, there was also Sydney Monk singing popular ballads during the comic picture pauses in the first part of the programme. \(^{69}\) At this time 'Snell', one of the 'Poverty Point' contributors was satirising the reversal of moral standards and the pseudo-chivalry of the gang;

> the moral of the story is that it is nobler and more righteous in the eyes of the gods to be a tall bushranger and thieve and kill than to be the despicable policeman who loses his life in endeavouring to trap outlaws. These splendid bushrangers never come within a hundred yards of a woman without taking off their hats, and on occasions they remove their hats as often as nine times to the one woman. \(^{70}\)

Besides its great length that has always been emphasised by casual observers, the other, possibly more interesting thing about this film is that it was pure film throughout, uninterrupted by sub-titles. It is true that the film needed the crutch of a printed synopsis at first, and later an energetic lecturer, and could not tell the full story in dumb mime as the German Last Laugh was to do.

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68. Ibid., 10 January 1907.
69. Ibid., 24 January 1907.
70. Ibid., 24 January 1907.
twenty years later, but the first performances when the film was shown without a lecturer or sub-titles must have been traumatic indeed for audiences accustomed to short sequences of readily intelligible action in comic films or documentaries. To have been able to unfold a strongly dramatic story within an hour must have necessitated the producers experimenting with techniques to show time lapse and simultaneous action, all probably involving cutting and editing to some degree. The only indication we have that there was in fact a complex interaction of images telling a sophisticated story comes from the Bulletin's Adelaide reporter who said 'a good deal of it would be hard to follow without the help of a closely-printed programme studied beforehand'.(71)

Another interesting feature of this film is its strong documentary or realistic flavour. There can be no doubt that the producers were not merely translating a fictional melodrama or play onto film; they also went back to the original documents and tried to tell the story exactly as it had happened. Consequently, it is difficult to know whether to call the film a re-enacted documentary about a true occurrence, or a fictional story film. The outdoor locations and the realistic props - like trains, telegraph wires, burning buildings - would all have enhanced the cumulative documentary effect of the film. This technique initiated the documentary flavour of many later Australian feature films, as for instance in the Sentimental Bloke (1919); the story may have been embellished

with fictional elements, but the presentation was completely real and natural.

Audience reaction was immediate and enthusiastic. Audiences cheered Kate when she declined to kiss the trooper in exchange for her brother's safety. They cheered the gang when they took their hats off over the dead constable they had just shot, and said what a good chap he was. They were a bit taken aback by the cold-blooded murder of Sherritt, but hissed the schoolmaster Curnow when he foiled the Kelly's plan to wreck the train. At least on two occasions it was reported that some members of the audience had so identified with the film that they had taken to acting out the exploits in real life. Less than six months after the film was first shown, the Bulletin wrote up the story about five Ballarat 'kids', who, after seeing the film, burgled a photo store and then held up their schoolmates. In September, a correspondent wrote into the same journal about a similar occurrence in New Zealand when the film was shown there in mid-1907:

The Kelly Gang biograph show has proved fruitful in Moeriland. It visited a remote township in the North Island and the local youth rushed to observe the flicker. Next day, three of the youths aforesaid stole three horses and broke into a store, where they secured rifles and 2000 rounds of ammunition. Then they made hurriedly for the back country with the local cop in hot pursuit of them and promotion. They stuck up sundry persons on the way, and broke into another store to relieve the monotony of the thing. When they struck the wild, untamed bush, they turned the horses loose to return home, and took to the hills. While I write, they are still in the hills, and if they are not dead or starving, and a large quantity of copy from Wellington is reconnoitring the vicinity. (73)
By its nature, the film was destined to run foul of the law, and these were just the first of the innumerable juveniles who cunningly gave 'the pictures' as their excuse for any and every misdeemeanour from burglary to sex offences. It is evident that Charles Tait regarded the threat of law suits seriously from the beginning, and years later recounted the following amusing story to his brothers.

The film included a policeman being shot in the back at the time of Ned Kelly's capture. As the story has it, one night while Charles Tait was manager at the Athenaeum, a man came up and asked to see the Manager of the theatre. Charles asked 'What can I do for you, Sir?', and received the reply that the man was the constable depicted in the film and that he had not been shot in the back. Charles was afraid of law suits and so he tried to bluff the stranger by saying that the booklet reprinting material from contemporary sources clearly stated that he had been shot in the back. This bluff did not work, so Charles repeated his question: 'What can I do for you, Sir?'. The constable said: 'I think a season's pass would be O.K.', and as the story concludes, 'He got it QUICKLY'.

Late in April 1907, the film was on tour in the Kelly country of northern Victoria, and was advertised to be shown at the Benalla Hall on Thursday 25 April. On 23 April, the solicitors, Gavan, Duffy & King, acting on behalf of Mr James Kelly (a brother of the Kelly's

72. Ibid., 2 May 1907.
73. Ibid., 5 September 1907.
74. See hand-written notes in E.J. Tait's Index, op.cit.
but not a member of their gang) attempted to prevent the screening by writing to the Melbourne police stating that the film would injure the reputations of people still living in the district. The result was very swift action by the Chief Secretary, Alexander James Peacock, who sent telegrams out on 24 April, prohibiting the performance of the film at the Benalla Shire Hall, at the Theatre Royal, and at Her Majesty's Theatre, Wangaratta. This action was taken under Section 6 of the 'Theatres Act, 1890', which embarrassingly did not mention anything about film shows, but only 'any stage play or any act, scene or entertainment' that was unlikely 'to preserve good manners, decorum or the public peace'. A further embarrassment, to be tested by showmen later, was that this prohibition could only be exercised in theatres licensed under the act. (75)

The film was not banned outright at this time, probably because the government of the time was unsure of its powers in this direction, and film censorship was not yet a world-wide phenomenon. The producers acted quietly and sent their tours interstate and through Gippsland, giving the Kelly country a wide berth. (76) However, in 1912 when either a new copy was made or additional footage was added and the film was re-released, it was banned in Victoria, and all Kelly Gang pictures were later banned in N.S.W. (77)

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75. See Vic. Archives, La Trobe Library, Melbourne. Police files on the Kelly Gang, J 2747. B 3383. See also Bulletin, 2 May 1907, gives the same reason - offence to the living - as reason for the banning in the Kelly country.
76. Leader, 22 June 1907.
77. Argus, 29 April 1912.
The film was definitely sent to England in July 1907, and shown in London in September, and throughout southern England until April 1908 or later. (78) It would have been unusual, given the free international flow of films at the time, if a copy was not sent to America, although so far no references to this have been located. There is, however, an interesting account of the film's passage through the English provinces given by a man who as a youth accompanied 'The Story of the Kelly Gang' as sound effects assistant and erstwhile lecturer;

This, I believe was the first long picture ever made. Titles and sub-titles had not yet been introduced. In the whole of the film there was not one word of sub-title. Consequently a lecturer had to describe the story and name the characters. The principal people were Ned Kelly, Dan Kelly, and their sister Kate. The lecturer was a Mr Barker. He had a very good baritone voice and sang one or two songs during the intervals. He wore full evening dress and stood at the side of the screen and used a pointer like a long billiard cue. My job was 'effects worker' at the back of the screen, and hearing the story told night after night, I unconsciously learned the full story by heart, so much so that I was able to deputise for the lecturer on occasions when he was indisposed. I remember even now how the story opened - 'We now show 'The Story of the Kelly Gang'. The longest film ever made being over 6,000ft. in length...'
It went on to say that all the photographing had been done in Australia on the actual sites of the original incidents and many of the people in the picture had actually been associated with the Kelly Family. The Kelly Gang were outlawed and while they were on the run they wore home made armour. This was featured in the company's advertising campaign. The posters showed one of the gang wearing the armour. It resembled a coal scuttle upside down on the head. The lip coming down over the chest. A slit was cut away for the eyes. We used to have sandwich men wearing replicas of his armour parading the streets. (79)

78. Leader, 13 July 1907.
79. Letter from Mr F.E. Russell, 1 Spring Bank, Hoolo, North Preston Lancashire, 1964 to Ernest Lindgren - now in possession of Film Division, National Library.
Mr. Russell, who wrote this letter, also mentioned how up to his resignation in April 1908, he went with the show through south and midland England, south Wales and North Ireland. The company was called 'The Colonial Picture Combine' and was run from the Strand, London, by J. Henry Iles.

It is not known what happened to all the copies of the film, but there must have been at least ten, since in February 1907 it was playing simultaneously in Melbourne, Adelaide and Sydney. By March 1907, the Taits had 5 separate companies touring with the film. In 1921 a photograph of the five men who each toured with a copy of the film was published in the Picture Show giving them as Herb. Findlay, H. Middleton, Chas. F. Jones, Harry Davis and Ernie Grigg.\(^{80}\)

There was also the copy the entrepreneurs E.J. & Dan Carroll purchased together with the Queensland rights, and the copy that was sent to England, where even further copies could have been made.\(^{81}\)

Even allowing for continual use and poor quality film stock, surely somewhere, one of these ten copies must have survived? The last known screening seems to have been in 1920, when W. A. Gibson said he took it off from a Melbourne theatre, so it would not compete with the Southwell version which Gibson had partially backed.\(^{82}\)

Years later, it was rumored in the trade that Gibson always kept one reel of the saga on his desk as a sentimental paper weight, but Anthony Buckley who questioned Gibson's private secretary years after

\(^{80}\) Picture Show, 1 June 1921.
\(^{81}\) Everyone, 29 July 1931.
\(^{82}\) Australasian Picture Magazine, 1 June 1920.
PLATE 8

Members of J. & N. Tait's original biograph company that toured with The Story of the Kelly Gang (1906). From left to right: Herb. Findlay, H. Middleton, Chas. F. Jones, Harry Davis and Berier Grigg.

Source: Picture Show, 1 June 1921.
her employer's death, and made many other rigorous searches, was not able to unearth even this relic. (83)

It is tempting to say that the success of the Kelly Gang film was immediately followed by a host of bushranging imitations, but in fact that was not the case. It took nearly five years before Australian film production approached anything like a continuous level. In the interim, a few more 'feature' length films were made, and although they were important there were not very many of them. One report says that the Taits immediately started production on Robbery under Arms in conjunction with Johnson & Gibson, but the second Australian feature seems to have been Eureka Stockade or Ballarat Eureka Stockade made in 1907 by the Melbourne based Australasian Cinematograph Co. Prop. Ltd. of 31 Queen Street. (84)

This film was released at the Athenæum on 19 October, and ran for two weeks. (85)

As with the Kelly film, the Eureka Stockade was more concerned with telling a true story of history than with romanticising unduly to make a complete work of fiction. It began with emigrants for Australia booking at a London shipping office in 1851. The people were all quaintly dressed in the costumes of the time, with the men chiefly in belltoppers and the women all in bonnets. A placard was placed outside announcing the gold discoveries, and from there on the story of the gold fields, the indignities of the diggers, and

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84. See Tait Index, op.cit.
85. Leader, 19 October 1907.
the murder at Bentley's hotel were faithfully portrayed. Fictional elements were probably introduced as this Bulletin reference indicates, but they did not detract from the main sense of realism of the film:

However short of the possible the Eureka scenes might be, they stirred me to the core. Goodenough, the spy, was effectively introduced with dramatic touches. A stockader pursues him to his death, a la Wainstone and M'Closky. The stockade was built in an authentic way. Then pains had been taken to represent the hiding of the wounded Lalor, and it was different again to the fancy. (86)

The last scenes underlined the film's documentary preoccupations when it depicted a reenactment of the unveiling of the Lalor statue at Ballarat. This mixture of history with contemporary times, and the heavy patriotism were to become recognizable features of films made in the twenties and thirties such as Around a Boree Log, Birth of White Australia and Charles Chauvel's Heritage. As the Bulletin reviewer so aptly commented at the time; 'What tremendous possibilities there are in the biograph!' Of the company, very little is known, except that it is one of the hundreds of defunct film companies listed in the Victorian defunct trading companies records in the State archive section at the La Trobe Library, Melbourne. The cameramen on the production were two brothers; George and Arthur Cornell, but the length of the film is unknown. Since little fuss was made about this at the time, it seems possible that it was shorter than the Kelly Gang, and probably only ran to two or three reels.

A month after the premiere of this second film, it was announced in the press that the Taits had in preparation a version of Rolf Boldrewood's story *Robbery Under Arms*, and that it would be screened in the very near future. It was first shown at the Athenaeum on 2 November 1907, and at the Sydney Oxford Theatre a week later. The producers appear to have been Osborne & Jardan, but the exact details of the direction, production, camera, leading players and so on are obscure. The *Referee* said that to enact the story 'a large party of persons were engaged at Freshwater (near Manly), Pymble and other parts'. The *Bulletin* later said 'Charles MacMahon roamed the Western Plains, accompanied by a band of appropriately dressed mummers; and so soon as a spot was reached whereon Starlight had stuck up someone, the apparatus was fixed, and wild, bloodsome proceedings began'. The cost was broadly advertised as £1/0/0, but this could have been an inflated estimate. Popular long runs of a month in both Sydney and Melbourne at prices from 1/- to 3/- meant that much of this cost was returned very quickly, although the film continued to tour country districts for at least another five years. The story followed the adventures of the bushranger Starlight, at his hide-out in Terrible Hollow, at the cattle duffing with Ben Marston, at the mail coach robbery, the sticking up of the gold escort and the attack on Kneightley's station.

89. *Referee*, 30 October 1907.
Love interest was offered by Aileen's broken hearted reaction upon learning of the boy's criminal activities, and the great ride by Miss Falkland. Finally, the climax was the shoot-out between the gang and the troopers.

The fourth of these early Australian features also had an Australian story as its theme, and like Robbery Under Arms, this one was also fictional; For the Term of His Natural Life, made by Charles MacMahon and Edward J. Carroll in 1907 or early 1908. It included most of the important incidents of the book, including the perpetration of the deed, the arrest, the transportation, the burning of the Hydaspes, the convicts' mutiny on board the Malabar, and convict life in Tasmania. Its Sydney season began on 6 August 1908 and ran for at least seven weeks at the Queen's Hall. Critical reception by the Bulletin was favourable, as it reported how the producers had turned people away from the opening night:

The story had been, of course, severely edited, but the boiling down was evidently done by a man who knew his business for the continuity of the yarn is quite unbroken. The pictures are good, especially the seascapes, such as the burning of the Hydaspes, and the voyage of Rufus Dawes, Lieutenant Frere and Sylvia in the fearful and wonderful boat made by Dawes. The films are all excellently done, and have the added attraction of being wholly of Australian origin. They prove that as moving picture builders Australians are not eclipsed by the best French and Yankee films.

In Victoria, it was distributed in 1908 by J. & N. Tait. They did tremendous business showing it at the Athenaeum in Collins Street for a record number of weeks. When audiences there began to diminish,

91. Ibid., 6 August 1908; 13 August 1908; 9 September 1908.
they took the film out on tour around country districts. The tour was a flop for some reason, so they decided to wash their hands of The Termp for the time being, and returned it to MacMahon at his office in Bourke Street, behind Kreitmayer's Wax Works. After a first unsuccessful rebuff, Claude Kingston, a young theatrical entrepreneur, secured the exclusive Victorian rights for £100, and later made a great deal of money by touring with the film throughout Melbourne suburbs and Victorian country districts. His lecturer was M. J. Bloomfield, who later became his partner. Bloomfield's job was to tell the story to the audience while the screening was going on. He became very adept at this, and delivered the narrative with a wealth of histrionic feeling; so much so that in country towns he had people fainting all over the place. Later Kingston was given control of the rights to Clarke's works by the family, and in 1913 a small public company was formed to manage those rights. In an article for The Age, Kingston later recalled two amusing incidents associated with his control of this film. The first concerned a show he gave in a roofless country woolshed which only had one small door as a workman's entrance. It was ideal to keep check of admissions, but took one and a half hours to fill the place, and then catastrophe struck as it started to rain and everybody headed for the small entrance at the same time. The second episode concerned a pirated copy of his film that was shown at the St. Kilda open-air theatre called the Paradise. Kingston suspected foul play and took his solicitor along with him. When the film was screened his
suspicions were confirmed. Only the titles were new, all the rest was exactly the same as his film; somebody had made an illegal copy. He and his solicitor quickly stopped the show amid catcalls and hoots from the audience, and the show only continued after the management had recognized his ownership, had agreed to pay the royalty due to him, and had improvised a rough slide to inform the public of what had happened.\(^{(92)}\)

The common features of these four early films are obvious. First, all were made very cheaply - under £1,000 - and probably returned ten times their initial outlay on the Australian market alone. The *Kelly Gang* (1906) was said to have returned £25,000 to its owners over a ten year period. All were Australian stories, either from its history or from its literature, and all were made simply out in the bush, with little capital expense and with mainly amateurs in the cast. They were all crude, rough and ready productions, made without pretensions by men who were in the business as theatrical entrepreneurs, and who were mainly out to make a quick profit and not an artistic triumph. The fact that in the process they were making world cinema history, may have surprised them.

**CONCLUSION**

The general theme of this chapter has been experimentation and development. From a shaky novelty in 1900, that many thought would go the way of the cycloramas and the roller-skating arenas, the

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\(^{(92)}\) *Age*, 14 May 1966.
cinema theatre became a permanent feature of Australian towns, and films an indispensable part of Australian life. In exhibition it was a time of fumbling investigations; new techniques of presenting and boosting a novel entertainment had to be worked out and applied. The ones who succeeded best were the Taits, West and Spencer, and the standards of showmanship they set were followed by other exhibitors as cinemas spread from the capital cities to the provincial cities, and then to the suburbs and the smaller country towns. New techniques of film distribution had to be tested as the cumbersome expensive method of outright sale gave way to a crude second-hand market system, and then to a sophisticated film hiring business. The films presented were growing more sophisticated all the time. At first they had been the short, naive action films taken from locomotives and ships, but from these there developed documentaries and newsreel gazettes that brought the news of the world to Australians. Story films, at first only 'short stories' in concept and length, stretched into full-length 'novels', and new and complex techniques of production had to be worked out by the Australians who made such films as The Story of the Kelly Gang and the Eureka Stockade. Again the keynote here was experimentation. It was a time to try out all the possibilities of the moving picture camera, and in this early period at least, Australians were well to the fore of the world cinema developments. But this early experimentation and flexibility was to give way over the next decade to patterns of consolidation and rationalization that led to some degree of rigidity in the way the film 'industry' was administered.

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CHAPTER 5. PATTERNS OF DEVELOPMENT: 1908-1913

Speaking as one who has known the picture business from its feeble flicker infancy to its present lusty youth, and who merely looks in occasionally to see how it is getting on, I would say that its popularity is assured....Pictures are the weekly entertainment of more people than go regularly to the theatres, whilst their occasional visitors grow more numerous every month. Statistics show it and the pictures themselves explain the fact. Why, the cinematograph is but just beginning to realize its possibilities and the prosperous managements are only young students of their business.

Bulletin, 4 August 1910.
1. EXHIBITION — THE SHOWMAN (1)

Of all the early film exhibitors in this country, Charles Cozens Spencer was the King; 'the Cinematocrat'. (2) Nothing like him had been seen since the bombastic days when Joseph Perry and Herbert Booth had travelled Australia exhibiting their slides and films. Spencer's cinema, the Lyceum, and his techniques of exhibition were to become the model for all Australian 'showmen'.

Charles Cozens Spencer became the closest approximation to an Australian 'movie mogul', and when he suicided in 1930 after a nervous breakdown, he was a millionaire, and the company of Spencer's Pictures that he had founded was still quoted on the Sydney Stock Exchange. (3) Born in London as Spencer Cozens, he reversed his name to aid his public image and Cozens Spencer

1. So much happened in the Australian film industry between 1908 and 1913, that to continue with a strictly chronological account would be to invite certain chaos. This chapter therefore deals with developments in exhibition and distribution during this period, while the next chapter deals with production. The reader at the end of this chapter should have some precise mental images of the flamboyant showmen-exhibitors, their cinemas, the types of audiences who frequented them, and the typical programmes shown. A section at the end dealing with distribution describes the source of the films and the procedure used to distribute them.


3. For reports that Spencer ran amok and shot his ranch manager and the local store-keeper in Vancouver (where he had retired), before shooting himself, see: Everyones, 17 September 1930; 22 October 1930; 5 November 1930; 14 January 1931.
is how he was always known. He migrated to Canada and began showing films with a limelight outfit on the west coast of Canada. In Vancouver, he met the theatrical Huntley family and eventually married the daughter Eleanor, who on the basis of her mother's homeland was later to assume the bizarre title of 'Senora Spencer'. Together with the Huntleys, Spencer and his wife left Canada for New Zealand. The Huntleys were successful there showing moving-pictures, but Spencer decided to go on to Australia.\(^4\) We have already seen how he came to Sydney in June 1905, and from that time until mid-1907 he travelled incessantly all over the continent with periodic stays at the Sydney Lyceum for two months or more. In January 1908, the couple returned to Australia after a seven months film-gathering and fact-finding 'holiday' in England, Europe and America.\(^5\) He very soon implemented some of the most up-to-date ideas of foreign showmen for boosting their shows. He had to, because in his absence, T.J. West had established permanent film shows at both the Melbourne ex-circus building 'Olympia', and at the Sydney Glaciarium.

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4. For much of the background information on this enigmatic man I am indebted to the article by Stanley N. Wright (a close personal friend of the Spencers), entitled 'Giants of the Past; C. Spencer' in The Showman, September 1950.

5. Referee, 29 January 1908.
naturally not in use for its original purpose during the summer.\(^{(6)}\)

These shows were in full swing and very popular when Spencer returned. Undaunted, he and his wife leased the 'New Lyceum Hall' for a number of years, but while it was being re-modelled they opened at the Sydney Palace.\(^{(7)}\)

As a team, the Spencers were publicity-minded. To the Australian public, the use by Mrs Spencer of the title 'Senora' was intriguing, and Spencer soon installed her as the projectionist up in the dress circle, while he looked after the front of house. Billed as the 'Only Lady Projectioniste in the World', people came to Spencer's show as much to see a woman operating what seemed mysterious and complicated machinery, as they came to see the pictures on the screen. Spencer boasted in a fashion that was soon to become familiar to the Sydney public, that his films would 'eclipse anything ever seen in this city'.\(^{(8)}\) The films, which he proudly declared came from the best overseas producers, were to change every Saturday.\(^{(9)}\) At one stroke, he thereby established a crippling precedent for most of his competitors, who had neither the contracts nor the capital to import their films directly on such a scale, and therefore had to wait for the throw-offs from

6. Table Talk, 2 January 1908.
8. Table Talk, 6 February 1908.
9. Referee, 12 February 1908.
Spencer and West. From the beginning the Palace was packed at every performance, and 'Senora Spencer's' manipulation of the machine while projecting views of the Cairns-Mareeba (Qld) railway, brought forth this praise from the Bulletin reviewer; 'Mrs Spencer focuses her pictures so well that the whole theatre seems to be sliding down the track at about 35 miles an hour'. (10) Together they set a vivid pace to their show that the audiences appreciated;

Whereas the usual theatre gives one long drawn-out show in one night, Spencer reels off, perhaps four or five, without wasting time and filling in long scene-shifting gaps with dreary conversation between two alleged comic idiots. The figures rush onto the canvas, tear through their parts and flicker off, and the scene changes from the wild mountain gorge to the middle of the Parisian drawing room in the twinkling of an eye. Each series of pictures tells a story. (11)

Even while Spencer's show was pursuing its 'shimmering career' at the Sydney Palace, in March 1908, Spencer was exploiting a few of his tricks of showmanship. Each film was made more realistic by the sound effects behind the screen, and Spencer would deliver the descriptions himself in a loud voice. (12) Once, while he was commenting on The Spanish Bullfight film he said; 'You will now see the toreador stab the bull in the shady part of the arena', and


11. Ibid., 13 February 1908.
the house convulsed in laughter. (13) He tried also to make his programmes more interesting by on his orders including the occasional locally-produced film - no doubt taken by the brilliant Tasmanian cameraman Ernest Higgins. The History of a Loaf (1908) was such a local 'industrial' that showed vividly the various stages of a loaf from the wheat growing until the bread was seen ready for consumption. (14)

Soon he began to find the cozy Palace theatre too small - particularly on pay nights - and towards the end of March he announced that he would open the New Lyceum Hall which would hold 3,000 people! (15) When it was opened in April, the Referee described the changes; 'The alterations have made it a most commodious and comfortable building. It has been lowered almost to the level of the street. There will be a dress circle and gallery which will be reached by comparatively few steps, while the orchestra stalls will be approached direct, thereby aiding to the safety and comfort of the audiences'. (16) Spencer ensured that the picture screen could be viewed comfortably from

13. Stanley Wright, op.cit.
16. Referee, 1 April 1908.
every seat in the theatre, and Table Talk called this 'an advantage not possessed by any other place of amusement in Sydney'. (17) Proudly installed in their new 'cinema', the Spencers soon had the 'house full' sign out every night. The Bulletin was also impressed with the renovated theatre, but was doubtful if it had been 'improved' by the religious executors of the late methodist philanthropist Ebenezzer Vickery's will; The Theatrescope is as usual good; but alas for the dear old Lyceum! All its Pagan beauty has fled. Although the seats are comfortable and the accommodation is increased in size, there is something soul-chilling about the new Lyceum. It has the atmosphere of a charity hall, and the trail of the Seven Deadly Vittues is over everything. (18)

Some of the gimmicks, new and old, that delighted the public were the handsomely draped box in the dress circle from which Senora Spencer projected the films, and the fine painted setting for the screen painted by Harry Whaitie for Spencer in April. (19) But the favorite novelty was a beautifully toned clock that behind the screen chimed eight o'clock each evening, and as the last chime

17. Table Talk, 2 July 1908.
19. Table Talk, 14 May 1908; Referee, 13 April 1908.
died away the orchestra would begin the overture and the show would commence. (20) The fine orchestra that Spencer assembled was considered responsible for half the night's pleasure, as the members played bright musical interludes between the usual three acts. (21) To attract the attention of the passing crowd, in May 1908, Spencer placed two North American bear cubs (allegedly 'sent him by his brother in America) in an open cage in the Lyceum's vestibule, and the public crowded around to see the playful furry creatures, and many stayed afterwards to attend the show. (22)

The essence of his popularity, however, was that his programmes were always full of variety and interest as the Bulletin said in May: 'At Sydney's Lyceum, Spencer's Theatrescope pictures range from a journey across the gloomy Atlantic in an up-to-date Cunarder to the Interstate League match at Sydney Agricultural Ground on Saturday last'. (23) Spencer was one of the first to introduce sound films when he demonstrated the 'Chronomegaphone' in August 1908; and he also showed coloured films when he could

20. Table Talk, 25 June 1908.
21. Ibid., 2 July 1908.
22. Ibid., 28 May 1908.
obtain them. (24) He stressed the sensational story or fictional film over the documentary, although naturally he would show both. West on the other hand, certainly in the early period of his activities, seems to have preferred newsreels, gazettes and industrials with the occasional story film. (25) Spencer and his films had the capacity to accentuate the fantasy nature of the entertainment, as the Bulletin was quick to point out:

The Spencer pot-pourri at the Sydney Lyceum is as varied as ever, and runs the whole gamut of fun, fancy imagination, tragedy and melodrama...Other subjects such as the Depilatory Powders, the Airship and a few more give the sensations of opium, drink, insomnia and other delights of the millionaire without the consequent bad head and injury to the cat. The picture show is, however, becoming a vice, and quite a large number of people have got it in such an acute form that they would sooner go without food than miss the thrills of the picture show. It takes them out of the ordinary every-day world, and lands them in region of romance where gravitation is not, and the things that was never dreamed of invariably happens. If it becomes more general a Reform government will be putting Spencer on the list of prohibited drugs. (26)

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24. Table Talk, 6 August 1908. But note that Rickards had first tried out the more primitive 'Gaumont Chronophone' which was often out of synchronization at the Tivoli, Sydney in October 1906, see Bulletin, 18 October 1906; 25 October 1906. Table Talk, 11 June 1908.

25. Ibid., 18 June 1908.

What sort of man was Spencer? A short, round-faced bearded Englishman with bright, sparkling eyes, he possessed, particularly in the early years, an alert, perceptive mind that was awake to the greatest opportunities of the situation. He was quick to see the lucrative possibilities of current events like the films of the American Navy visiting San Francisco which he showed in July 1908 when the fleet was then on its way to Australia. (27) The Bulletin was so impressed with his uncanny ability at picking the topical that it once declared that he must have been a newspaperman at sometime in his life. (28) By 17 September, Table Talk was calling his show 'one of the best all-round entertainments in Sydney' and referred to the crowds that were still being turned away every Saturday night. The Chronomegaphone, which was then in its sixth week was especially popular, featuring in addition to Harry Lauder, other singers who had been seen and heard on Australian stages. (29) Spencer had a flair for getting in early; immediately after establishing the Lyceum as his headquarters, he spilled over into the other facets of the business. He established a strong film production team

27. Table Talk, 30 July 1908.
29. Table Talk, 17 September 1908.
headed by Ernest Higgins, and later joined by his brothers Arthur and Tasman, who soon made Spencer famous for the quality of the photography of local documentaries and newsreels. This was the kernel of a later feature film unit, that Spencer was to initiate in 1911. In June 1908, Spencer announced that he had not only completed arrangements to make his own films, but he would also have a special hiring and selling department for a direct supply of the latest subjects from the important makers in the old world. (30) Included in his importations from his own buying office in London, then the film capital of the world, were Pathe films, Gaumont, Williamson and other British products, the famous American films by A.B. Essanay, Vitagraph, and Selig, together with the considerable output of many continental companies.

To distinguish himself from the others in the field who had not yet settled down, he boasted proudly and emphatically that he did not intend to travel from Sydney. (31) He studied his patrons likes and dislikes, and aimed to serve them with appropriate films at appropriate times. For instance, he nearly always showed religious films at Christmas and Easter times. He was sensible in that he did not expand too quickly, and it was not until late in 1909 that

30. Referee, 3 June 1908.
31. Ibid., 3 June 1908.
he moved into Wirth's Olympia, Melbourne just after it had been vacated by West. (32) He followed this up by leasing the Perth Theatre Royal, and released Spencer's Pictures in Western Australia. This was a company he formed in 1911 to draw together his far flung interests in exhibition, distribution and production. He had the ability to inspire loyalty and respect from the many executives he employed to run the different aspects of his business. Men like Henry Hawkins, Clem Sudholz, Alan J. Williamson, Bert Emilheinz, Ernest, Arthur and Tasman Higgins, Micky Stanley, Teddy Bedford, W.A. McIntyre and Stanley N. Wright all became well-known figures of the industry during the twenties, and this is part of Spencer's achievement that he could employ and train so many future film businessmen. During these fruitful years at the Lyceum the theatre was credited with box-office 'takes' that included Italy's Quo Vadis, which he was said to have paid £4,000 for the rights and which over 12 weeks returned an average of £1,100 per week. (33) All his pictures were outstanding successes and by 1912 he was a very wealthy man. The same year he built a large modern moving picture studio at

32. Australasian, 11 December 1908.

Rushcutters Bay, Sydney, and over the next few years he was the sponsor of many early Longford films like *The Tide of Death*, *The Fatal Wedding*, *Sweet Nell of Old Drury* and *Australia Calls*.

Between 1905 and 1912, Spencer made amazing progress and was partially responsible for the industry reaching the stage of 'Big Business'. Talk of amalgamation became current, and in the interests of protecting investment in cinemas and to achieve advantages in film buying and theatre operation, he consented to merge his interests with the amalgamation that already comprised the General Film Company. (34) Stanley Wright was later to assert that this marked a turning point in Spencer's career as he was such an individualist that he found it difficult to work with others on a board of directors. As time went on, Spencer became more and more highly strung, and started to voice his phobia that his hard-earned wealth was disappearing. He came to lean considerably on the Senora who took over many of his business responsibilities, and she even went into partnership with Wright in 1915, to open a cinema circuit on her own account. The Strand theatre, Brisbane and Toowoomba were accordingly opened, and on 26 April, 1916 they started the Newcastle Strand. Although the circuit was an outstanding success under the highly intelligent direction

34. See later discussion of 'the combine' in Appendix 3.
of the Senora, the amalgamation took Spencer to court claiming breach of agreement as Spencer had promised not to have any further interest in the picture business. The defence was that the circuit was entirely his wife's, but after three days the case was settled out of court, and it was announced that the Senora's theatres would be embodied with those of the Amalgamation. Following the court case the Spencers left Australia for Vancouver, and by this time Spencer was a nervous wreck. Nothing more was heard from them until the cables announcing he had run amok in 1930 shocked the Sydney film world. (35)

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Spencer's main competitor throughout the years 1908-1913, was T.J. West with his cinemas in Sydney and Melbourne, and later in provincial centres in four states. While Spencer had shown films in Australia before West, during 1907 while he was absent overseas, West managed to entrench himself in two big converted 'theatres' in Sydney and Melbourne. Using similarly high standards of showmanship, he managed to pack these huge areas (both held over 3,000 people) nearly every screening night. West like his competitor, had spent most of 1906 and 1907 touring the various Australian capitals, but almost from the beginning he had also

35. Stanley Wright, _op.cit._
visited and established cinemas in England, and New Zealand.
His film business was on an interstate, and even international
footing.

What sort of man was West? Thomas James West was born
in London in 1855, and died there on 16 November, 1916, aged 61
years. He was just fifty when he started showing films in New
Zealand, although for many years before that he had been a
theatrical showman and exhibitor in the North of England and had
made many tours to the U.S.A. with shows like Sam Hugo's Minstrels
before bringing the Brescians out with his films to New Zealand
in 1904. His character is perhaps best expressed in his obituary
published in the English cinema trade journal Bioscope:

Mr West was a man of a simple, kindly disposition, which
won him the affection of all who met him. Although he
took an honest, well-justified pride in his great
achievements, success never spoilt him; and he remained
to the last a quiet, modest, unassuming gentleman, as
courteous and fair in his business relations as he was
sincere and faithful in his many friendships. (36)

Probably he was more serious and formal than the flamboyant,
egotistical and vain Spencer, but West also had a fine head for
business, and he made the most of his head-start over the younger
Englishman with his already existent capital resources and
theatrical experience.

By the beginning of 1908, West was showing his films at Wirth's Olympia, Melbourne - a huge converted circus hall - and at the Sydney Glaciarium, a converted skating rink. (37) This brought him into competition with the Taits in Melbourne and Spencer in Sydney, but he showed that he could more than compete with these rivals. His popularity was also based on variety, for as Table Talk said: 'Truly Mr West caters for all. No wonder his entertainments are so well patronised'. (38) The Bulletin spoke of the stationary tourist, or the person who did not really travel but only wanders in his mind as the images of faraway places are flashed on the screen. 'West's great Flicker provides a world tour in a few minutes. Also it provides a new sample of bore - the creature who has seen everything from the Tomb of Amenhotep to the liquor saloons of Skagway, though he has never struggled personally beyond the St.Kilda esplanade'. (39)

In June 1907, the circus entrepreneurs Wirth Bros. took out a fifteen year lease on an old circus site near Princes Bridge and pulled down the old building to make way for a new one of handsome design and capable of seating 5,000 people. (40) Opened

37. Table Talk, 2 January 1908.
38. Ibid., 12 March 1908.
40. Leader, 15 June 1907.
in October by the Lord Mayor, it had a central ring for circuses and could be modified to accommodate theatrical productions with seating for up to 7,000 people. The central dome spanned eighty feet.\(^{(41)}\) It was destined to be little used as a circus hall because T.J. West took it over in December 1907, installed a sloping floor and electric light and opened it as Melbourne's newest picture theatre on 21 December 1907, under a nine months lease.\(^{(42)}\) So profitable was the lease when it was renewed that Wirth Bros. continued to use an adjacent circus site and the building was left undisturbed under West's management until late 1909.

The seating capacity of these early 'cinemas' is staggering when one considers that the St. Kilda Palais today holds only 3,000 and is hardly ever completely filled. West seated 5,000 in the Olympia at 6d per head, and by May he was bringing more chairs in.\(^{(43)}\) The Sydney Glaciarium likewise held 3,000 people, but somehow he jammed 4,000 in for his opening night on 14 December 1907.\(^{(44)}\) Using converted buildings had its disadvantages; as winter 1908

\(^{41}\) Ibid., 19 October 1907.
\(^{42}\) Ibid., 7 December 1907; 14 December 1907, and Bulletin, 19 December 1907.

\(^{43}\) Table Talk, 14 May 1908. This was his 21st week.
\(^{44}\) Bulletin, 5 December 1907; Leader, 14 December 1907.
came on and skating became more popular, West had to move to the Sydney Town Hall, which held only 3,500 at 6d per head.\(^{45}\) He returned to the Sydney Glaciarium in October and stopped doing 'the homeless cat act', but the following winter, he again had to give way to the skaters.\(^{46}\)

Unlike Spencer, West did not engage in any flashy gimmicks, although he did introduce a number of innovations including a big scenic screen at the Sydney Town Hall that made his films even more life-like and imposing, and he was the first to start a 10.30a.m. Saturday matinee session which was very successful.\(^{47}\) It took him nearly a year to acquire a 'Cinephone' - his answer to Spencer's 'Chronomegaphone' - and then he kept it at his Melbourne theatre.\(^{48}\) Even though the trend was plainly running towards some sort of weekly gazette of local events, since the audiences at West's and Spencer's would become restless if there was no local film in the programme each week, it was West who finally

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45. *Table Talk*, 7 May 1908.
47. *Table Talk*, 14 May 1908. This reference also says that he and his family would be leaving Sydney by R.M.S. Ormuz the following Saturday, but further details were not given. This is significant if he was absent as his business would have been administered by others. *Referee*, 24 June 1908.
initiated a weekly newsreel system in August 1910. Like Spencer, he also established a weekly change of programme - every Tuesday - after the arrival of the mail boat.

In mid-1909, he announced plans to build a new cinema at the corner of Sturt Street and City Road Melbourne, since the lease for the Olympia was regarded as too costly. At this time he also had theatres in Adelaide and in many Victorian country towns. By September the new building was opened; capable of seating 4,000 and called 'West's Picture Palace'. At the end of four years in Australia - in 1910 - he had developed the branch idea of cinemas and administered a far-flung string of theatres throughout the urban centres of Australia, including the new one at Broken Hill burnt out in December 1910. By April 1911, he had three theatres in Sydney, the Palace, Glaciarium and the Bijou. At the peak of his success he merged with Taits, Johnson & Gibson and Spencer into the General Film Co. His motives for doing so are not clear, but it is possible that by 1911, he had had enough of Australia and wanted to retire to his English cinema circuit. He was one of several foreigners who brought to Australia skills of showmanship and

50. Leader, 17 September 1910.
52. Ibid., 22 July 1909.
53. Australasian, 18 September 1909.
business organization that were to pave the way for the giant cinema circuits of Hoyts and Union Theatres during the 1920's. He did not have a pronounced policy towards local production — unlike Spencer's positive approach — but in 1911, he did establish a small production unit in Sydney under Franklyn Barrett, and West's newsreel did give work and training to many future cameramen. (56) While one writer has made out a titanic struggle to the death between Spencer and West, in fact they were really only in playful competition and then in only a restricted number of areas. (57) On occasions, they would vie with one another and seek to scoop the other with films of local events, but it was never on a very emotional level as the market was big enough for both of them in the early years. Until Spencer moved interstate into Melbourne and Adelaide, the area of competition was necessarily small. There were just as many examples of overt or tacit collusion as competition (for instance they often showed the same films simultaneously or shared 'scoops'), and as additional proof they merged their differences in 1911 in a common financial structure. (58)

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58. Bulletin, 4 June 1908. 'As Spencer's Theatrescope at Sydney Lyceum and West's Pictures at the Town Hall are displaying practically the same films at present, it is unnecessary to waste two lots of space referring to them, and it is unnecessary for the public to spend two prices of admission seeing the same set of films.
These were the two giants of 1908, but in 1909 they were joined by a few others, notably the Taits who re-entered the field of exhibition in Melbourne, Dr Russell who established 'Hoyts Pictures' in Melbourne; while in Sydney J.D. Williams arrived from America and soon made his presence felt. There were also a number of typical smaller exhibitors like Anthony Pugliese at the Sydney Alhambra Theatre, and W.J.Lincoln at the St.Kilda Paradise Gardens.

The re-appearance of J & N Tait at the Melbourne Glaciarium close to West's Olympia on the south side of the Yarra, in January 1909, marked the beginning of a very hectic year of competition as four shows were 'scratching for a crust' near Princes Bridge. (59) Despite the growing number of picture shows the Taits still managed to carve out their share of the market, and full houses greeted most of their performances. They were lucky that their general theatrical connections enabled them to secure film agents in London, Paris and New York, and they could therefore import modern films that were beyond the scope of the ordinary Australian exhibitor. (60) Yet they also showed a preference for the local product, and in January 1909 they were showing For the Term of his Natural Life.

59. Ibid., 14 January 1909.

60. Australasian, 16 January 1909.
at the Athenæum, with the sonorous voice of Mr Boothman as
lecturer. (61) One of the gimmicks that they introduced was
their Sunday night 'illustrated sacred service' at the Glaciarium,
during which they showed whatever religious subjects they had on
hand and many that were profane as well. (62) In winter, when the
Glaciarium was required for its original purpose, they had to move
from hall to hall throughout Melbourne, until they managed to
secure a booking at the Melbourne Town Hall or the Athenæum. (63)

In December 1909 when Spencer arrived at the Olympia Melbourne
with his 'chronomegaphone', the Taits like West, responded with
their own version of 'sound films', called the 'biomegaphone'. (64)

Throughout 1910 they continued mainly at the Glaciarium and
engaged in a tripartite competition with West and Spencer. During
this year their early association with Johnson & Gibson was
cemented, and they often showed locally produced newsreels like
the Melbourne Eight Hours Procession in April 1910, and whatever
local feature films were available. (65) In 1911 the partnership

61. Ibid.,
62. Ibid.,
64. Australasian, 25 December 1909.
65. Leader, 30 April 1910. For example Its Never Too Late to Mend,
(1911) made for them by Johnson & Gibson with W.J. Lincoln as
director. Bulletin, 16 February 1911. This was just the first
of a whole series made and shown during 1911 and 1912.
was formalised in the company they formed together called
Amalgamated Pictures Ltd., and in that year they were showing
films at the Collin St. Auditorium, as well as at their new
St.Kilda cinema in Fitzroy Street which included a glass enclosed
studio at the back for taking films. (66)

Another 'big' showman who had his start in 1909, albeit in a
very small way at first, was the popular bearded dentist Dr Russell,
who established a cinema under the novel name of 'Hoyts Pictures' at
the old St.George's Hall adjoining the Royal in Bourke Street. (67)
From there he was to build within a decade a string of theatres
all bearing the term 'Hoyts' until that name became a byword for
movie entertainment among Australian families. He started in
September 1909 and by October had won a fair share of the public
patronage of Bourke Street entertainments. (68) His shows were
continually successful, but other than the acknowledged excellence
of his films, his low prices, constant variety and personal good
reputation, it is difficult to see why, since he rarely engaged in
the usual showman tricks of publicity to attract his crowds. (69)

66. Bulletin, 18 May 1911; Argus, 12 April 1911.
67. Bulletin, 23 September 1909. Hoyts was a name Russell invented
because it was unusual, easy to remember and short - so it was
cheap to use in advertising.
68. Australasian, 16 October 1909.
Like the other exhibitors of this time, he also on occasion took local films to show in his cinema. One such Hoyts film that particularly captured the imagination of the Bulletin's reviewer was taken during the 1910 national elections.

Engaging a cinematograph machine he pursued the chief Labour men and after the polls took snapshots of their smiles and other facial ornaments. The resultant pictures, supplemented by another of the Labour party in caucus are joyfully received and promise to continue a popular item for they feed a ravenous public appetite for information about the new men in the national Parliament.

J.D. Williams, unlike the Taits and Russell, was another foreigner who left his mark on the Australian film industry at a critical stage of its development, and made the core of his considerable fortune in the process. He came to Australia from America late in the first decade of the century attracted by a newspaper item he had read about the high prices paid for admission to Australian cinemas. He arrived just at the time audiences were developing the 'film habit', and he correctly surmised that the relatively affluent Australians would go more often to the cinema if prices were lower, and the theatres more comfortable and attractive. Starting with his 'Colonial Theatre No. 1.' in busy George Street, Sydney, in 1909, he provided continuous shows from 10.00 a.m. to 10.00 p.m. for 3d and 6d. This was a new concept in exhibition and at first he was scorned by the...

70. Ibid., 5 May 1910.
J. D. Williams

PLATE 9

Source: Lone Hand, 1 March 1912.
other more lethargic showmen. Nevertheless the public vindicated
William's judgement by their overwhelming patronage, and he soon
reaped the economies of running his theatre on a continuous basis.
Running costs such as rent, advertising and labour were not
greatly increased for the longer hours, yet because his theatre
emptied and filled every hour, he made much more per seat each
day than other more traditional cinema showmen who were charging
higher prices and opening only at night. The same economies of
scale applied when fixed costs like film hire, advertising and
administration were spread over several cinemas, so it was not long
before profits and popularity enabled him to open his 'Colonial
Theatre No.2.' opposite his first theatre, and both soon became
renowned throughout the world for the sumptuousness of their
interiors and the services they provided.

In 1911, the *Lone Hand* critic explained the essence of his
success, and why his example was rapidly being followed by other
exhibitors:

First and foremost, the theatres are all placed where there
is a large and increasing foot passing traffic. The gay
exterior, the light and the music, all attract the people.
The splendid vestibule, with marble steps, marble ticketboxes,
splendid doors, and the vast marble staircases, with railings
of burnished brass make an alluring bait. And when all this
splendour is available for sixpence and threepence the
places are naturally rushed. It's worth a shilling an hour
just to sit in them and rest, but when the world's best
photo-plays are laid on the value received for the money
becomes overwhelming...the result is the casual visitor becomes the regular client. (71)

J.D. Williams introduced a bi-weekly change of his programme for constant variety, and he set new standards in press advertising. His theatres were the only ones in Australia at the time to give special matinees for ladies and for children. Between 1909 and 1911 this Canadian made £58,000, and his Greater J.D. Williams Amusement Co. Ltd. with capital of several hundred thousand pounds embraced a chain of theatres in Australia and New Zealand, together with a distribution organization to service them with films. (72) In the first half of 1911 he moved into the Melbourne film market, by building his Melba cinema in Bourke Street as that city's first continuous show running from 11.00 a.m. until 11.00 p.m. (73) It was an immediate success. (74) Throughout 1911 and 1912 he enlarged his empire and continued to make profits. In mid-1912 he established his newsreel; 'Williams Weekly', with Bert Cross and Bert Ives and cameramen. (75) His

71. Lone Hand, 1 March 1912.
72. Ibid.,
73. Bulletin, 19 January 1911; 16 February 1911; 18 May 1911; Australasian, 10 June 1911.
74. Australasian, 22 July 1911.
75. Photoplay, 8 June 1912. It is not true as E. Reade op.cit. suggests that Williams was a negative force in Australian film production, as he continually encouraged local newsreels, and was a close friend of Raymond Longford to whom he suggested the idea of making The Sentimental Bloke in 1918.
attitudes to the combine (West's, Spencer's, Taits and Johnson & Gibson) were rather erratic. At first he opposed amalgamation, and did much in the trade paper *Photoplay* to ridicule them, and to raise exhibitor's fears about the consolidation. (76) Although he indignantly denied that he was holding out so fiercely only for a better offer, he did in fact sell out to the combine in 1913 when his interests were merged into a new company called Australasian Films Ltd. (77) By this time he had offices in New York and Minneapolis as well as in London, and he had opened in June 1912 his fifth Sydney cinema, the beautiful, huge, exotic Crystal Palace in Sydney. (78) He returned to America and became one of the most significant film executives of the American film industry, dying a millionaire in 1954.

Before leaving the subject of pre-World War One showmen, it would be as well to look at a representative sample of the smaller men, for few were as well off as the big five; Spencer, West, Taits, Russell and Williams. One of these smaller men, who was later to achieve some sort of fame as a sponsor of Longford's films, was the Italian migrant Pugliese who established himself as one of the first

76. Ibid., 27 April 1912. See especially cartoon, 8 June 1912.

77. Specific denial of intention to enter; Ibid., 25 May 1912, Merges without explanation, Argus, 8 January 1913.

78. Bulletin, 27 June 1912; also Photoplay, 18 January 1913.
permanent Sydney showmen in the broken down Haymarket Theatre called the Alhambra in 1908, and who by dint of good showmanship and management built it into one of the first release houses of Sydney for lesser films. (79)

Another smaller man was W.J. Lincoln, who had once been a youthful Melbourne playwright, actor, then a touring agent for Williamson's bio-tableau around the turn of the century. By 1909 he had settled down as manager of one of the first outdoor cinemas, the St.Kilda Paradise Gardens, taking advantage of the warm summer weather. (80) Over the next five or six years he was to emerge as one of the few Australian scenario writers, and he helped in the production of many Amalgamated Pictures (Johnson & Gibson) films, in his own productions under the Lincoln-Cass Films company, and in the J.C. Williamson films of 1915. While many of the above showmen went into film production as a sideline, and some developed distributing interests, another smaller exhibitor Clement Mason is an example of a showman who found greater profits in organizing a film distribution office. He started in 1908 in Sydney and by 1910 had three suburban shows as well as the lease he held on the Bijou, but he is mainly remembered for his

79. The Stage, 29 April 1908 and Theatrical Argus, 30 July 1910.
80. Australasian, 2 October 1909, and Bulletin, 16 February 1911.
initiation of Clement Mason Films, a buying and distributing concern that was carried on, after his death, by his wife. Mrs Mason. (81)

2. EXHIBITION - TOURING SHOWS AND PERMANENT CINEMAS

What sorts of shows did these showmen present, and where did they show their films? At first nearly all shows were temporary and travelling. Spencer and West for instance spent most of 1906 and 1907 touring the mainland cities of Australia, and often took in the large outlying provincial cities. While they generally showed their films in hired halls and legitimate theatres taken over temporarily for screening of their films, other smaller exhibitors had to be content with tents and mechanics institute halls. As film supply from overseas became certain enough to support weekly changes the necessity of moving was eliminated, and many showmen, heartily sick of the ceaseless packing and unpacking, settled down in the location of their choice and established

the first permanent cinemas. At first these were in some converted skating rink, church hall or circus building, but as demand increased, new specialized buildings especially for the exhibition of films were erected around 1910. Nevertheless, touring shows were still necessary and popular in the smaller centres of population, and consequently the touring showman continued as a feature of exhibition until well into the 1920's.

The touring showman and his show was a different type to the city showman and his show. By nature flexible and mobile, he had to put up with a variety of unexpected conditions, both natural and man-made, in all types of communities. The earliest touring film showmen had been the Salvation Army Perry's, closely followed by the Corricks presenting a mixed film-musical show. Many of the men who were later to become famous in the industry like Bert Ive, George Tallis, Frank Thring, W.J. Lincoln and Herbert Wilkins had all had spells as 'carpet-bag film men' hawking films around the country towns. It was a rigorous apprenticeship and a forcing ground for techniques they were later to exploit in their permanent shows. Probably the classic example of a pre-World War One touring show was that promoted by M.P. Adams during 1910 called *Australia at Work*.

The programme arranged by Erskine Scott, a manager of West's Pictures Melbourne and a later executive of Pathe Freres, covered a series of films of outstanding local enterprises, among them
The Argus, MacRobertson's, Swallows & Ariels, H.V. McKay's harvesters, and the Abbotsford Brewery. These and other films had been taken by the Pathe Freres cameraman Henry Herault, and Frankly Barrett; each was a little less than 1,000 ft. In addition, they had robust early comedies, violent dramas, flickery newsreels and scenics, with which to sustain the public's interest in their 'industrial display:.

M.P. Greenwood Adams was a young, enthusiastic exhibitor, and he was helped by a team of five; James Cameron followed by W. Shannon operated the projector; Harold McColl was the engineer, Bertie Afriat provided the music from a miscellany of pianos, Jim Bell did the advance work, and Harry Watson was an 'omniscient utility man'.

They opened at the Preston Hall on 23 August 1910, and covered 28 suburban districts before beginning in the country at Werribee. Eventually they were to claim the record of 316 consecutive performances in 245 towns, covering 7,000 miles by rail or road without once letting down their sponsors or the public.

82. The Taits in 1907 had no less than 5 touring shows on the road at once with The Story of the Kelly Gang, and this was also toured throughout Queensland by E.J. Carroll. Others, like The Squatter's Daughter (1910) film touring company had as many as ten men in the team; see Leader, 6 August 1910.

83. For much of the information on this show I am indebted to the article 'On The Road with the First Movies: There were Moving Accidents by Flood and Field with a 1910 Picture Show', by M.P. Greenwood Adams, in The Argus, 17 September 1938.
Electric light itself was a novelty in many of the townships of the travelling showman's itinerary, and long before any programme began a group of curious farmers would gather around the little single-cylinder and watch silently the operations of the engineer. Many of them would have been attracted by huge searchlights the showmen aimed into the sky as an attraction of outlaying farms. Then would come the time when the searchlight would be cut; the engine would slow its beat, and then take up the load of running the 'pitchers'. The show would be on. Inside the hall, the shuffling would cease, as a stream of light was projected onto the glorified bed sheet hung at the end of the hall, and the pianist would point out a medley of airs from an ill-tuned piano. Sound effects were provided by Mac, the engineer, and Watson, the handiest of handy-men behind the screen, dropping boxes and tins to synchronize with the amazing acrobatics of Tontolini, and the startling falls of Prince and Linder. Of course, sometimes the crash would arrive a minute or so after the fall, or the knocker would sound after the actor had passed through the doorway, but who cared? It was all for realism.

The tour was an unending series of packing and unpacking and re-packing. They became experts, and at Birchip one night established

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84. This was also a favourite gimmick of the Corricks, and the story was told of simple country folk falling on their knees in their isolated farms when they saw the faraway beam of light cutting the night.
a record by hauling the equipment from the station, setting it up, and projecting the first picture on the screen all within 14 minutes! As Adams later proudly declared, 'that was moving pictures indeed'. Among the problems of the road show and its personnel was the question of laundry. Six towns a week gave little scope for the adequate arrangement of such things. But the engineer solved his problem by washing his clothing in the small canvas tank holding water for cooling the engine, that naturally became hot as the night wore on. All went well until one night the engine became overheated and on examination it was found that the engineer's shirt had blocked the engine intake.

It took many years to win the confidence of country people in the road show, which rested so precariously on the dependability of the engine and the men who nursed it along. When Adams returned to Australia in 1913 with another spectacular called Ireland To-Day after a visit to Europe, he discovered that even in two years there had been vast changes. Many of the country towns by then had permanent cinemas and he found that although his show was well patronised because of its novelty, the day of the touring showman was nearly over. (85) Others continued after him, but generally they were one

85. For examples of other touring shows see Photoplay, 11 May 1912. Hugh Black's Entertainments Ltd. in Qld. and Bulletin, 12 December 1912, about the perils of travelling shows with Spiller's Continental Pictures in N.S.W.
man shows, or else they made arrangements with the local film
men to use their hall and equipment, and showed their 'special'
films on a percentage basis.

In the cities, the permanent cinemas existed in two forms:
buildings converted into cinemas, and buildings especially built
for film exhibition. In 1908 the Sydney Glacialium and Wirth's
Olympia in Melbourne were examples of the former, while the Sydney
Crystal Palace and the Melbourne Scala were examples of the latter.

The first type were often huge, draughty, high-domed
buildings that could seat thousands on rows of hard benches. They
often had expensive leases, and the added disadvantage of being
required at different times of the year for their original purpose,
during which time the exhibitor had to find an alternative place
to show his films. However, they did not involve a heavy initial
outlay, and were often centrally situated close to trains and trams.
The various town halls of the capital cities were ideal as places
for temporary shows, and it was in Melbourne Town Hall that many
films were shown by the Taits and West. In fact West is a
good example of a showman who made the transition from a temporary
theatre into a permanent theatre. We have already seen how he began
in Melbourne at Wirth's Olympia, but after 18 months there, in
September 1909 he decided to build his own picture 'Palace' nearby, and when this brick cinema (because of the South Melbourne building restrictions) was opened towards the end of that year it covered an area 165ft x 85ft. and included seating for 4,000. It was built without pillars for the roof so that everyone could have an uninterrupted view of the screen. (86)

The Taits also made the transition in 1912, from their temporary quarters at the Glaciarium, to a new theatre they built in Flinders Street. Often a new development in motion picture presentation would prompt the building of a new cinema to house the novelty, and this was the case in this instance. It was built mainly for the showing of kinemacolour films which required a special projector and films twice as long as normal. The Leader described the new building, named after the famous London kinemacolour theatre, the Scala, as having 2,200 new tip-up chairs arranged in three tiers with stalls, dress circle and balcony. 'Like the most modern edifices of its type, it will be absolutely fire-proof and will be provided with numerous exits to permit complete emptying of the theatre in a couple of minutes. (87) It also had stage dressing rooms and other conveniences so that it could be

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87. Plans to build a cinema in Flinders St. were first voiced in 1909 see Bulletin, 24 June 1909, but not brought to fruition until 1912.
used, if necessary for dramatic and vaudeville performances. Plainly the canny Taits, aware of the then current widespread fears that motion pictures were only a passing fad, did not build their 18,000-20,000 theatre without providing for a variety of uses should motion pictures go out of favour. It is also interesting to note that the seating capacity of these later cinemas tended to be smaller. For instance, the Brennan's new cinema in Melbourne, the Amphitheatre in Bourke Street, completed by May 1912 would seat only 2,000 people at prices from 1/- to 3/-.

'The cost of the land and building is set down at 32,000 and none of the money was wasted in interior decoration. Plain white walls and blue plush-covered seats, framed in white, complete the colour scheme. The balcony is placed at the back of the theatre as in the buildings where the cinematograph unwinds itself eternally. (88)

But the most palatial of all these early cinemas, and the model for the later munificent Regent (South Yarra), Palais (St. Kilda), State (Melbourne), and Prince Edward (Sydney), was J.D. Williams glittering new Crystal Palace opened in June 1912:

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Perhaps the greatest free spread ever seen in Sydney occurred on Saturday night at the opening of the Greater J.D. Williams Crystal Palace in George Street. The 70,000 structure was packed... The whole system of Yankee ices, drinks, peanut collations, popcorn and sundries was free. The Crystal Palace is easily the handsomest photoplay theatre in Sydney, and the plays are shown by a greatly improved process. This theatre is a symphony in dark green with pictures painted on the walls, and framed heavily in old gold. The Winter Garden is a pleasant haunt of high-priced refreshments and iced drinks. Ladies 'with encumbrances' will be pleased to notice an enclosed space filled with baby furniture and crowded with dolls, teddy bears and toys, where the infant can be deposited in charge of a nurse. A careful labelling system makes the return of the right infant fairly certain. The ventilation is excellent. The place was filled with smoke on Thursday before the opening, and the atmosphere was completely purified in five minutes. (89)

This was fantasy-land incarnate, and the Australian public loved it. Here they could see the most up-to-date films, or sit in the cool lounges or rendezvous in the Winter Gardens, while men could flex their muscles in the Athletic room, sit in the smoking lounge, or spend a penny of the peep-show machines in the 'Pavillion of Automatic Devices'. This was the stuff Hollywood was made of.

But by 1912 the city cinemas no longer had the field all to themselves. They had faced suburban competition before from such temporary shows as W.J. Lincoln's open-air 'Paradise Gardens' on

89. Ibid., 27 June 1912; 11 July 1912, Australasian, 4 January 1913.
PLATE 10
Crystal Palace Wintergarden.
Source: Souvenir Programme, National Library, Canberra.
the St. Kilda esplanade or the McIntyre Bros. tent cinema of
North Sydney, but on Christmas Day 1910 a new development was
ushered in with the opening of the first permanent suburban
cinema; the Lyric right in the heart of Chapel Street Prahran:

For the first season the new suburban theatre has been
constructed to show photoplays, and for this reason the
stage had been dropped from the plans. The Lyric will
hold nearly 2,500 people and that number has been
approached every night since the opening. The theatre
is a fine one from the front view on Chapel Street, but
the interior has been furnished with tasteful and
beautiful decoration. There is an enormous sliding
open air roof in the dome which has a span of 76 feet
designed in Wunderlich panels. At the stage end is a
tremendous screen capable of giving a picture close to
1600 square feet.... In addition the management has
wisely 'spread' itself over an orchestra which is
probably equal of any theatre band in Victoria, and
which has the happy knack of not playing only the
everlasting ragtime and two step horror, but has
substituted the lighter passages of comic opera for the
lightsome films and the solid grand opera for the dramas. (90)

Under the management of Mr Victor Upton Brown, the Lyric set out to
prove that Australians would go more to the pictures if there was a
comfortable cinema situated near them, and they did not have to
take the time or expense to travel four or five miles into the city
to see a show. By March 1911, the Australasian was saying 'Prahran's
Picture Theatre, the Lyric, quite holds its own with metropolitan

90. Leader, 31 December 1910.
rivals'. (91) By then the same syndicate had bought a valuable block of land, 85 x 200ft. in Sydney Road, Brunswick, and the Lyric Brunswick was opened in September 1911:

It starts with a 'fairy' Garden basement and works up to a sliding roof. The entrance to the vestibule has some smart shops on either side and over these, running the width of the building, are a big billiard room and a hall for hops, lodge meetings, etc., with a bit of roof-garden attached. 'Fairy bower', and 'roof garden' are wide descriptive terms of course; it remains for the nobility and gentry of Brunswick to develop the meaning of them. (92)

Before long, these two theatres had their own local competitors, with the Royal, Chapel Street near Windsor station opened in October 1911, and the Empire, Brunswick in June 1912. By this time cinemas were being built in Geelong, Fitzroy, St.Kilda, Malvern and Brighton, and soon nearly all the suburbs were well catered for as decentralization of the new entertainment media proceeded apace. This ushered in the age of the suburban manager, at first independent, but soon to fall beneath the heel of the more powerful giant circuits like Hoyts and Union Theatres.

91. Australasian, 4 March 1911.
The great fear of the time was fire. Films stopped for even a fraction of a second in front of the hot light source would burst into flames. This is what happened in Balmain, Sydney in October 1910 when a 14 year old operator tried to take a burning film outside. The fire was quickly extinguished and although the crowd had panicked, they were back in their seats within twenty minutes and the show went on. (93) Less fortunate was another operator who tried to throw the blazing film over the heads of the audience panicking at the door. Many were burnt, and the skin of the operator’s hands was hanging off when he was taken to hospital. (94) Fires often occurred at Salvation Army screenings, where the projector was often set-up in the middle of the audience at the back of the hall. After one such fire in Richmond in July 1911, the fire-officers criticized the lay-out of the show, and shortly afterwards regulations were framed for the safety of audiences. (95) While very few fires in Australian theatres caused loss of life, overseas examples like the frightful death of 1000 Mexican aristocrats incinerated at a society screening in Mexico City in 1909 were frequently quoted by those members of the public and the authorities determined to make film shows a safe entertainment. (96) Most of the Australian fires

93. Argus, 10 October 1910.
94. Ibid., 10 July 1911.
95. Ibid., 24 July 1912 and 27 July 1912.
96. Australasian, 20 February 1909.
caused by films were small and generally only the film itself and some of the projector and its surroundings were ever destroyed, although there were many fires in film stores that caused thousands of pounds of damage and disrupted services. (97) In February 1910, the Melbourne fire chief gave a demonstration of a new non-inflammable film that would only smoulder when exposed to a flame. (98) It had been developed by Pathé Frères at an alleged cost of £100,000, but it was not until after the Second World War that 'safety-base' 35mm films became general. Local regulations had by 1913 enforced much greater safety precautions, the fire-proof boxes, extinguishers and fire escape doors were then general. (99)

Other hazards that the early showman had to contend with were impertinent small boys disturbing the audience, the inveterate talkers, the ladies with the giant hats, larrikins out on a spree, the drunks and lovers taking advantage of the warm and dark for their different purposes. (100) Added to these problems were the local policeman on the watch for contraventions of censorship laws, and the local health and fire inspectors concerned over

97. See Argus, 4 November 1910, fire at Pathé Frères, 1,000 damage, but insured. Bulletin, 5 December 1912. Fire broke out in J.D. Williams' Collins Street film store, and in characteristic fashion that same night he had films of the blaze showing at his Melba theatre opposite.

98. Argus, 10 February 1910.

99. See ibid., 12 August 1911.

100. Bulletin, 19 September 1912. So concerned were the 'wowsers'
the condition of the cinema. Problems might arise with the various unions that were growing up around 1910 like the Musicians union or the biograph operator's union, and there was always the worry of whether the selected film would arrive in time, and in one piece. (101)

But the audience as it settled back on a Saturday night and munch its peanuts was blissfully unaware of these problems, and it is time now to look at who the audience was at these early film shows.

3. EXHIBITION - THE AUDIENCES

At first the film shows were merely part of an older form of entertainment - vaudeville - and hence took their audiences ready-made from the types of people who used to attend music-halls, but after a decade or so as cinemas were established purely for the exhibition of films it became obvious that a new type of audience was being created. In 1908 the Bulletin claimed that there were over a dozen cinemas showing in Melbourne, and in 1911 it listed three in Melbourne, two in Prahran, one in St.Kilda and

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with pictures in the dark, that a group of Melbourne businessmen formed a company in 1909 to exploit a new 'daylight screen' that in theory allowed films to be shown with the lights on. The company failed soon afterwards.

101. Bulletin, 15 June 1911. A union of biograph operators was forming in Melbourne, to affiliate with the stage hands. Photoplay, 13 April 1912. Victorian Association of Cinematograph Operators. The Musician, 18 September 1913, Musician's union against picture shows where award was not paid.
many more being built in the suburbs. (102) In the same year the Argus said there were over 100 picture shows in Sydney (permanent and temporary) employing 2,000 people and with a capital of £1m. (103) A year later the same paper gave a list of over 25 Melbourne cinemas and added up a total of 50,000 seats available on a Saturday night, ranging from Spencer's with accommodation for 4,200 to the Star with only 600. (104) By 1913 the Argus said 65,000 were attending 57 city and suburban 'proper' cinemas on a Saturday night, where over 1000 workers were employed and capital was estimated at £350,000. (105) Legitimate theatre's audiences were stationary at 14,000 so it was claimed that the picture shows had attracted their own audience.

Observers made much at the time of the fact that the people going to the film shows were different from those who had gone to vaudeville and legitimate theatre shows. They noticed many old people in the audience who never before went out at night to entertainments, or who had not been out to an entertainment for

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103. Argus, 31 May 1911.
104. Ibid., 13 January 1912.
many years. They noticed many young children with or without
their parents, who before had not been allowed out to night
entertainments. Workers who previously had not been able to pay
for a night's entertainment at a theatre came two or three times
a week to the cheap picture shows, and there were others whose
religious scruples had kept them from such entertainments as
horse-racing and the legitimate theatres.

The Bulletin was always keen to comment on the frequency
with which people would go to the picture show, and how this
increased as the more convenient picture theatres sprang up all
over the suburbs. 'A Visit to West's Pictures (Melbourne branch)
is now almost as obligatory as a wash. Indeed, some people might
make the pictures and the wash alternate celebrations.' (106)

In September 1909 it said; 'Pictures have become a habit, not to
say a vice, and there are people going around who would sooner
miss two meals a week than their regular 'picture night'. ' (107)

Unlike the situation in England where the middle and upper
classes had to be wooed to the picture shows gradually, in
Australia a much more democratic air prevailed at the 'flicks',
and it became just as much the preserve of the 'better classes' as it

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106. Bulletin, 28 May 1908. See also; Ibid., 4 February 1909.
People who used to go once a month now spend every night in the
week meandering around a score of picture shows. Ibid., 2 June 1910.
Once or twice a week common, and why.
107. Ibid., 16 September 1909.
was of the workers. From the very beginning in Australia vice-
regal patronage had been accorded such film shows as the
Melbourne Cup (1896), and this patronage continued from time to
time throughout the next half-century. As in England, once royalty
went to the films then the upper and middle classes followed. (108)
All classes went to Australian cinemas, and when the grand new
theatres of 1911-1912 period started to be built, it was not so
much to woo the middle class to the pictures - for they were already
present - as it was to make existing patrons more comfortable.
But above all the pictures were a family affair, and the wise
showman encouraged this early development. 'Mr C. Spencer
presented a gorgeous array of pictured scenes at the matinee on
Saturday before a crowded house, largely composed of the youthful.
In lots of cases even 'baby' had been brought with the family party,
and she also cooed her pleasure'. (109)

'It did not matter what sort of weather there was; the audience
still came by train, buggy, tram or on foot to see the weekly film.
Wet nights would bring people out determined to cheer themselves

108. See Chapter 1 for Lady Brassey's patronage to 1896 Melbourne
Cup. In 1908 the new Governor-General Lord Dudley was present at a
screening of Spencer's film of 8 Hours Day Procession. See Table
Talk, 8 October 1908., and he later visited the Tait's show of
Mystery of a Hansom Cab, see Bulletin, 16 March 1911.
109. Table Talk, 21 May 1908.
up, and make the 'evening glide easily away'; while even on
the hottest nights, thousands would crowd into the huge barn-like
tin roofed buildings over Princes Bridge. Many of course,
preferred the open-air cinemas at St. Kilda on hot nights, or the
shows that were often held in places like the Melbourne Cricket
Ground.

A special audience that showmen went out of their way to
attract and accommodate very early in the development of the cinema
was the small child. Children loved the fantasy nature of films
from the beginning, and showmen like West and Spencer soon
appreciated this and started to cater for them with special
matinee sessions and special programmes.

At Wirth's Olympia (Melbourne) West's flickerdrama
now details an exciting piratical incident among
other things. It is the usual abduction of a fragile
young thing to a sort of cardboard ship, where among a
litter of dice, pewters, and homicidal implements,
desperadoes royster in sixteenth century togs; and
where follows sudden death and gore. The flicker is
a bit unfounded, but the small boy votes it a
pleasant change. (111)

With the small boy's attachment for the 'flicks' came fears of
his degeneration. At first playful as in the following Bulletin
reference, it was soon to become a tenet of faith of many members
of the public that films could undo all the moral teachings of

111. Ibid., 13 February 1908.
society.

West's Melbourne picture programme these days is a treat to nice little boys, who are somewhat neglected by modern entertainers. Stevenson's 'Treasure Island' adapted to the arbitrary requirements of the flickergraph has been included. It is a film full of delicious awe to the Melbourne youngster, who sees in the incidents before his eyes a million incitements to go and do likewise. Wherefore a new phase of juvenile depravity becomes possible. (112)

Then, as now, the press delighted in publishing stories of children being led astray by what they saw at the picture show (nowadays it is what they see on television). In November 1911, the Argus reported that two boys burned down a miner's shack after seeing films of Indians. They were given a severe talking to by the magistrate and nominally fined 5/-.(113) Soon the 'authorities'; police, headmasters, and priests were taking the threat seriously.

Mr J. Milne, the inspecting superintendent in Melbourne in 1913 was convinced that there was a connection between crime and films and said 'Only recently two boys whose imagination had been stimulated by a bushranger film shot a Chinese'.(114) This may have been laughable if had not led inevitably, in the Australian context, to the banning of all bushranger films in N.S.W. for children and adults for a quarter of a century. (115)

112. Ibid., 25 June 1908.
113. Argus, 23 November 1911.
114. Ibid., 8 October 1913.
115. See Appendix 4 for a discussion of early film censorship in Australia.
Despite this growing negative attitude, which was to assume the proportions of a flood of protest by the 1920's, surprisingly there were many Australians in the early years who felt that pictures were a force for good in the community, and the exhibitors naturally tried to foster this belief. These observers would point to the families enjoying themselves together, and what a force for family cohesion the local picture show was becoming. Others pointed out the early effect film shows had on Saturday night at the pubs, and how publicans were distressed by the fall off in their clientele. (116) Journalists delighted in describing the new medium of entertainment as some form of drug, better than alcohol in its ability to engender escapism, but without the after-effects of a hang-over. The Theatrical Argus called it a 'clean and healthy' form of recreation, and even the Argus in 1911 praised the development of the motion picture over the previous fifteen years and said it was 'both instructive and wholesome'. (117) The potential educative influence of motion pictures was early acknowledged, even though the Bulletin might gently satirize the way films were 'educating Bill and his missus on the beauties of travel'. (118) In a country lacking visible evidence of a long history, or a highly developed attitude to 'culture' with easily accessible art galleries, museums, and

117. Theatrical Argus, 30 July 1910, Argus, 4 January 1911, editorial praising development.
libraries, the effect of the motion picture cannot be over-estimated. It became the 'drama of the masses', and for reasons that still need to be closely analysed Australians apparently went earlier and in greater numbers (in proportion to their small population) to the pictures than many other comparable western nations. (119)

4. EXHIBITION - THE CHANGING PROGRAMME AND ITS IMPACT

Given that cinemas were an important part of Australians' life around 1910, and that they were frequent visitors to the picture show, what sort of impact did films have on attitudes and values? Again this is one of those ultimately unanswerable but nevertheless fascinating questions about the development of cinema in Australia. It is unanswerable because the factors we need to know are unknowable. To postulate a change in attitudes as a result of seeing films, one needs to know precisely what sort of attitudes or moves were current in Australia before the advent of motion pictures, and seeking the answer to this question would lead into the vague realms of 'national character'. Then it would be necessary to establish exactly what films were seen by the majority of the community, and precisely what general and specific effects they had on behavior. The historian would need to be

119: Photoplay, 13 July 1912. Comparative figures are hard to come by, this assertion is based on the many subjective opinions of world travellers, and executives like J.D. Williams, Spencer, etc. Statistics available for the 1920's, however, support this contention.
careful to isolate out those changes caused by films and those
causés by other factors like general education, maturation,
industrialization and international communications. These are
only a few of the problems to be faced in answering this
question, but they establish that this is a non-quantifiable,
non-testable field. All that can be done is to gather
together hints, clues, and indicators in a subjective manner
and make tentative generalizations.

Putting to one side for the moment the huge question of
what values were held by 'Australians' (in all their different
socio-economic classes, geographic distributions, ages and sexes)
before the advent of motion pictures, it is perhaps possible
to sketch out roughly the types of films that were shown and
appreciated in Australia during the years 1908-1913. From this
perhaps very cautious conclusions can be drawn about the possible
effects of viewing such films.

In 1908, the typical film programme had just started to
change from those current around the turn of the century. As in
1900 'realistic' films like 'scenics', 'travelogues', 'industrials'
and 'comics' predominated, but 'story' films of various lengths
were just starting to appear in increasing numbers. At first the
showmen were glad to be able to show any films at all, and so their
programmes of necessity were a mixed bag, with a typical two hour
programme having ten or twelve films on all sorts of subjects. To their relief the public endorsed this varied programme, and for many showmen the necessity had hardened into dogma by 1911, when one showman told the Argus that he thought the public preferred a programme like a plum pudding; with a little bit of everything. (120) Variety was the thing, and to showmen only recently out of vaudeville, it seemed natural that films of up to twenty minutes duration (one reel, and the usual length of a vaudeville act) should appear on the 'sandwich principle', with drama succeeding comedy and travelogues succeeding comedy. Nevertheless, by 1911 many audiences were becoming more critical and would no longer passively accept old worn out gazettes or the weaker comedy films. They also started to demand longer and 'meatier' films with stronger melodramatic story lines. Long epics like 'The Story of the Kelly Gang' (1906) probably hastened this process in Australia, and made Australians discontented with the short, trivial films still being churned out in America and Europe, before 1912.

The Bulletin praised variety saying: West's Pictures at the Melbourne Olympia continue to remove the incubus of melancholy

120. Argus, 17 January 1911.
with a stream of alluring phantasy and picturesque fact'. (121)

Spencer's programme also ranged from the sublime to the ridiculous; 'and when one moment you feel your eyes fill with tears at some pathetic picture shown, the next you are nearly doubled up in two with uncontrollable mirth'. (122) A typical programme of a 1908 film show would therefore generally include a 'scenic', a few travelogues, 'industrials', comedies or novelty films, and the occasional 'star' or story feature. By November 1912, the programme had evolved to something like the following order; a drama, a comedy, a drama, a topical, a main feature, and a comedy to conclude. (123)

In April 1908 most of the films advertised for sale or hire by Harringtons Ltd. of Sydney (one of the first Australian film distributors) ranged in length from 125 to 600ft, or from 5 to 15 minutes duration. (124) Spencer at this time was showing a dozen

121. Bulletin, 18 June 1906. See also, 20 August 1908; At Melbourne Olympia West's Pictures are still endeavouring to cater for all intellects, ranging from homespun to torchon-trimmed. For the 9½d flannelette brand of mind there are 'The Lunatic's Escape', 'A Strange Inheritance' and 'She would be an Actress'; while the 17s lid. sort with Valenciennes trimmings may be fed upon 'Ancient and Modern Sicily', and 'Romeo and Juliet' - the last a sweet pictured sob, lasting 20 minutes, which, the management insists, is 'finely accurate'.

122. Table Talk, 10 December 1908.

123. Photoplay, 23 December 1912.

124. Stage, 22 April 1908.
such short films in his 2 hour (average) programme, and he and
West both gave Wednesday and Saturday matinees at 2.30 p.m. as
well as their six regular evening performances. (125) Even after
the hour long (4-5,000ft) Story of the Kelly Gang (1906), imported
feature films were still relatively short. For instance The Life
of Napoleon (1909), one of the longer films, was only 2,500 ft.
or 40 minutes long, and three years later in 1912 most films were
only 1,000ft although some were as much as 2,600ft. (126)

Two of the most interesting features of the non-fiction
films shown during this period were their strong educational
slant and the evolution from the sporadic, primitive 'human
interest' films of real events that only lasted a few minutes, in
1908, through the more sophisticated 'current affairs' films of
1910, to the final emergence of some sort of consistent 'newsreel'
appearing regularly every week by 1912. Journals like Table Talk
and the Bulletin very early appreciated the educative potential
of films of 'furrin parts', and declared such films to be 'more
instructive than a whole library of traveller's tales'. (127) As
far back as 1897, Sestier and Barnett had given special shows
for schools, and West continued this idea in 1908 with special
matinees for school children, but it was to be many years before

125. Ibid., 6 May 1908; 3 June 1908.
126. Australasian, 10 July 1909. Photoplay, 1 June 1912.
projectors were a common item of equipment in Australian schools. (128)

As an important part of 'adult education', such films as London To-Day shown by West at the Sydney Town Hall in June 1908, cannot be overestimated. (129) Such films revealed to the stay-at-home Australians information about the great cities of the world that most of them would have had no chance of acquiring without the advent of films. This film had been taken nine weeks before, but film of the Paris Grand Prix Motor Race took only 6 weeks to reach Sydney in August 1908, and the time was to shrink to 4 weeks or less by 1912. (130) In July 1909, the Australasian was to declare that it 'seemed only days' since events reported in the cables were being depicted in Australian screens. (131) That year was full of films of the other great twentieth century development; the aeroplane. (132) In 1910 film of the Suffragette's raid on the House of Commons was shown by Spencer, exactly four weeks after it happened, and in 1911 stunned Australians could watch film of the 3 Houndsditch (London) anarchists keeping 1,000 policemen at bay. (133)

128. Table Talk, 21 May 1908.
129. Ibid., 4 June 1908.
132. Bulletin, 26 November 1908. Wilbur Wright's aeroplane experiments shown at West's Melbourne Olympia. See also Australasian, 20 March 1909; and Bulletin, 2 September 1909; French aeroplane crossing the English channel.
Local events like the Foundation Ceremony at Canberra in 1913 were equally important to Australians in Perth and Darwin. (134) Such films not only gave information, they also expressed the beliefs, customs, and mores of foreign nations, and they enabled Australians to keep abreast of the most stirring world events.

The newsreel was an early development in Australia. The Bulletin in discussing the visit of the American fleet in 1908 said that 'no-one with sense now bothers to suffer the crush of a mighty crowd. He looks at the mob from a tramcar and takes a quiet side street while the affair is in full blast and blither, and later on, when all the excitement is over, he leads his best girl down to the Lyceum, where he sits in quiet comfort and watches the moving show.' (135) West, Spencer, the Taits and J.D. Williams all made some provision for the filming of local events, and by June 1911, weekly newsreels like the Adelaide 'Wondergraph Weekly' taken by cameraman Krischock, and Pathé's Australian Gazette' were appearing regularly. (136) One of the best was probably the 500ft. long 'William's Weekly' of 1912, made by cameramen Bert Ive and Bert Cross for J.D. Williams. (137) Australians soon grew accustomed to

134. Australasian, 5 April 1913. See also Commonwealth Archives Office, CRS Al, Item 13/10816. //
136. Ibid., 8 June 1911. Bulletin, 29 February 1912. There was also 'Pathé's European Gazette' and 'The Gaumont Graphic'.
137. Photoplay, 8 June 1912.
imbibing the news at the picture theatre as well as with the morning paper over breakfast.

Other films concerned such scandals as the American divorce of the millionaire 'Thaw Tragedy' in 1908, the ever-green monarchy, and Boxing films, and exploration movies like those taken in the Antarctic. Of the fiction films, 'cowboy and indian' films from America were an early favourite, and continued right through this period. They were supplemented by comedy films from Europe, and Melies-type novelty films, like the one shown in 1908 with 'scantily dressed ladies representing the solar system'. There were even sex films like the one called 'the Hours' with each period of the day - sunrise, morning, afternoon and so forth - represented by 'plump, draped damsels in varying stages of activity'. According to the Bulletin: 'As each damsel wore just enough clothing to keep folk interested, the complete day was simply lovely, as well as poetical'. Occasionally challenging social themes would be attempted like the 1911 What Shall We do With Our Old shown at West's Melbourne, or 'In the Grip of Alcohol' (1911).


But the keystone of a night's programme were the 'star' films, or 'features', and by 1908 'spectaculars' like Quo Vadis? were starting to be shown in Australian cinemas. Later came Hamlet, and Les Miserables in several versions. Country of origin varied over the years. At first most films were from the east coast of America or England and France, but by 1912 Italy was a prominent producer of such long epics as Dante's Inferno, and many Danish films 'starring' Asta Neilson were also popular in that year. Religious subjects were an early favourite, and ran the full gamut from Ben Hur (1908) through Nero and the Burning of Rome (1909) to A Victim of the Mormons (1911) and From Manger to Cross (1913).

One fact is certain and central about the film programmes of the period 1908 to 1913, and that is that the overwhelming majority of the films shown were foreign. Just what implications this had in the realm of moulding or altering the values held by Australians

141. Ibid., 27 May 1909.
142. Ibid., 11 May 1911, Australasian, 16 September 1911.
143. Table Talk, 6 August 1908. There were many early silent versions
144. Bulletin, 13 August 1908. Leader, 1 January 1910. At Spencer's Melbourne Olympia. See also Australasian, 26 April 1913, when another version was shown in 2 parts - each an hour long - at West's Palace Theatre, Melbourne.
145. Leader, 17 August 1912, Ibid., 17 August 1912.
is impossible to discern because of the shortness and diversity of the programmes. It could perhaps be argued that if the Australian 'Bill and his missus' saw a great number of different scenic and travel films then their mental horizons would have been broadened, and they would have had an increased (or conversely, satiated?), desire to travel. Similarly that watching 'industrials' like The Rope Industry would have educated and informed a poorly educated public. But whether watching the early religious epics like Quo Vadis had an influence on religious values or not it is impossible to say.

Consumption patterns may have been influenced by films from America and England extolling the virtues of a wide range of material possessions, while the feature films like 'cowboys and indians' could just possibly have had an imperceptible effect on speech, manners and general morals. While many voices were raised against the 'Americanization' of Australian youth, affirming the psychological and sociological impact of film, we must conclude that most of these arguments were pure conjecture and based on prejudice and fear.(147)

But if it is impossible to accurately measure the impact of films on values, it is more feasible to state that audience participation, involvement and identification was as strong in Australia as elsewhere in the world at the same time, if not greater.

147. See Appendix 4 for full discussion of censorship.
In Chapter 2 the early experience of cinema by Australian audiences was referred to, and one might perhaps expect that this extreme sense of the reality of film shows had diminished after a decade of familiarization, but in fact numerous incidents were mentioned in the press over this period establishing that for many viewers the images on the screen were far from 'artificial.' In 1908, for example, the Bulletin referred (perhaps apocryphal) to a fireman who wanted to put out a fire on the screen, while in 1912 the question 'Who Will Go?', on the screen at a crucial point in a war drama brought forth a willing volunteer from a man who jumped up from his seat and went towards the screen. (148) Then there was the old Irish lady who had to be restrained by her friends during the screening of Ireland To-Day in 1913, and at interval, when released, danced an Irish jig in the aisle-way. (149) Shrieks of agitation were aroused during the more stirring episodes of a 1908 detective film, and many were roused to rise and sing the national anthem when 1911 films of royalty were shown. (150) Australian films could also produce strong feelings. When the aboriginal drama Moora Neeya, or the Message of the Spear was shown at the Prahran Lyric in 1911, the Bulletin half-seriously said that the film had many in the audience wanting to

150. Ibid., 18 June 1908 and Table Talk, 10 December 1908.
go and boil the billy at the conclusion of the show. Films taken from an airship in 1911 evoked in the audience a distinct feeling of being aloft over the fields of England, while others experienced the sensation of speed when films taken from locomotives were exhibited. This latter feeling was so acknowledged that in 1908 many cities had special cinemas equipped to look like train carriages, and some were even provided with special machinery to induce a rocking motion so that the sensation of train travel could be duplicated.

It may be concluded from this discussion that the impact of films shown during the period 1908-1913 was great but incalculable. Many spoke of the effects of films on morals, and some said the overall effect was a distinctly wholesome one as the melodramatic films generally showed the conquest of evil and the triumph of 'Good'. Evidence of audience identification, and changes in the values of the Australian people is by nature difficult to come by, and one can only make assumptions and intelligent guesses about what people looked at, and how it conditioned their view of society and life.

5. DISTRIBUTION — THE PIVOTAL POSITION OF THE MIDDLEMAN

At first there had been no need for a 'distributor' as films were bought outright directly from the producer, but this was an expensive and cumbersome method, and there were many smaller exhibitors who did not have the time, money or contacts to buy without the aid of a 'go-between'. Gradually, therefore, all over the world, a new aspect of the nascent industry grew up that was to assume enormous power over the next decade: distribution.

The first seller of films in Australia was probably Baker and Rouse who even before the turn of the century had offices in Melbourne and Sydney, and were selling both raw stock and exposed film to exhibitors like the Perrys and Rickards. By 1908, their George Street shop was advertising 'the latest films by every mail', and that they were the 'sole agents for Kodak Ltd. and Gaumont's cinematograph and films.' They were followed very quickly by Osborne & Jordan, 'My Opticians' in Sydney who entered the film field as an adjunct to their general optical business, and Harringtons & Co. Ltd., who by 1908 had offices in Melbourne, Sydney, and Brisbane.

In an advertisement that year in the Referee, this last company claimed that they had imported and sold 960,000 ft. of film during the year, and that over the previous 16 years they had sold 300 projectors and 5,000,000 ft. of film. The 'going price' was then 4½d. per foot.

152. Referee, 24 June 1908. Probably exposed film.
but the price was often as high as 6d. for special films, or as low as 2d. for worn-out second-hand films, called 'rain storms' because of their multiple scratches. Variations in price according to quality was a relatively late development, and reflects the growing critical judgement of the public. Once the public started discriminating between which films it would go and see then prices had to vary accordingly. By 1909, Harringtons, like other distributors, had an exchange film library, and sold and hired equipment for showing films. (153) Even as early as 1908, Spencer's exchange, and another Sydney distributor; Direct Cinematograph Supply Co. (cnr. Pitt & Park Streets), were advertising films for hire, with or without competent operators. (154) The situation was the same for the Melbourne firm of Johnson & Gibson which not only sold and hired films and equipment, but had a team of trained operators who would show the films. Around 1908-1909 many new companies entered the field, one of the most important of which was the French film Pathe Freres who established offices in Melbourne to distribute their product, and even took over the Bijou to show their 'Animated Gazette' and 'World Pictures'. (155) In 1911, Pathe Freres were selling a

153. The Stage, 22 April 1908. Referee, 1 July 1908, also 20 January 1909.

154. For Spencer's, See Referee, 3 June 1908; 6 January 1909, and Direct Cinematograph Supply Co; Ibid., 15 January 1908; 6 January 1909; Stage, 29 April 1908.

155. Australasian, 13 March 1909; Leader, 19 February 1910; 5 March 1910; 12 March 1910, 20 August 1910; Argus 4 November 1910; 22 November 1910; 1 March 1912; Bulletin, 2 February 1911, 11 May 1911
special cinematograph for educational purposes for £24., and by 1912 the home projector had fallen to a modest £14/14/-.

(156) In April 1908, a Sydney exhibitor Clement Mason formed the Clement Mason Trading Co. and offered to sell or hire films. The following year he was giving a 'bioscope school' to train would-be operators, and his films could be had for as low as 1d. per foot; 'conditions good and subjects new'.

(157)

At first selling, then hiring films, the film distributor had a key position in the industry half-way between the producer and the exhibitor. With the emergence of hiring on a universal basis around 1909, these companies had to devise business administrative systems to handle the huge numbers of films and see that their clients received the films they had ordered at the correct time, and that the films were returned in good order. By the end of World War One a system of contracting for films had evolved, and during the early twenties this was to harden into the system of 'block and blind-booking'.

18 May 1911. Note that the Commonwealth Government signed a contract with this famous French film firm to produce propaganda films of Australia for screening overseas, but all did not go well with the local company and late in 1912 it was taken over by West's, and its interests merged in the general combination the following year.

156. Bulletin, 11 May 1911. Argus, 1 March 1912. Note that Harringtons were selling the Warwick Cinephone in 1909 for £12/10/-.

The equipment and films were relatively cheap at this early stage, in comparison to the huge audiences showmen could expect at 3d. and 6d. a head or even more in the capital cities.

that so effectively kept Australian films off the home screens. But in this early period there was nothing insidious about their developments; they were merely facilitating the growth of an exhibition industry that was dependent upon a sure supply of films. The bigger city cinemas may have been able to continue buying their films direct from the overseas producers without the help of distributors, but the smaller men in faraway country towns were entirely dependent upon some sort of middleman to buy films for them. It was this dependence that made the distributors so potentially powerful, and they were to become even more powerful as the overseas film manufacturers sent their own agents out all over the world to tie-up film outlets. The first of these was Pathe Frere (1909), followed by Paramount (1913) and many others during and immediately after World War One. By the early twenties, Australasian Films Ltd. was the only pure Australian company that was competing with about 8 or 9 branches of American film producing interests in Sydney.

* * *
'We just made pictures, and that was all there was to it.'

1. NON-FICTION AUSTRALIAN FILMS

Hundreds of non-fiction or 'documentary' realist films were made throughout this period, but only the more significant will be mentioned here. In film production all over the world, reality came before fantasy. These documentaries were the forcing ground for the feature films which followed; they gave expert training to the producers, directors, cameramen and technicians who were to later work upon the feature films of 1911.

In 1908, over twenty local 'scenics' or 'gazettes' were made and shown in Melbourne and Sydney. They ranged from sporting events like The 1908 Melbourne Cup, and the Sculling Match between Barry and Towns, through scenics Australian Pastimes and Scenes of Australia to industrials The History of a Loaf and general interest films such as Sydney Boy Scouts and The Agricultural Show at Moore Park. While all were popular with Australians anxious to see their life depicted on films, the favourites were the films of current affairs like The Railway

1. In order, see: Bulletin, 12 November 1908. Table Talk, 19 November 1908.
Table Talk, 26 November 1908; 10 December 1908.
Ibid., 15 July 1908.
Stage, 29 April 1908.
Referee, 18 March 1908.
Table Talk, 5 November 1908.
Referee, 22 April 1908; 29 April 1908. Bulletin, 23 April 1908.
Disaster in Victoria, Sydney Tram Strike, Arrival of the Earl of Dudley in Sydney and The Visit of the Great White Fleet. These latter films were often shown at incredibly short spans of time after their occurrence. For instance, Spencer's cameraman happened to be on the scene shortly after the train disaster at Sunshine in April 1908, and the film with the following segments was shown a few days later at the Sydney Lyceum: The Railway Station, Sunshine; The Concourse [sic] of People Waiting; The Casualty Engine and Van; Removing the Debris; the Gang at Work; the Fatal Spot; Broken Materials on Platform; the Remains of a Carriage; Government Surveyors at Work; Arrival of the Commissioners; View of the Terrible Ruins. The whole series were shown with 'mechanical effects' that added to the realism of the pictures, and the Bulletin referred to the 'ghastly up-to-dateness' of the pictures.

The same patterns are discernible in the twenty or so realistic films of 1909. Again, sporting films were popular and diverse;


3. Stage, 29 April 1908.

4. Referee, 29 April 1908; Bulletin, 30 April 1908.
The Fitzsimmons-Lang Boxing Match, Yacht Championship on Sydney Harbour, Roller-Skating in Melbourne, Snow Carnival at Mt. Kosiusko, Deep Sea Fishing, Flemington Grand National Steeplechase and Empire Day on Sydney Cricket Ground. (5) In this way did a people express their preoccupations in the films they made. Scenics like N.S.W. Scenery Near Tuggerah, and current affairs like The Australian Squadron and Henley Carnival on the Yarra also maintained their popularity, and one can observe quite clearly the development of a newsreel spirit in the fevered activity of the cameramen that accompanied The Great Cycling Road Race from Warrnambool to Melbourne in October 1909. (6)

In 1910 the volume swelled to over forty local documentaries of various sorts and various lengths, and from then on it is difficult to keep track of all the little local films that were made. In that year beauty competitions on films were a favourite ploy of showmen like West, who attracted audiences keen to vote for the pretty ladies exhibited in the film West's Beauty Competition. (7) Football matches


like Collingwood vs. Carlton and Essendon vs. Melbourne University became a regular feature of weekly film programmes, as did local important events like Houdini's First Flight in Australia and the Arrival of Lord Kitchener in Australia. (8) But above all, Australians were keen to see their own land in such films as Marvellous Melbourne, Hawkesbury River, The City of Adelaide and Surroundings, Hobart Carnival and Buffalo Mountains. (9) Industrial series like Australia at Work, Newcastle at Work and Play, A Busy Day at the Argus and Seal Catching in Tasmania showed them how their fellow Australians earned their living, while national pride could be swollen by such films as The Launching of the Paramatta and Australian Torpedo Boat Destroyers in Hobson's Bay. (10) Space prohibits the mention of all the documentary films made during 1908-1913, but the patterns described here were continued and so the reader may safely assume their existence in the background of

Australian film production as his attention is now directed to the fantasy films of the period.

Interest in Australian-made films was immense from the beginning, and before long there were murmurings that Australians did not only want to see 'realistic' films of their life, they also wanted their myths, literature and 'ethos' enshrined in celluloid. In May 1911 a Bulletin correspondent expressed a typical sentiment when he complained:

I want my money back as a protest against the un-Australian character of the legions of pictures thrown nightly on the screens of assorted flickergraphs. (11)

His opinion was supported by another correspondent who wrote:

Australian flicker showmen are missing fine opportunities to do some good for the country they are making their dough in, and, incidentally, to swell their bank balances at the same time. Nearly every show screens so-called 'Cowboy' films made up of foolery, lovemaking, riding along roads or open-country, and much blazing at the sky with revolvers. By free advertising they have created a taste for these pictures, of which 98 per cent are palpable 'fakes'. About the best of them is 'Ranch Life in the Great South West', yet a much better picture of rough riding, handling of cattle etc. could be got in the cattle country of Australia. In this star 'Cowboy' film, the horses don't buck, they merely pig-root; the bullocks are no harder to ride than those of Australia; and as for the steer-throwing and tying, I'd sooner watch an Australian at work in our own style - riding up alongside the beast and catching him by the tail and throwing him - than all the cowboys throwing lariats and choking a beast into submission. The showmen have cultivated a taste for 'cowboy' films; let them set to work to get good pictures of Australian station life, and, besides increasing their receipts, they will be showing the people what is going on in their own land. If they want 'action pictures' let them start out with a party

of musterers, and they'll get all they want - rough riding galore on real buckjumpers, smart work in collecting the cattle in all sorts of country, excitement when 'cutting out' is in full swing, and wild riding after the breakaways.

(12)

The showmen like Spencer, West and the Taits, and their cameramen like the Higgins brothers, had cut their teeth on Australian realist films, and by 1910-1911 were ready to launch into feature film production on a more or less continuous basis.

2. AUSTRALIAN FEATURE FILMS 1909-1913

Australian feature films of the period 1909-1913 were usually sponsored by enterprising showmen like Spencer or the Tait brothers who gathered around them a compact nucleus of directors, cameramen and actors, producing films with an 'aggressively Australian' content, on show-string budgets, and destined primarily for a local market. Although always small, and concentrated in the two largest cities, by 1913 one could say that there was the embryo of an efficient and vigorous local film producing industry, with men experienced in the techniques of directing, photographing and acting in story films. During these years, directors like Alfred Rolfe, Jack Gavin, Raymond Longford, and W. J. Lincoln made their appearance, as did cameramen like Ernest and Arthur Higgins, A. J. Moulton, H. A. Finlay, Franklyn Barrett, A. O. Segerberg

12. Ibid., 1 June 1911.
and Orrie Perry. Actresses like Lottie Lyell, Nellie Bramley, Louise Carbasse (later Louise Lovely in Hollywood), Eugenie Duggan, Nellie Stewart and Ethel Bashford, together with leading men like Jack Gavin, Charles Woods, J. H. Martin, Augustus Neville, Stanley Walpole and Alf. Scarlett were to become well-known figures on Australian screens. These were the halcyon days of Australian film production, when costs were so small that the local market could return a profit. They were also the days when the whole world was experimenting with movies, when Hollywood was still undeveloped, and when no one country had a monopoly on film production. The films Australians made during those years were not artistic triumphs, but they showed commendable promise, and demonstrated that Australians too could make films equal to the world's best.

Three directors active in the pre-war years were John F. Gavin, Alfred Rolfe and W. J. Lincoln. They were self-taught film directors, although all had some theatrical background. W. J. Lincoln has already been mentioned; he was a Melbourne playwright before 1900 and thereafter toured with J. C. Williamson's Bio-Tableau. (13) 1909 found him the manager of one of Melbourne's first suburban cinemas;

the 'Paradise Gardens' at St. Kilda. Like Joseph Perry before him, Lincoln had toured all over Australasia and even before he started making films he knew the idiosyncracies of his potential audience well. This plus his competent ability at writing vivid scenarios meant that his films generally hung together well and developed through a series of actions to a climax. He made most of his films under the sponsorship of the Taits or Johnson & Gibson, and possibly his most successful were The Luck of Roaring Camp (1911) and The Bells (1911). His success with these films led to his partnership with the Melbourne actor Godfrey Cass in 1913 when they formed The Lincoln-Cass Films Co. and produced such films as The Sick Stockrider (1913) in their small Windsor studio. After a spell in hospital for alcoholic poisoning he was also engaged by J. C. Williamson Ltd. to write the scenarios for some of their 1915 films with Fred Niblo and Monte Luke as director. His crowning success was a scenario for the Melbourne film based on the martyrdom of Nurse Cavell, and he died in August 1917 while still working on a scenario entitled 'The Worst Woman in Sydney.'

15. J.C.W. internal correspondence.
Alfred Rolfe was a successful stage actor with the theatrical producer Alfred Dampier around 1900, and he started producing story films under Spencer's sponsorship in 1911. In his own words Rolfe was later to recount his background; 'Before entering the picture world, I had over 20 years experience on the dramatic stage and before attempting to direct the making of a photoplay, I studied methods for 12 months. My first effort, Captain Midnight, an Australian bush story, proved a marked success'. (17) His second film for Spencer; Rufus Dawes included as one of its principals, Raymond Longford recently returned from acting overseas and destined to replace Rolfe as the director of Spencer's feature films. Before that, however, Rolfe made his third film for Spencer called Captain Starlight with Ernest Higgins as cameraman. He then accepted a two year engagement with the Australian Photo-Play Co. which had a stock company of players, and according to Rolfe he produced twenty-five 3 and 4 reel features while it was in existence. (18) These included such stirring sagas as Lady Outlaw (or The Tasmanian Lady Bushranger) (1911), Moora Neeya (or The Message of the Spear)(1911) and What Women Suffer (1911). He then worked for Australasian Films Ltd.

17. See Australasian Stage Annual, January 1900, also important article by him; 'Making Movies in Australia', The Picture Show, 2 August 1919. One might perhaps be sceptical of his claim to have studied motion picture technique, as in those days the only way a would-be Australian film director could learn to make films, was to produce them himself.

18. Picture Show, op. cit.
Alfred Rolfé

PLATE 11

Source: Australian Variety & Show World, 21 December 1917.
for eighteen months until September 1916, and in that time not only directed for them such recruiting features as Will They Never Come (1915) and A Hero of the Dardanelles (1915) but also made a series of industrial documentaries with Lacey Percival as cameraman, based on the Lithgow Small Arms factory and the Yanco Irrigation district. Although he was still keen to work, he did not direct any more features after the war. (19)

Jack Gavin also worked for the Australian Photo-Play Co. in 1911. This huge good-natured Australian and his diminutive wife, Agnes, had been free-lance theatrical entrepreneurs in the years 1900-1910 culminating in the successful 'Wild West Show' that they put on at the Melbourne Cyclorama in 1905. (20) This rough-riding, outback and 'cowboy' type of extravaganza admirably equipped him for the rough and tumble of the early films, and his films had plenty of pace and action. Later, Gavin was to declare that he first started making films thanks to Mr. Bert Forsyth, whom, I believe, has the honour of being the first man to produce a four-reel movie in this state. [N.S.W.] I was engaged to play the role of Thunderbolt


20. See Table Talk, 26 October 1905; 2 November 1905; 16 November 1905. Australasian, 10 March 1906; 31 March 1906.
in the story under that title and was also co-producer'. After this, Forsyth gave Mrs. Gavin her first chance to write a scenario from the book of *Moonlight, the Bushranger*, and Gavin again played the leading role and directed. It was a bushranging saga in the grand manner, with enough dead troopers to warrant a later severe censoring. Forsyth made sufficient money from it to go on a world tour, and Gavin went around to see Stanley S. Crick, then the manager of Pathe Freres' Sydney branch. Crick was amazed when he heard how much showmen were paying nightly for *Thunderbolt* and *Moonlight* and forthwith became Gavin's backer in such films as *The Assigned Servant, Frank Gardiner, Keane of Kalgoorlie* and *Ben Hall and his Gang* all in quick succession during the first half of 1911. As an example of how cheap pre-war production was, these last three films only cost a total of £731/8/3 (£416/15/4 'to cost of production', plus £314/12/11 'to dramatist's royalties') and in four months to April 30, 1911 had brought in £811/1/9 in bookings. On the strength of such profits, Crick, always an astute businessman, formed the second Australian company to specialize in feature films;

21. One of the most important biographical articles on Gavin is in *Everyones*, 9 May 1923 called 'When the Australian-Produced Picture Made Big Money', but see also *Woman*, 20 November 1939, and his obituary in *Film Weekly*, 15 December 1938.

22. For estimates of the cost of his films; from £300 - £500, made within 3 to 8 weeks see *Sydney Mail*, 16 May 1928. *Film Weekly*, op. cit. Forsyth made £10,000 and took his trip, while showmen were paying £20 and £30 per night for the films, see *Australian Variety & Show World*, 1 December 1917.
AGNES GAVIN, Writer.

PLATE 12

Source: Australian Variety & Show World, 10 May 1916.
the Australian Photo-Play Co. in mid-1911. (23) Gavin later said that Crick had formed the company with a capital of £25,000 with the intention of hiring Alfred Rolfe and Raymond Longford to expand production, but while Rolfe certainly made films for this company, it is unlikely that Longford ever did. Gavin did not like the idea so he sold his share and commenced independent production, and after a few more films the old company went into liquidation within twelve months. (24)

Gavin's first production independently was Assigned to his Wife, followed by many others including The Mark of the Lash, The Drover's Sweetheart, Cast up by the Sea and The Interrupted Divorce. All were successful, and they were followed by a film made in Melbourne called appropriately enough A Melbourne Mystery. During the war, a casual reading of the war news over a beer with J. D. Williams and C. Post Mason at Sydney's Tattersall's Hotel led to those gentlemen backing Gavin in his most successful film The Martyrdom of Nurse Cavell (1915) which became the first Australian feature film to be shown on Broadway New York in 1916. (25) The Murder of Captain Fryatt, although exploiting a similar theme, was less successful, but His Convict Bride (1917) restored his confidence, and his wife suggested that they try Hollywood. After the usual early struggle he started as a fighting

23. See Australian Variety & Show World, Ibid., and Everyones op. cit.
25. Ibid.
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23. See Australian Variety & Show World, Ibid., and Everyones op. cit.
25. Ibid.
lumber-jack in a Jack Kerrigan film, and over the next four years
worked with Tom Moore, Will Rogers, Billy Fletcher, Snub Pollard
(another Australian), Bill Hart, Tom Mix and Douglas Fairbanks,
and seemed to have been genuinely highly respected by the Hollywood
community. On his own testimony, he also directed some American
Westerns over two years featuring himself as a cowboy with scenarios
written by his wife. He returned early in the 1920's convinced
that America would welcome Australian films as something exotic
and different. How he fared will be taken up in later chapters.(26)

Another Australian film director who later went to America
was the well-known actor and stage producer Gaston Mervale, who,
financed by a timber merchant, named McKenzie, founded the Australian
Life Biograph Co. in Sydney in 1911 and made several films starring
Louise Carbasse (later Louise Lovely in Hollywood) and Jerome Patrick
(also successful later in America) in a studio he erected at Narrabeen
near Manly.(27) Like the other self-taught film directors with a
stage background, most of his films were based solidly on stage

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26. For information on his American experiences, besides the
biographical articles already cited, see Australian Variety &
Show World, 1 March 1918; 8 March 1918; 27 September 1918;
6 June 1919; 15 August 1919. Picture Show, 4 October 1919.
Everyones, 9 March 1921; 13 April 1921; 17 May 1922; 5 July 1922;
6 September 1922; 18 February 1923; 11 March 1923. Theatre
Magazine, 1 May 1922.

27. Miss Lovely, now Mrs. Cowen and living in Tasmania still has in
her possession a photograph showing this 'studio' - a small
weatherboard shack with a glass roof. It was one of the first,
if not the first, studios to be build in N.S.W. as West's studio
in Pitt Street was not operating until mid-1911 and Spencer's
Rushcutters Bay studio was not opened until July 1912.
PLATE 13

Source: Australian Variety & Show World, 1 February 1917.
successes, like his *Ticket in Tatts* (1911), *Colleen Bawn* (1911) and *One Hundred Years Ago* (or *The Wreck of the Dunbar*) (1911).

After a few more films in 1912 he left for America to study the film business and was engaged in Philadelphia for seven months where he played the lead in films opposite Laura Nelson Hall: New York, Columbus (Ohio), Washington, Baltimore and Los Angeles followed, where he was engaged in plays and films, and on his own testimony he was 'in the middle of producing a picture play' in New York when he signed a contract to return to Australia for the Taits in 1917, and produce comedies and musicals like 'Turn to the Right' and 'Very Good Eddie'. (28) Although he later acted in such films as *The Russell Affair* (1928) and *The Far Paradise* (1928) he directed no further pictures in Australia.

As well as the men who made a more or less continuous effort to produce films, the Australian film industry has always been plagued or blessed (depending on your viewpoint) by a number of independents who made one or two films before moving onto other projects or into oblivion. Often their incompetence was responsible for the development of the marked investor apathy towards Australian motion pictures, but sometimes they made outstanding successes. One

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of the latter category was Bert Bailey whose 1910 film probably contributed a great deal to the 'one reel revolution of 1911' when so many Australian films were produced. His immense success The Squatter's Daughter (1910) demonstrated that The Story of the Kelly Gang (1906) was no fluke and that as the Bulletin asserted of the film; 'There's money in it'. (29) Edmund Duggan (who played Ben Hall in this film) and Bert Bailey (Archie McPherson, the New Chum) were touring stage actors and producers who teamed up before 1900, and together wrote many Australian plays like 'The Squatter's Daughter' (1905), 'The Man From Outback' and 'The Native Born'. His real name was Bailey and he was born in Auckland, New Zealand, his mother re-married when he was a boy. His first job was in the Telegraph Office at Ashfield (Sydney). From there he became floor-manager of the Crystal Palace Skating Rink in York Street, and it was not until the mid-1890's that he first appeared as a descriptive vocalist at the one-time Canterbury Music Hall in George Street, and in the basement hall of the Imperial Arcade. A small part in Ned Duggan's 'Eureka Stockade' at the Royal Standard Theatre led to touring shows with the Monty Maitland-Ruth Wallace Co., William Anderson's Co. and finally his own Bert Bailey Dramatic Co. Plays he produced or created the principal comedy role in

before 1919 included 'Thunderbolt', 'The Bushwoman', 'My Mate', 'Under the Southern Cross', and his most successful of all; 'On Our Selection', first performed in May 1912, and made into a film by Longford in 1920. (30)

The story of 'The Squatter's Daughter' (an original stage play and not taken from a novel or other source) concerned the lives and loves of two adjoining homesteads, and included a dramatic shearing match, a thrilling bushranging sequence with Ben Hall, and an aboriginal marriage. It was between 5,400 and 6,000 ft. long, at a time when imported films were rarely over 1,000 ft., and it was an outstanding success when taken on tour throughout Victoria and New South Wales during 1910. Bailey was not connected with any other films until the 1930's, and this seems surprising, given his obvious talents and success in this direction. In 1919 he said; 'On the picture itself I made something. But about this time I became interested in the movies in another way, with the result that I lost what up till then represented all my hard-earned savings'. (31) What this investment was is not known, but it could have been one of the many film companies that mushroomed out in the period 1911-1913 determined to make quick profits from fashionable

30. See Theatre, 1 July 1919; 'The Evolution of Bert Bailey'.
Lone Hand, 1 June 1914, and Daily Mirror, 15 October 1958, 'Stage film adventures of Bert Bailey', also critical biography by Hal Porter, Stars of Australian Stage and Screen, p. 104.

31. Theatre, 1 July 1919.
Australian films.

Other smaller producers were shadowy figures like Charles Wood, about whom very little is known, other than that he was on the fringes of the theatrical world as a part-time actor and lecturer at movie shows. He made Cooee and the Echo (1912) and The Bondage of the Bush in 1913. Other actor-lecturers like Roy Redgrave (The Christian 1911) and Godfrey Cass (Moondyne 1911), together with theatrical promoters like the MacMahon brothers (The Christian 1911), and cameramen Bert Ives (Driving a Girl to Destruction 1912) and John Dixon Copes (The Wreck of the Dunbar 1911) also made films during this period but with mixed success. There were also documentaries by the explorer Francis Birtles (Outback Australia 1912) and the English kinemacolor expert brought to Australia by the Taits who made Melbourne in Kinemacolor in 1912. But the two most important silent film directors to emerge in Australia during this pre-war period were Franklyn Barrett and Raymond Longford. Both were to make a sustained impact on the local industry during the next two decades by making the most successful local films and defining in the process a definite Australian film idiom.

Of all the Australian silent film cameramen and directors, W. Franklyn Barrett was the most colourful. In a full and creative life, Barrett was at different times (and sometimes simultaneously), musician, conductor, newspaper photographer, projectionist, documentary and newsreel cameraman, theatre manager, film buyer and renter, writer
and director. His special quality was that only he and Frank Hurley could take to their directorial tasks a sound knowledge of camera technique and photographic perfection. They were cameramen who became directors. Paradoxically, this experience was their greatest strength and their greatest weakness as directors. (32)

He was born 11 July 1874 in England, and according to his own version, his introduction to moving pictures came in Bath, England, when in 1896 he was 'sawing a fiddle at the Theatre of Varieties', and a man came to town with 'a camera that had a handle sticking out of the side'. The stranger needed someone to assist him in developing his negatives, so the theatre manager suggested that since one of his fiddlers had won the coveted Thornton-Pickard prize for photography that year, the same fiddler should know something

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32. A sound apprenticeship in motion picture photography was possibly the best training one could have during most of the silent era, as in those days visual composition, editing and clarity of images counted for as much as skill in directing the actor's miming gestures. Directing was a much more simple task then than nowadays. Then the actors were generally taken from the stage, and knew how to 'act', or thought they did, and the director's role was consequently minimal and mainly organizational. As acting became more 'natural' and greater stress was placed on correct direction of complex expressions and emotions by the director, so his role overtook that of the cameraman in importance. It is in their later films, like Barrett's Girl of the Bush (1920) and Hurley's Jungle Woman (1926) that one most notices--their lack of control over their actors.
FRANKLYN BARRETT
WITH HIS PATHEScope CAMERA

PLATE 15

Source: Theatre Magazine, 1 January 1917.
about 'stinks'. 'Hence my debut in the realm of movies'. In 1898 he was with the Warwick Trading Co. in London, which was one of the first film concerns in the world, and he later worked with Charles Urban as a cameraman, as well as projecting films from a black- curtained promenade at the world-famous Alhambra theatre in London.

By 1900 the family had migrated to New Zealand, and Barrett was once again a musician with various theatrical shows, including tours with the John F. Sheridan Company. With them, Barrett went to Dunedin and opened with 'Cinderella'. To his surprise, in five nights he became the conductor of the orchestra. The first night he played the string bass, the second night the 'cello, the third night viola, the fourth night first fiddle, and on the fifth night acted as conductor. At the finish of this tour he transferred to the famous Bland Holt shows, playing in the orchestra under Percy Kehoe who wrote all his own overtures. By touring with these shows, Barrett learned much about acting, stage directing and

33. Most of the material for this section on Franklyn Barrett came from interviews with his daughter by the writer, and from the following articles which were either interviews or written by Barrett. The reader is warned that there are some alarming inconsistencies, and only the broad outlines of his career have been given here. See: Theatre Magazine, 1 January 1917; 1 September 1920; Australian Variety and Show World, 21 December 1917. Everyone, 11 December 1929; 10 December 1930; 13 December 1933; 14 December 1932. Woman, 30 April 1926. Showman, August 1950, September 1950, October 1950. Picture Show, 1 August 1920.
and audience reaction that he could later apply to the direction of his own feature films.

In 1899-1900 in Wellington (New Zealand) he made a short moving picture drama called *A Message From Mars*, a sketchy thing from 500 to 800 ft. long and lasting only ten minutes on the screen. One of the actors in it was P. A. Savieri who later became a popular stage actor on the Australian theatrical circuits with the Phillip Lytton Company. For a long while Barrett claimed this as the first moving picture drama to be attempted in the southern hemisphere, and there is only the films of Perry and Booth in 1899 and 1900 to dispute his belief. Also in 1900 he made four short films known as 'The Ally Sloper' series of comedies based on illustrations in a popular comic paper of those days; 'Ally Sloper at the Seaside', 'Ally Sloper, Conjuror', 'Ally Sloper's Picnic', and 'Ally Sloper Joins the Army'. The pictures were all shown in New Zealand without much profit to Barrett, although he did receive the degree of F.O.S. (Friend of Sloper), from that journal together with its certificate of membership and a bronze medal struck in 1901 and embossed with the features of the G.O.M. (Grand Old Man). Such was the business done in New Zealand with the Gorbett-Fitzsimmons fight films that Barrett was approached by Alf Linley for something in the way of an opposition draw. Barrett fixed up a three round match (his sponsors could only afford 300ft. of raw stock at 2/- ft.) between 'Dummy' Mace and Tommy McGregor. The result was even better
than expected when a bull-dog spectator joined in, and matters in the third round developed into a real fight with a K.O. to 'Dummy'. (34)

After completing the Sheridan tour, the New Zealand Premier, Richard Seddon asked Barrett to accept the position of 'Official Cinematographer' on behalf of the New Zealand Government for the forthcoming tour of the Duke and Duchess of York (later George V and Queen Mary) later that year - 1901. The young cameraman was honoured by his selection and became Sergeant F. Barrett of the Royal Engineers (Photographic Section) in a new uniform. Sailing from New Zealand he joined the Duke and Duchess at Fremantle, Western Australia and he stayed with the Royal Yacht 'Ophir' and the entourage for four months filming them in the functions in which they participated. His rival throughout the tour were the Salvation Army under Joseph Perry's supervision. Barrett left the Royal couple at Christchurch, New Zealand and again took up his fiddle with the Pollard Opera Company. On tour with that company he managed to secure some fine scenic pictures of the country; his best one being a reproduction of the Waimangu Geyser doing a record shoot. The company ended up in Hobart, and Barrett left them to take up another job with J. C. Williamson in one of his Sydney Opera

Companies. While not engaged in touring he also held a job as projectionist for £7 per week at the Palace Theatre in Pitt Street. At the conclusion of the Brisbane season of the opera company, Franklyn Barrett gave away music as a means of livelihood and never returned to it. Instead he became a touring projectionist for Rial and Clarkson and travelled through N.S.W. and South Australia. In 1904 he filmed the Melbourne Cup from beginning to end for the first time, and returning to Sydney he went into partnership with Joe Baker in the hiring of films. He was then commissioned by the New Zealand Railways to take films from their trains, and in 1905 he was making films of the railways in N.S.W.

During the next few years Barrett devoted himself to scenic pictures of the travelogue type, covering Canada, the eastern portion of United States of America and part of the Continent, eventually joining up with Pathe Freres as Expeditionary Photographer. He did not work for them long in Paris as he did not speak French well, and a job with Charles Urban in London lasted eight months before he returned to Australia as operator for the Taits. In Melbourne he transferred from the Taits to Pathe Freres, and spent most of 1909 and 1910 touring and photographing the South Pacific Islands. In 1910 he also helped photograph the series known as Australia at Work and once again returned to England to work with Charles Urban on kinemacolor films.

It was therefore as one of Australia's most competent cameramen
that he first became involved in feature film production in Sydney in 1911 on his return from England. He worked for West's, who by then had taken over Pathe's old Sydney film exchange and were in the process of launching into feature production with a new studio in Pitt Street and prizes for the best scenarios. For them he made *All for Gold* (1911) from the prize-winning scenario by W. S. Percy, and later came *The Mystery of the Black Pearl*, *The Silent Witness* (or the Wiretappers) and *The Eleventh Hour*. with Leonard Willey, Sydney Sterling, Cyril Mackay and Irby Marshall, although on most of these he was more the cameraman than the director. On the formation of the 'combine' - Australasian Films Ltd. - in 1913, he joined the new opposition group; the Fraser Brothers and made several films for them including the brilliant *Whaling in Jervis Bay* (1913), *A Blue Gum Romance* (1913) and *The Life of a Jackaroo* (1913), before becoming their overseas film buyer. Like Longford, he was to make his best films during the 1920's.

Raymond Hollis Longford is certainly the most well-known of all Australian silent directors, mainly for his direction of the classic *Sentimental Bloke* (1919), and it is true that in the twenty years from 1910 he directed more major films than any other Australian silent or sound film director. He came to directing films from acting on the stage, and his special talent lay in the fact that although his early training had been the exaggerated melodrama of the late Victorian stage, he appreciated that the
PLATE 16

Source: Picture Show, 1 September 1920.
new medium of film required 'natural' acting. 'The art is not to act' he continually told his casts, and his films reveal this realistic direction, in direct contrast to American and Continental films made at the same time but still burdened by the hang-over of melodrama. He made films for others - like Spencer's, Fraser's, the Southern Cross Feature Film Co., Australasian Films and even the Commonwealth Government - and he tried independent production on many occasions, but became a bitter and frustrated man by 1927 because of what he saw as American intervention and control of the local industry through the firm of Australasian Films Ltd. which he persisted in labelling 'the Combine'. (35) Friends who knew him always mention his quiet and decorous manner and his patience with casts. He was also 'aggressively Australian' in his values, and his films reveal his love and understanding of his country. He never ceased to believe that Australia should and could make films, and he came to see enemies everywhere who were trying to thwart his attempts to establish local production. There can be no doubt that his was an unusual talent, and one moreover that was wasted and frustrated in his own country. He had the misfortune to be born in the wrong country at the wrong time.

He was born in 1874, the son of a Sydney prison warder. Whilst

35. See his evidence at the Royal Commission into the Moving Picture Industry of Australia, Minutes, 1927.
still a teenager he went to sea from Sydney on an old windjammer to adventure around South America. He became mixed up with a few adventurous undertakings and political troubles in Iquique (Chile), after which he decided to journey to Buenos Aires, and the wild colourful life of Rio de Janeiro and New Orleans, before finishing up in England. Longford sat for his second mate's ticket in London and joined the Merchant Navy. He left his ship in Calcutta and after a spell in the official medical service he joined the Bandman's theatrical company, playing in small utility parts before going to New Zealand and later Australia. (36)

36. For much of the material on Longford, I am indebted to his second wife Mrs. Emily Longford for many kind interviews and permission to use family records, and from such (usually highly inaccurate and at times offensive) secondary sources as: A.M. October 1950; 'He invented the Close-Up' by Ernest Harrison. While the claim has often been made that Longford invented the close-up in his film The Silence of Dean Maitland (1914), see Sydney Morning Herald, 3 February 1934.

'...Mr. Harry Thomas played the part of the Dean. During the confession sermon the camera was concentrated on his face while he mouthed the words. When the picture was projected, he stood behind the screen and spoke the lines...''

This claim has been repeated more recently by E. Reade op. cit. It is false, since D. W. Griffiths first used close-ups creatively in one of his 1908 films and before that the opening shots of Porter's Great Train Robbery (1903) included a 'baddie' pointing his pistol in extreme close-up at the audience and firing. Others go even further back and maintain that Fred Ott's Sneeze (1894) one of the first kinetoscope films made by Edison and Dickson in their 'black Maria', was a 'close-up'. This is not to assert that Longford was unoriginal. The film media was so new, and foreign developments were often not known for a long time, so that techniques were often developed here simultaneously or independently from America or Europe, giving rise to such understandable claims to 'firsts'.

Longford first entered the Australian film industry as the villain in Captain Starlight, directed by Alfred Rolfe for Spencer in 1911. He became friendly with Spencer, who was at that time planning his own Sydney studio to safeguard his exhibition interests. Both believed Australia could produce films equal to, or better than those then being imported. While his studio was being built, Spencer financed, and Longford directed such films as The Fatal Wedding (1911) and Sweet Nell of Old Drury (1911) which brought to the screen Australia's Nellie Stewart who had become internationally famous for her role as 'Nell' in the stage production. Then came Spencer's Midnight Wedding (1912), The Romantic Story of Margaret Catchpole (1911) and The Tide of Death (1912), which, like most of his other films starred his future partner and co-script writer Lottie Lyell.

July 1912 saw the completion of the Spencer studio at Rushcutter's Bay, overlooking the then famous White City Wonderland Carnival. The studio was officially opened by the Hon. J. S. T. McGown, Premier of N.S.W. on Friday 12 August 1912, and the elaborate programme issued on the day outlined an ambitious scheme of Australian film production and promised that many Australian films would be made at the studio in the future. (37) This was the first large and well equipped Australian studio, with sloping

37. A copy of the programme is preserved at the Mitchell Library, Sydney.
glass roofs for interior shooting and laboratories for developing films. Even though it changed hands quite a few times in the following years, Spencer was right since many Australian films were indeed made there. The most important of the pre-war films was probably *Australia Calls* (1913) which Longford directed and the Higgins brothers filmed at the studio, but *The Fatal Wedding* (1911) and *Sweet Nell of Old Drury* (1911) probably brought in the most cash for Spencer. (38)

3. THE CAMERAMEN

Just as the 'patrons' or 'producers' (39) of pre-war Australian features gathered around them a nucleus of directors — Spencer had Rolfe and Longford, the Taits had W. J. Lincoln and W. A. Gibson, while West had Franklyn Barrett, and Gavin worked for Stanley Crick of the Australian Photo-Play Company — so too did most of the directors attract a number of skilled cameramen and a 'stock company' of actors and actresses who worked with them on one film after another in a more or less continuous fashion. This continuity

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38. The *Fatal Wedding* was premiered at the Sydney Lyceum on Friday 21 April 1911, and by September Spencer had already grossed £5,000 see *Bulletin*, 14 September 1911. Longford in his testimony at the Royal Commission in 1927 (see *Minutes*, 16 June 1927) said it had cost £600. *Bulletin*, 23 January 1913, quoted Spencer as giving his best shows to date in this order: (1) kinemacolor (2) *Fatal Wedding* (3) *Sweet Nell of Old Drury*.

39. They were 'producers' in the sense accepted today, i.e. men who find the money, organize the production team, and supervise the completion of the film under the director they choose. They could also be called 'patrons' in the sense that they fostered a new art form, although unlike most of the patrons of old their motive was plainly profit.
of personnel, and the general strong personalities of the directors would probably support the application of the 'auteur theory' of film direction to early Australian films if only enough of the films remained. (40) Some of the most important working relationships between director and cameraman were those between Longford and the Higgins brothers, Rolfe and Lacey Percival, and Jack Gavin with A. J. Moulton, or Herbert C. Finlay. Other important 'Australian' cameramen included Bert Ivey, Mons. Perier, Bert Segerberg, and Maurice Bertel, although the last three were born in France. Barrett and Hurley, of course, were their own cameramen, and there were other competent explorer-cameramen like Francis Birtles and J. F. Ward. John Dixon Copes and Orrie Perry (son of Joseph Perry), also photographed some features, as did Bert Cross. In 1913 when the Commonwealth re-advertised the position of 'Official Government

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40. The 'auteur theory' first propounded by the writers and film critics of the 'French New Wave' during the late 1950's - early 1960's, is taken here to mean the stamp or signature that certain brilliant film-makers like Orsen Welles impress upon their films so that they are immediately identifiable. Unlike the 'anonymous' studio films of Hollywood of the 1930's and 1940's with their stereotyped plots and form, the films of 'auteur' directors like Bergman, Fellini, Truffaut, Antonioni etc. have an individuality of style that can be attributed to the force of their personalities. What is suggested here is that early Australian films were made under similar conditions and similar assumptions, and it seems feasible that if enough films remained from this period, the viewer would immediately be able to pick the Longfords from the Gavins and so on, by their individual style.
Cinematographer\(^1\), over 60 applications were received, and even if only half of these men were competent cameramen (and nearly all those mentioned above applied), then Australia was well endowed with cameramen in relation to its small population and the newness of the skill. (41)

It would take too long to here recount more than some of the achievements of that superb family of Tasmanian cameramen—the Higgins brothers—Ernest (1871–1945), Tasman (1888–1953) and Arthur (1891–1965). Like his younger brothers, Ernest was born and educated in Hobart. His interest in films started when he was a bioscope operator at a Hobart theatre in 1903, and the following year he bought a motion picture camera and began to take and exhibit films of the city, harbour and mountains. In 1904 he went to Sydney and there teamed up with Spencer, touring with him and his Melies and Porter films. From 1907 he settled with Spencer at the Sydney Lyceum and was responsible for many of the topical newsreels and travelogues that Spencer was then showing. His first major assignment was to film the 4,000 ft. of the first world heavyweight championship fight to be held in Australia—The Burns-Johnson Fight—taken on Boxing Day 1908 for Spencer and Hugh D. McIntosh. Like most of the other early Australian cameramen,

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41. Commonwealth Archives Office, Canberra. In every instance correspondence was destroyed and references are to Registers of Correspondence to the External Affairs Department. For the applications for the position see A70/2, 13/5607, also 11/16382.
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ARTHUR HIGGINS.
Who from behind the camera her before the camera.

PLATE 17

Source: Theatre Magazine, 1 December 1919.
Higgins processed his own negative, in the darkroom at the Lyceum. Over the next five years Ernest was responsible for the photography of most of Spencer's feature films directed by Alfred Rolfe and Raymond Longford, with titles like *Captain Midnight*, the *Bush King* (1911), *Captain Starlight* (1911), *The Romantic Story of Margaret Catchpole* (1911), *Rufus Dawes* (1911) and *Sweet Nell of Old Drury* (1911). With the success of Ernest's career with Spencer, and the demands upon him to cover both significant newsreel events, and feature films; Arthur and Tasman came over to the mainland and also became cameramen for Spencer.

Arthur came over first, and at the tender age of 19 photographed one of Spencer's most successful films - *The Fatal Wedding* - which also happened to be the first film directed by Raymond Longford. The two men subsequently became close friends as well as working partners and Arthur was Longford's cameraman for many of his films, including *The Woman Suffers* (1918), *The Sentimental Bloke* (1919), *On Our Selection* (1920) and *Ginger Nick* (1920). Arthur, a small man with a limp since childhood was described as 'Ernie's shadow', and he was always a willing pupil of his older brother's technique. He was, however, the only brother to put sound on his camera (Ernie rejected sound because of the noise, believing that people would not accept it), and
he also experimented with colour film processing. His photography, as for instance in *The Sentimental Bloke* (1919) was more than competent; it approached an art form. His Woolloomooloo street scenes and character compositions are responsible for much of the film's lasting appeal.

Tasman Higgins also filmed Longford's films like *The Silence of Dean Maitland* (1914), but his real speciality was outdoor photography and his newsreels and gazettes were always impressive. He also developed a close working relationship with the Chauvels and worked on many of their films during the 1930's like *In the Wake of the Bounty* (1933), *Heritage* (1935) and *Uncivilized* (1935). All the brothers spent long lives working on Australian films, and Tasman and Arthur were still working on films during the 1950's. Their contribution was an impressive one, for altogether the three men worked on over 60 Australian features and literally hundreds of scenic shorts and newsreels in both the silent and sound era.

Lacey Percival (1885-1968) was another film 'pioneer' that contributed a long life-time of service to Australian motion picture photography. From his youth he was interested in photography and he

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42. For much of the information on the Higgins brothers, I am indebted to Mr. Bryce Higgins (son of Ernest; and a cameraman himself), and Mrs. Gladys Higgins (wife of Tasman) who gave me interviews and much useful information. For some press comments on Arthur see: *Theatre Magazine*, 1 December 1919; *Sunday Telegraph*, 29 September 1963; *Sun-Herald*, 29 September, 1963.
MR. LACEY PERCIVAL

PLATE 18

Source: Australian Variety & Show World, 17 August 1917.
was associated with a photographic studio in West Wyalong (N.S.W.) just after the turn of the century. A chance meeting with an American touring with some fight films on the Cootamundra-Sydney train determined his decision to enter the motion picture business. Never having seen a motion picture in his life, Lacey was fascinated and curious about what the other man had to say about film making and the film industry. In Sydney, Lacey met Clement Mason who had been screening J. C. Williamson's films of the Russo-Japanese War. This was the first film Lacey Percival ever saw and he was caught by the spell. Mason agreed to take Lacey on as an assistant at the Clement Mason Film Exchange, situated in the Queen's Hall, Pitt Street. There he learned to operate a bioscope, and later in 1908 he was the projectionist of Mason's Crow's Nest Tent Show 'where the seating was hard and the admission 3d. and 6d.' One night a patron, George Young, who was a retired businessman and one-time stage manager for J.C.W., suggested to Lacey that they make a motion picture. In order to raise money for this film a syndicate was formed including a doctor, a draper and a Goulburn squatter. With the money these 'angels' put up, Lacey bought a Premo camera and equipment to process the film. Kookaburra Films, Walker Street, North Sydney as the syndicate was known produced four films including The Octofoon. (43) The length of these films

43. 'Angels' are people, generally unconnected with the industry - although not necessarily - who put up money for a film, with or without much hope of getting it back.
varied from 1,200 to 1,500 ft. which was 'feature length' in those
days. Some of the cast names were Roland Conroy, Gasper Middleton,
Ruth Wainwright and Kitty Morris. Kitty Morris later became
Mrs. Lacey Percival. Lacey photographed these pictures and then
single-handed, on extremely primitive equipment, developed,
printed, cut, edited and finally projected them. Early Australian
cameramen were noted for their versatility and their capacity to
brilliantly improvise.

In 1911 he was approached by Stanley Crick, managing director
of the Australian Photo-Play Co., and offered a contract. With
an attractive salary of £12 per week and a long contract, Lacey
started on his new job, but after twelve months the Australian
Photo-Play Co. was taken over by Gaumont and disbanded. Hearing
that Franklyn Barrett, the maker of Pathe's Gazette was leaving,
Lacey applied and was given the job. It was a seven day a week
job at a salary of £5, but he installed modern equipment and
increased the footage from 200 to 300 ft. and from three prints a
week to ten prints a week. He was also instrumental in having
the name Pathe Gazette changed to 'Australasian Gazette', and
after Spencer's merged into Australasian Films Ltd. in 1913, he
was put in charge of the Rushcutter's Bay studio and laboratory.
Over the next 14 years that he worked there, he introduced more
modern equipment and filmed shorts, industrials and Government
sponsored films. Some of the feature films he photographed included
the Rolfe films: A Hero of the Dardanelles (1915), Will They Never Come? (1915) and Cupid Camouflaged. But he also worked for Jack Gavin; The Martyrdom of Nurse Cavell (1915), Beaumont Smith; The Man From Snowy River (1920) and Arthur Shirley; The Sealed Room (1926). This only mentions a few representative samples of the films he was concerned with. Between 1925 and 1927 he operated as a freelance cameraman and photographed such documentaries as Forest Wealth (1925), Mining at Newcastle and Mr. Morgan and the Bundaberg Sugar Industry. When the first American talkie The Jazz Singer appeared in 1927 he became manager of Automatic Film Laboratories, and later formed his own processing plant of Percival Film Labs. He retired in 1948. (44) One of the most outstanding, if rarely acknowledged achievements of these early cameramen-technicians was the second group of men that they helped train as future cameramen. Walter Sully was Percival's particular protege, and together they filmed many films, and later Sully was responsible for many features and documentaries in his own right.

Alf. J. Moulton was born in South Australia, learnt mechanical engineering in Victoria, and was a survey assistant with the

44. For much of the information on Lacey Percival, I am indebted to Miss Joyce Percival (his daughter), Mr. Anderson of Commonwealth Film Unit and the article by Bruce Hillyard, 'Lacey Percival, Australian Film Pioneer', printed in Industrial Photography & Commercial Camera, June 1968.
PLATE 19  ALF J. MOULTON

Source: Australian Variety & Show World, 17 August 1917.
Engineer-in-Chief's department in South Australia and also in the
Existing Lines Department in Western Australia. Taking on photography
at first as a hobby he was very successful and for ten years made
a livelihood by contributing large photographs for the weekly
illustrated 'The Western Mail' in Perth besides running a studio
at the same time. When motion pictures came along he became
interested, and after a rigorous apprenticeship on his own he joined
Pathé Frères. (45)

With Pathé Frères, Moulton travelled all over Australia, and
photographed several miles of film, mostly industrial and practically
every city and its surroundings in Australia. He spent nearly
one-third of his time travelling on trains and steamers. After
he left Pathé Frères he did contract work on his own and earned
the magnificent sum of £77 per week, single handed, but these
good days did not last long. Some of the features he photographed —
many of them for Gavin and the Australian Photo-Play Company — were
as follows; Frank Gardiner, King of the Road (1911), The Assigned
Servant (1911), The Mark of the Lash (1911), The Drover's Sweetheart
(1911) and Moonlight (1911). In 1917 he held decided views on the
worth of Australian films:

I hope again to see the day I can get sufficient film
work to make a decent living, and see films of a distinct
Australian type with the style of the old gumleaves go on
to the market to crowded houses as in the days of yore,
not evil-smelling American of a decided Germanic flavour. (46)

46. Ibid.
Like many others, he had many schemes but little came of them after the First World War when Hollywood was King.

A man with an almost identical career was A. O. Segerberg who became interested in photography in 1896 when he helped Sestier and Barnett film *The Melbourne Cup.* Later he worked with Kodak, Small’s, and the Swiss Studios, Melbourne where he was an operator for three and a half years. He worked for Pathe Freres when they became established in Melbourne in 1909, and was transferred by them to Sydney where he worked on Pathe’s Australian Animated Gazette. Like Moulton, and Finlay he also joined Crick at the Australian Photo-Play Company in 1911, and photographed such successes as *Cooee and the Echo, Whose Was The Hand?, Moira,* and *Mystery of the Bush.* Later, he was responsible for the photoplay of Allen Doone’s production *The Rebel* (1915) which had quite a successful run throughout Australia. During the war years he worked for the Fraser Australian Picture News, and in the twenties mainly occupied himself with scenic, industrial and educational shorts.

The two Frenchmen who worked as cameramen most of their adult

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47. He claimed this in his evidence at the Royal Commission, 20 October 1927, when on oath, and although his name is not mentioned in contemporary or later reports of the screening, it is known that an assistant was present and it was most likely Segerberg. See long comment about the filming by 'Lafayette' - probably Segerberg himself? - In Bulletin, 23 March 1911. See also *Australian Variety & Show World,* February 1917.
CAMERAMAN A. O. SEGERBERG
(FRAZER FILMS).

PLATE 20

Source: Australian Variety & Show World,
17 August 1917.
lives in Australia - A. J. Perier, and Maurice Bertel - have already been mentioned in earlier chapters, Perier for his filming of the Inauguration of the Commonwealth (1901), and Bertel because of his crucial role in the foundation of the technical laboratories of Pathe Freres in Melbourne in 1909. Jeane Antoine Maurice Bertel (1871-1930) known affectionately to his many proteges like cameramen Bert Cross, Bert Segerberg and Reg. Edwards by his first three initials as 'Jam', came to Australia from London in February 1890, and was naturalized in June 1915. Before the merge of Pathe's into the complex known as Australasian Films Ltd. in 1913, he was in production superintendent and was responsible for turning out 20 copies of the Pathe Australian Gazette every week for five years. He photographed the Lincoln-Cass Film Company's Sick Stockrider (1913), and probably their other productions of The Crisis (1912) and Transported (1913), but his major contribution was probably in the establishment of up-to-date laboratory facilities and the training he gave to many younger men who all made their mark on the film industry in Australia during the next half century. (48)

One further early cameraman should be mentioned as he was to

48. He worked for J.C.W. in 1915 on the films they made, and later joined Herschells (Melbourne) to stay with them as their Laboratory Manager and was on the pay-roll up to his death at the age of 59 in 1930. See Everyone, 5 January 1927; 21 May 1930, and Commonwealth Archives Office, CRS A1, Item 15/9512 for his naturalization certificate.
become the second 'Official Commonwealth Cinematographer' in 1913 and the mainstay of the Cinema Branch of various Commonwealth Departments over the next twenty-five years. Bert Ive was born in 1875, and began his moving picture career shortly after the turn of the century when he became a projectionist in the Brisbane vaudeville show of Ted Hollands, whom he stayed with until October 1908. His skill as an operator was commented upon continually in the press, and while he was with this show he started taking short local newsreels like the *1907 Sailing Carnival at Hamilton*,(49) On 23 October 1908 he signed a contract with E. J. Carroll (an early Queensland film entrepreneur, and destined to play a crucial role in the film industry of the 1920's to tour Queensland with films like *The Story of the Kelly Gang* (1906), *Robbery Under Arms* (1907), *Thunderbolt* and *For the Term of His Natural Life*. In October 1909 he went into partnership with Brisbane tobacconist Hugh Black, to open 'Woolloongabba Continentals' pictures at the Brisbane Cricket Ground, and this was followed by shows at Paddington and Ipswich.

His early tours with the immensely popular Australian feature films led to more of his own films in 1910 like *The Arrival of Lord Kitchenor* (1910), and by November 1911 he had finished his first dramatic production; *Driving a Girl to Destruction* followed by *The Angel of His Dreams* in 1912.(50)

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49. See Brisbane *Daily Mail*, 30 December 1907.

50. I am indebted to Mr. Ivan Ive (his son) for extracts from the family scrap-book. Also helpful was Mr. Anderson, Commonwealth Film Unit and extant files at Commonwealth Archives Office, C.R.S. A/ Item 13/14804, 18/2465, and 19/1255.
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family scrap-book. Also helpful was Mr. Anderson, Commonwealth
Film Unit and extant files at Commonwealth Archives Office,
C.R.S. Al. Item 13/14804, 18/2465, and 19/1255.
These were the only two features that Bert I've made, but in October 1912 he was working as J. D. William's newsreel cameraman, and his 1,000 ft. film of the Sydney Eight Hours Procession was being acclaimed by the public and press alike. In May 1913 the position with the Commonwealth Government was re-advertised and he was appointed. During his long employment as a 'temporary employee' for twenty-six years with the Cinema Branch he led a colourful life and travelled almost incessantly. During the First World War he filmed the Launching of H.M.A.S. Brisbane, and the Timber Industry (1918) and also photographed German interns. During the 1920's he was responsible for most of the significant Know Your Own Country series, which was responsible for bringing many British migrants to Australia and for conditioning generations of city-born Australians to country views and native animals.

These early cameramen were nearly all born around 1875 or 1880, and were thus young men in their prime when they took up the new medium of motion pictures. Most were self-trained men of a practical bent of mind, ready to improvise and flexible in their technique. Nearly all had some sort of intuitive feeling for their country that led to fine films full of light and strikingly composed images. It became a cliche about Australian films, both here and overseas, that the story might be poor, but the photography was magnificent. Besides the hundreds of feature films, scenics, gazettes,
industrials, newsreels and documentaries that these men produced, their next greatest achievement lay in the many men whom they trained to carry on after their retirement or death, so that their force is still being felt even today.

4. THE ACTORS AND ACTRESSES

The actors and actresses that cavorted before the cameras of these cameramen and the megaphones of the directors, were also mainly drawn from some field of existing entertainment; either vaudeville or the legitimate stage. There were a number, of course, who were amateurs whose first acting experience was for some film, but at least in the beginning they were in a minority and generally played unimportant roles. One of the most significant features of the pre-war film casts was the amazing turnover; relatively few actors appeared in more than one film, and there was always a number of 'new' faces in each film. The explanation of this was the free mobility of labour. Unlike the early days of the film industry in eastern U.S.A., when actors like D.W. Griffith scorned the new medium and only consented to act before the cameras when compelled to and only then under an assumed name so his stage reputation would not be tarnished, Australian show business people always moved freely from music hall or legitimate stage to outback or street scenes recorded by the hand-cranked cameras. Few could make a living purely at film-acting, and so most could not consciously develop distinct film-acting styles because the following week they could be
back in front of the footlights on the melodrama stage acting with all the exaggerated mannerisms demanded by that medium. Certain factors aided this transition from stage to film set, and the first was the apparent similarity of the two. Actors and actresses used to the rough and tumble of life in a travelling troupe saw nothing foreign in mounting horses or fighting bush-fires before motion picture cameras, particularly if the director happened to be someone who had directed them on the stage, and if the story they were enacting had been played by them hundreds of times before on stages all over Australia.

Often whole companies of touring actors and actresses - such as the Dampier combination, the George Marlow Co., the William Anderson Dramatic Co., George Willoughby's Co. or the Coles Bohemian Players - would form the cast of a film or re-enact one of their favourite stage pieces before the camera. This was the case with Bert Bailey's 1910 film version of *The Squatter's Daughter* when nearly all the cast came from his touring company that had been playing in the stage version for three years. Spencer, and his directors Rolfe and Longford, also made use of the Dampier stage company with Lillian Dampier (*Captain Midnight* 1911), Walter Vincent, Nellie Fergus (*Fatal Wedding* 1911), Augustus Neville, W. J. Coulter, E. W. Melville, Fred Hardy and Fred Twitcham (*Margaret Catchpole* 1911). D. A. Dalziel, another prominent stage actor played in two of Longford's films; *The Midnight Wedding* 1912 and *The Tide of Death* (1912),
while Alfred Rolfe had Ethel Phillips and Stanley Walpole as his leading players in *What Women Suffer* (1911), and Charles Woods in *Mates from the Murrumbidgee* (1911).

W. J. Lincoln and the Taits used the George Marlow troupe with Ethel Buckley and John Cosgrove in their *Luck of Roaring Camp* (1911), and Charles Hawtrey, Arthur Styan in *Called Back* (1912). Other Melbourne-based actors and actresses were Nellie Bramley, Frank Cullenane and his wife 'Miss Grist' in the film *The Bells* 1911, while in his 1913 films Lincoln used mainly Godfrey Cass, George Bryant and Roy Redgrave in *The Sick Stockrider*. Jack Gavin had a close-knit group of actors who worked consistently in many of his pre-war films, consisting of his wife Agnes, Alf. Scarlett, Mr. and Mrs. Mainsbridge and their daughter, and John 'Patty' Harris working on such films as *Frank Gerdiner, King of the Road* (1911). In the *Assigned Servant* (1911) he chose Ethel Bashford, May Kennard, Charles Villiers, Billy Harcourt, Daphne and Edie Taylor, and Charles Woods. Most of these performers mentioned here appeared in more than one film.

The only Australian actress who approached anything like a 'film star' in the quantity and quality of her work in this early period was Lottie Lyell who worked almost exclusively in the Longford films. Born in Sydney in 1891, she went on the stage as a young girl, and after Longford's return to Australia, played heroines to many of his heroes in the plays staged by the Edwin Geach Co. in Australasia.
PLATE 21
Miss Lottie Lyell

Source: Courtesy of Mrs E. Longford.
Even on the stage her acting drew consistent admiration from the critics, but she was 'universally loved' on the screen in such charming roles as 'Margaret' in *The Romantic Story of Margaret Catchpole* (1911) and 'Sylvia Grey' in *The Tide of Death* (1912). The secret of her success was that she, like Longford, realised that the exaggerated style of melodramatic acting was unsuitable for films because the camera lens tended to magnify even the slightest affectations and unnatural expressions. In two of her films that remain to us it is possible to discern a consistent development in naturalistic acting from the slightly stiff and mannered acting in *Margaret Catchpole* (1911) when she was only 20, to the superbly natural performance as a mature actress in the part of the lassikin’s sweetheart in *The Sentimental Bloke* (1919). But she was more than a brilliant actress with a pretty face and petite body, she was also a woman of high intelligence capable of writing creative scenarios, and possessed of business acumen capable of organizing the commercial details of many of their complex productions. Longford freely acknowledged that she helped him direct *On Our Selection* (1920) and their partnership blossomed into the Longford-Lyell Productions Co. of the early twenties. (51) When she died tragically of tuberculosis in 1925, Longford was heartbroken, and probably his creative decline as a director could be traced from that year. Thirty years later he

has to write:

With few exceptions .. Miss Lyell and myself were closely associated and that applies to all Australian films handled by us from 1910 to her death in 1925 in her 34th year. This little lady, an elocutionist and a native of Sydney - strictly religious - was placed in my charge by her parents and the late Edwin Geach... She was universally loved by all and her death was not only a deep loss to me, but to the Australian Film World at the time.

Another actress who came to films from a successful early stage career was Louise Carbasse, who, with Annette Kellerman, was to become one of the few Australian girls really successful in Hollywood. Born in 1896 in Sydney, Louise Nellie Carbasse started on the stage at the age of seven as Eva in a production of 'Uncle Tom's Cabin', and this was followed by a series of vaudeville tours throughout Australia. By the time she was thirteen she was an accomplished actress playing difficult adult roles, and in 1911 while acting in Western Australia she received a cable from Gaston Mervale inviting her to make films in Sydney. As master of her own destiny she made up her mind to return and made One Hundred Years Ago, Hands Across the Sea, and Con the Shaughran in the first New South Wales

52. Ibid.

53. Interview with Miss Lovely by writer February and May 1970, plus New Idea, 8 November 1969. Annette Kellerman, besides her appearances in a few short realist films prior to 1905, did not make any Australian feature films, although she made many spectaculars in America before 1920, and so she is not mentioned directly in this account. The most fabulously successful of all our actresses overseas she was living in The Gold Coast in 1970.
RECOGNISED AS ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL SCREEN ARTISTS OF THE DAY.

WILLIAM FOX presents

LOUISE LOVELY
THE AUSTRALIAN GIRL.

IN

"The Little Grey Mouse"

RELEASED BY
Fox Film Corporation (A sia) Ltd.
Head Office: 305 Pitt Street, Sydney.

PLATE 22

Source: Picture Show, 1 March 1921.
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PLATE 22

Source: Picture Show, 1 March 1921.
studio situated at Narrabeen. She married Wilton Welch, another theatrical performer, in 1912 eight days before her sixteenth birthday and appeared on several Australian vaudeville circuits with him for Rickards. In 1914 they went to Hollywood and she broke into the film business through Mr. McCrae, a friendly general manager of Universal Films. The first film she played in was *Stronger Than Death* (1916) opposite another Australian, Arthur Shirley. When this film was shown in New York, her appearance prompted Carl Laemmle, the chief of Universal, to change her name to 'Louise Lovely'. Under this name she appeared in about thirty American films, many of them opposite such he-men as William Farnum, as in *The Man Hunter* and *The Lone Star Ranger* (1919).

In 1922 she left films and in a 'Day at the Studio' routine appeared on most of the prominent stages of America, including the Palace at New York, where she shared top billing with Eddie Cantor. In 1923 she returned to Australia and continued her popular series of personal appearance tours until she made *Jewelled Nights* in Tasmania in 1926.

Visiting artists to Australia often acted in local films, and this was especially the case in the post-1914 period when performers like Fred Niblo (Get Rich Quick Wallingford, 1915) and Barry Lupino (*Barry Butts In* 1919) made film appearances before leaving Australia. In the early period, Olive Wilton is an outstanding example because of her great success on the stage in England and
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Australia. Born in Bath, England in 1883 she went to Ben Greet's Dramatic School and at the age of seventeen played the lead in 'A Cigarette-maker's Romance' which later toured England. Because of her long red-gold hair she was chosen to play Princess Flavia in 'The Prisoner of Zenda', and Glory in 'The Christian'. Thus launched she was taken up as an ingenue by the light comedian, Edward Terry and played the British Isles, New York and Canada in a number of pieces such as 'The Passport', 'Love in Idleness' and 'Sweet Lavender'. She first came to Australia in 1906, and in March married Benjamin Cornell. After various theatrical tours she returned to England and it was not until 1909 that William Anderson on an English talent-seeking quest engaged her for his company's productions in Australasia. (54)

In 1910 she played 'Violet Enderby' in Bert Bailey's film Squatter's Daughter, and continued to play such outdoor, outback, horse-riding parts alternating with 'bad women' parts in stage plays for the next decade. (55)

Other actresses in Australian films of this period were Ethel Buckley (Luck of Roaring Camp 1911) who married theatrical entrepreneur George Marlow in 1903 at the age of 17 and played in many of the William Anderson productions, and Nellie Bramley (The Bells 1911) a Melbourne actress who played in most of the current melodrama

54. Hal Porter, op.cit. p.114
roles and was described by Campbell Copelin who worked with her as 'a trouper in every sense of the word', and 'one of the smoothest performers to work with'. (56) Eugenie Duggan, sister of Edmund was another prominent local player in stage dramas, as was Lilian Dampier daughter of Alfred Dampier, and wife of Alfred Rolfe, who acted in her husband's films; *Captain Midnight* and *Rufus Dawes* 1911. But probably the most famous local actress to be reproduced on the screen was Australia's idol, Nellie Stewart, in her greatest stage role *Sweet Nell of Old Drury* 1911. Born in 1858 in Woolloomooloo Sydney, she was at least 53, and had played the role of youthful 'Nell Gwynn' for nearly a decade on the stage, before she was directed by Raymond Longford at the Wonderland city studio, Sydney. For her performance in this more or less 'filmed play' she allegedly received £1,000 and a share of the profits. She was reportedly fascinated with the new medium, insisted on seeing the daily rushes and upon its release watched the film twice a day at the Lyceum. She is supposed to have made provision in her will that her copy be screened when 'she is no more', but so far a copy has not come forward. (57)

Most of the male leads in these films were taken by the directors themselves, another example of the versatility of these early film-makers and the multiplicity of roles that characterized the Australian film industry. Jack Gavin, for example, played in most of his 1911 bushranging sagas, and so did Alfred Rolfe, Gaston Marvare and Bert Bailey in The Squatter's Daughter 1910. They were supported by at least a dozen prominent stage 'heroes' who performed in at least one and sometimes several of the pre-war films, including Charles Villiers, Augustus Neville, D.A. Dalziel, Godfrey Cass, George Bryant and Roy Redgrave, William Harcourt, Charles Woods, Alf Scarlett, John Harris, John Cosgrove and George Marlow. (58) Behind this dozen was at least another dozen whose names were well known throughout Australia on the programme notes of the local melodrama theatre; Cyril Mackay, Rutland Beckett, George Cross, Walter Vincent, J.H. Martin, Fred Twitcham, Frank Cullenane, Stanley Walpole and W. Power. Even visiting artists acted in the films, including Englishmen Roy Redgrave in the W.J. Lincoln dramas, and W.S. Percy the comedian in All for Gold 1911 by Franklyn Barrett.

For most of these actors and actresses, old habits absorbed

after hours of practice, died hard, and very few could make the transition demanded for acting in front of the movie camera. Most still persisted with grotesquely screwed up facial expressions that were once obvious to the furtherest gallery, but which now with punishing close-ups were unbearable to the motion picture audience. Directors who themselves had been brought up in the melodrama school could find no fault with this, or if they did feel vaguely that something was wrong there was little their training and experience equipped them to accomplish. Melodrama may have helped the development of films at the beginning, by supplying the directors, actors, and stories (as we soon shall see), but before long it became a bar to the development of new acting forms, and its persistence in Australia was even greater than overseas.

5. FILM THEMES: 'AND THE VILLAIN STILL PURSUED HER'

The Australian silent film industry was plagued by two corporate 'villains' that retarded its full development, and from which it was never able to completely escape. One restricted it as an art form; the other as an industry. The first 'villain', that will be dealt with in this section, was the hangover of melodrama that raised its ugly head in every aspect of film-making and seemed to pursue those directors, actors, script-writers, and cameramen perceptive enough and brave enough to try and break away from the
stifling mould of another medium; the stage. The second 'villain',
more important during the twenties, was the over-powering and at
times insidious influence of Hollywood films and general American
influence throughout the whole film industry. Film in Australia
was consequently nearly always derivative and imitative; it never
really had a chance to be original and self-reliant. In the first
two decades melodrama debilitated it, and in the third the American
film influence extinguished it.

The impact of melodrama and the stage is obvious in all
departments, from the cameraman who at first set up their cameras
rigidly in front of the action as if they were some prone audience
incapable of following the action off stage to the actors and directors
using techniques valid for a confined space and painted surroundings
but obsolete for the dynamic reality that the camera would capture.
But the field where melodrama (itself the decadent end-point of
Victorian drama) really made itself felt in films was in the
story-lines; the very core of these early films. In Australia, as
in Europe and America, most of the first feature films were little
more than filmed plays. But there was a difference. Where in
America by 1913 film-makers were realizing the limitations of using
stage plays as a crutch and were thus starting to use original
scenarios written especially for film purposes; in Australia the
practice of lifting complete the plots of poems, books and plays
persisted until well into the twenties. Along with the stories went
the conventions of the other mediums, and film as a visual art form was neglected while the verbal art form was merely embellished by the addition of pictures.

Anyone wishing to understand pre-1920 Australian films needs first to know and understand Australian melodrama in that period; for the first was more or less the step-daughter of the second. Stage in Australia at this time was occupied by three forms; 'classic theatre' with the plays of Shakespeare and other classics preserving a more or less realistic form of production; melodrama with its corruption and exaggeration of these forms, and vaudeville with its variety of acts, farces, and music. Australian films borrowed something from all three but they were more heavily reliant on melodrama. What then was 'melodrama'?

As late as 1919, A. Brandon-Cremer, one of the foremost purveyors of this form of entertainment throughout Australasia wrote what may be taken as a definition of melodrama:

The keynote of melodrama is accentuation. With that object we take greater liberties than may be necessary in finer plays.

For instance, we have to proclaim the entry of the villain by music appropriate to such a character. 'Heavy music' is our name for it. Similarly with regard to the heroine. Her music is in the plaintive key. Then there were the lights. The villain is spotted from one of the perches with blue or green. He never comes on without his music, and rarely is he deprived of the light designed to identify him with his deeds. The usual colour for the heroine is white or amber. Even the comedian has music - something
bright and lively. But he has to carry the weight of his character without any special light. 

In the same article he carefully defined the stereotyped 'properties' or sets used, and how the performers were rigidly rehearsed for the weekly change of bill. But he did not spell out here the full gamut of exaggerated gestures, mannerisms, and facial expressions that accompanied the various roles, nor the inevitable cloak of the villain and the snow-white dress of the virginal heroine. It did not matter who played these roles, the actors' individuality was submerged beneath a layer of readily recognizable conventions that aided the half-literate audiences in their understanding of the plot.

During sixteen months in New Zealand prior to October 1919 Brandon-Cremer produced in Auckland over sixty plays. Among these were the following, with those that formed the basis of films underlined:


59. Theatre, 1 October 1919. 'Producing Stock Melodrama', 'A Brandon-Cremer's Australasian Record'.
60. Theatre, op.cit.
This list is far from exhaustive, nevertheless it does establish something of the flavour of what Australian audiences went to local theatres and halls to see and what films were later substituted by films.

Not all the plays that formed the basis of films were foreign, in fact most the films made in 1911 had Australian themes and were the product of the post-1900 interest in Australian 'outback' and 'bushranging' plays. From the mid-1890's onwards, perhaps with the approach of nationhood in Federation, Australian audiences had strongly supported the efforts of local playwrights in their efforts to fit melodramatic conventions to local dramatic themes. The inrush of American 'cowboy and indian' plays during this period like 'The Squaw Man' had only intensified the drive to find a workable Australian idiom on the stage. When films came along they merely continued this trend by choosing Australian plays already endorsed on the stages.

The bushranging films were nearly all directly or indirectly influenced by Rolf Boldrewood's classic novel Robbery Under Arms and so most glorified some mythical 'Captain' hero who was always courteous to women and robbed the rich squatters to help the poor. They were our 'Robin Hood' figures, and while the first one; The Story of the Kelly Gang (1906) had at least tried to preserve a
realistic treatment by showing the bushrangers as occasional cold-
血液的杀手，到1911-1912年，
outlaws like 'Moonlight' and 'Thunderbolt' had become highly
romanticised figures of freely-adapted fiction:

The Great Bushranging film, MOONLIGHT, MOONLIGHT will be
produced on Saturday night for the first time. Of
unusual interest to Australians because it is the result
of Australian hands and brains. It depicts in 3,750ft.
the career of that magnificent gentleman bushranger
CAPT. MOONLIGHT who robbed the rich and gave to the poor
and never wronged a woman. First, an army officer,
second a clergyman; third, the greatest outlaw of his age.
Every Australian because it is Australian should see this
film, showing the arrest of Moonlight by the Victorian
police, his escape from gaol, the great fight at McGreedy's
farm, the escape of the gang, robbery of gold escorts and
banks....Remember it will be Moonlite on Saturday night.
Come early and see Moonlite under the stars. (61)

No doubt such films by Gavin, Rolfe and even Longford were influenced
by the pace and excitement of their American counterparts - the
cowboys and indians sagas of the early movies - and although both idioms
were set in the great outdoors, there are some differences between the
American film stories and the Australian ones. There was never, for
instance, the evolution of a 'lawman' type figure in Australian silent
films. The sheriff, marshall or even trooper was never extolled, rather
the opposite; the outlaw became the hero, and the police were seen in
a poor light in most films. In fact, as Longford was to later bitterly
recall, in the early days if one wanted to make a film all one needed

61. From an unidentified newspaper cutting included in S.S. Crick's
scrap-book, National Library, Canberra, location; 791.430994 P.
was a coach and horses, uniforms for the 'troopers' and plenty of half drunk extras. Troopers were mown down like the proverbial 'flies' in these films, and it was this apparent vincibility of the police force that led to the N.S.W. Chief Secretary's Department banning some of these bushranging films.

Just as Boldrewood's book provided the stimulus for the bushranging films, so too were many of the convict sagas inspired by Marcus Clarke's stirring book, For the Term of His Natural Life, which was itself transferred to celluloid on at least three occasions. Here also the sympathy of the film makers was with the under-dog; the outcast, the poorly treated convicts. But this strong identification for the period, with the rigours of the 'system', did not prevent them portraying the peccadillos of the convicts, as for instance Gabbett's preference for escaping with a lot of 'friends' so that he at least was sure to reach safety after consuming them. Agnes Gavin, who wrote most of Gavin's 'convict' type scenarios, also managed to give them a melodramatic impact with the twistings of her plots, and she like Longford was keen to make the most of the Anglo-Australian story bridge that transportation provided. This linking of England and Australia in the plots was good box-office, since interest in things English and the 'home' land still ran high in Australia in 1911. The story of Gavin's Assigned to his Wife (1911), was set at the Scottish Highlander's Regimental quarters located at Aldershot, England, in the early 'forties'. 
and afterwards at the Penal Settlement, Tasmania. When the hero, Jack Throsbie, is transported to Tasmania after being 'framed-up' on a spying charge by the villain Captain Danvers, he is followed there by his wife. Danvers is transferred to the penal settlement and woos the friendship of the couple by having Throsbie 'Assigned to his wife', however, the true nature of his feelings is demonstrated one morning when he makes advances to the beautiful Bess. Driven off, Danvers leaves the house but returns with two officers who imprison the unfortunate husband in an old hut. His faithful black friend Yacki-Yack rescues him, and soon afterwards the hero's good name is vindicated and the happy couple return to England with their friend Yacki-Yack.\(^{(62)}\)

An almost identical motif of unrequited love in England leading to happiness in Australia, pervaded Ray Longford's Romantic Story of Margaret Catchpole\(^{(1911)}\) Margaret at sixteen was the Harvest Queen of her village in southern England. She is loved by a smuggler and a Coast Guard, but loves the smuggler. When her sweetheart is captured by his rival, Margaret persuades Lieutenant Barry to free the smuggler and attempts to leave England with him. In the process, Margaret is captured and sentenced to transportation for life for stealing a horse, and her lover is surprised and shot during a police raid. In Australia, after many years, the Coast Guard and Margaret meet and decide to marry, making their new home at Windsor.

62 Program in possession of writer.
Margaret Catchpole had previously been a play, popular in England and Australia. The fact that many of these Australian stories were acted out in real locations transformed them from rather dull melodramas into sparkling pieces of dynamic realism. This is obvious in the little that still remains of Margaret Catchpole. In some scenes — such as the capture at the Inn — there is all the artificiality of a filmed play and the action could be taking place on any stage; but this is not the case with the thrilling chase sequence as Margaret rides through some deserted country town in N.S.W., deliberately chosen to resemble an English village. This at least is real.

The Bulletin when discussing Bert Bailey's film The Squatter's Daughter (1910), which fits into the third category of 'Outback or Bush melodramas', also drew attention to this distinguishing characteristic of the film over the play version; 'One thing the picture audience will have that the theatre is done out of - real rides'. This is perhaps where Australian film-making was more fortunate than overseas producers. Instead of making straight melodramas or society dramas that lent themselves to inside studio work as in America and Europe; in Australia, the demand was for outback melodramas and this prompted the use of outdoor locations, amateur actors and fast-moving realistic

64. Bulletin, 13 July 1911, 27 July 1911.
65. Ibid., 14 July 1910.
action. All these features helped to keep Australian film-making from stagnating or dying an early death.

It is significant that so many of the films of this first big 'wave' in 1911-1912 had story lines based on outback or bush themes. One of the reasons for this was that there were so many plays of this type available for transferring to celluloid, but then that begs the further question of why so many plays were written around these themes, and comparatively few around Australian city themes? To answer such a question is beyond the scope of this present work, but probably Russell Ward's thesis regarding the influence of the 'outback ethos' on Australian culture in *The Australian Legend* could supply part of the answer. In any event, these themes were the ones the early film-makers preferred, and they were the ones that were most successful with the Australian public at the time. *The Squatter's Daughter* with its love-story linking two stations, a courageous outback 'daughter' and bushrangers, was popular as a play when it was first written by Duggan and Bailey in 1905. It was a hybrid production - including story lines from other Australian works and from standard melodramas of the period - but for this reason it was even more successful since it included a bit of the best of many plays. When it was later made into a sound film by Ken Hall in 1933, the plot underwent a few more changes, but they were careful to keep within the proven formula of success. The same applied to Bailey's production of
On Our Selection (1912) as a play, and Ray Longford's version in 1920 as a film. This has been one of the most popular Australian productions, and the sound film of On Our Selection made by Ken Hall in 1931 is still making money today forty years later. Rudd's original story included figures of 'Mum', 'Dad', 'Joe' and 'Dave' that everybody in the Australian audiences could readily identify with, and in the stage and radio versions the caricatures were so exaggerated that the production became a giant national 'Aunt Sally' - something that Rudd never intended, and that Longford never attempted in his film. It was the broad, earthy humour, and appealing sentimental life-stories of the Selection mob that made for their success in this early period, and most of the films were played 'straight' without attempting satires of the current rural values.

A further difference between American and Australian films of the pre-war period was that a workable 'indian' mode was never made out of the local aboriginals. A few films, notably Caloola and Moora Neeya were made with aboriginals and settlers cast in a 'cowboy and indian' mould, but somehow it was never really successful and in fact a later effort during the twenties in The Romance of Runnibede (1927) turned out to be ludicrous. The story of Caloola, or The Making of a Jackeroo (1911) was given twenty years later by a reader of Everyones who had acted in it;
The story concerned a tribe of aborigines who capture the daughter of a struggling settler. Her parents become worried and a search party sets out to teach Jacky and his brethren a lesson. They take no risks and shoot the blacks on sight. Enter the hero Jackeroo who spots the chief of the tribe ready to fling the girl over the cliff. Dashing to the rescue he saves the girl's life and puts finish to the body-snatching habits of the black chief.

(66)

It is plain from this synopsis that the Australian aborigine just would not fit into the pattern of Red Indian behaviour in North America, and Australian audiences could not be fooled, although they appreciated the novelty of the 'local blacks' appearing in films.

This was often achieved with some hardship:

The Australian Photo-Play Co. spared neither expense or trouble in securing this picture, sending Mr. Alfred Rolfe and Co. to Brewarrina, where, after much trouble, the blacks were induced to face the camera. During the corroboree the natives became excited, and threw spears and boomerangs, one hitting the machine. Then, again, where the natives attack the hut, they hit the man who was acting the part of the Old Shepherd on the head with a nulla nulla stunning him and severely handled Mr. Rolfe. However, the company was well repaid as the picture is ONE OF THE MOST NOVEL, WEIRD, STARTLING AUSTRALIAN PICTURES EVER PRODUCED.

(67)

The story of Moora Neya had at its centre the cloying sentimentality of the 'faithful black' — another attempt to transfer the Northern American negro 'Uncle Tom' to the Australian situation:

66. Everyone, 3 January 1934, 12 May 1937.

Two of the films dealing with a war motif had a distinctly Australian flavour, and mixed patriotic pride with nationalist fears and prejudices. The story of Alfred Rolfe's Mates From the Murrumbidgee (1913) ranged from a homestead on the banks of the Murrumbidgee to South Africa during the Boer War where some heroic acts of mateship took place, before concluding in Sydney. Films made during the Great War 1914–1918 were to preserve the same essentials and merely change the theatre of war. Australia Calls (1913) by Ray Longford both expressed long-held Australian fears about 'the Yellow Peril', and prophesied the direction of the Second World War. This film began with scenes of Australians blithely enjoying themselves surfing, playing football and at the races. Over each scene in turn rose the image of the covetous Asiatic invaders. The melodramatic eternal triangle was just reaching the point where the station heroine is rejecting the villain in favour of the hero when

news arrives that Australia had been invaded:

The station hands rush to arms and are hurriedly enlisted. The messenger, riding on, reaches the farm of the Peace Society man, the fool who believes in arbitration and goodwill on earth when the enemy is on the soil. He (the fool) tears down the proclamation and orders the courier off his property. Later on, when he sees another courier in uniform with an Asiatic face, he reaches for a gun, and uses it. Having fired, he looks around to find himself covered by the rifles of Chinese infantry. The rifles speak. The picture then switches back to show the gathering of an army. The marching of Australian troops through the cheering streets; the accumulation of mounted infantry, the assembling of all arms, making for the various stations. And then the boom and smoke of battle; Sydney a sea of fire where tower and spire come toppling down. Hereabouts the rejected suitor turns traitor, and in return for the girl, 5,000 cash and a passage out of the country, he undertakes to guide the Mongolian forces. The girl is captured and brought into the Chinese camp, but the Australian aeroplane, manipulated by Hart, happens through the air, rescues her, and carries her off amid a storm of bullets and a typhoon of applause. (69)

It should be noted that films like this one, and Franklyn Barrett's All for Gold (1911), where both had scenarios especially written for them, were also notable for the innovatory techniques they employed. Longford, for instance, in Australia Calls (1913), utilized such modern devices as aeroplanes and wireless, and had his cameramen - the Higgins brothers - construct special models with toy aeroplanes gliding down on wires to bomb 'St. Mary's Cathedral' in what was probably one of the first dramatic uses of miniature photography in

69. Bulletin, 24 July 1913. Note that although the scenario was said to have been an 'original' one by the two Bulletin journalists Jeffries and Barr, Randolph Bedford's 1909 play 'White Australia' had an amazingly similar plot. See Bulletin, 19 August 1909 and Australasian, 3 July 1909.
Australia. Barrett also employed a startling technique in his film about a mining melodrama based on a scenario by W.S. Percy that had won the West's best film-script prize:

This picture was also noted for the first triple exposure ever attempted. The action of the picture demanded a telephone call to be put through ordering a fast speed boat to take the heroine across the harbour. To emphasize the position and make the action more attractive, I evolved the idea of showing Miss Teece speaking into the telephone on one side of the film and the boatman taking the call on the other side, the two sections being separated by the boat harbour at Port Macquarie. (70)

The result was probably one of the first 'split-screen' effects to have been attempted in the world. Thus, original scenarios would often lead to a more creative use of the camera and make for a more interesting visual experience, while the reproduction of an old melodramatic play seemed to stifle the director's creativeness.

The few Australian films made before 1914 that had predominantly city-based themes were largely centred on 'Australia's national sport'; horse-racing. The story of The Double Event (1911), adapted by W.J. Lincoln from the popular novel by Nat Gould, for instance, was to be reproduced with monotonous regularity and slight changes over the next two decades. In a long and intricate plot that tried to embrace as many local locations as possible – from Flemington to a 'Chinese Den' in Little Bourke Street – the story

70. Woman, 30 April 1936, article by Franklyn Barrett.
opened in England with a fight between two brothers over a girl, and the departure for Australia of the wronged hero. In Australia he entered the arena of horse-racing under the name of Jack Marston and is successful on the turf besides falling in love with the daughter of a wealthy Sydney bookmaker. The climax comes when his horse 'Caloola' wins the 'Double Event' despite the efforts of crooks to nobble the favourite, and all is cleared for a happy homecoming of Jack and his Australian bride. (71)

The Cup Winner (1911) was another racing drama adapted from an original stage play by Australians Phillip Lytton and J.C. Lee. This film's overbearingly corny melodramatic plot revolving around an abandoned child findings its parents at the eleventh hour was somewhat lightened - as was the case with many others - by the inclusion of some documentary footage. In this case most of the melodrama part had been photographed before November 1911 under S.S. Crick's supervision, and the Melbourne Cup sequences were cut in the night after the race to give the film an appealing topicality. (72)

But with the exception of the straight melodramas like East Lynne and The Mystery of the Hansom Cab (1911), that could easily have been set in any of the world's cities, there were very few Australian city films made before 1914. Most of the Australian films were entrenched firmly in the 'bush ethos'.

71. From program in writer's possession.
72. Unidentified newspaper cutting in S.S.Crick's scrap-book; op.cit.
6. CONCLUSION

The first realistic films of the 'newsreel' period in Australian film history paved the way for the production of feature films by giving experience to the producers, directors and cameramen who were to become prominent in the years 1909-1913. The producers were generally the non-artistic businessmen who acted as entrepreneurs by bringing together the various necessary talents and by supplying the necessary capital. Most of these men were, like Spencer, West and the Tait brothers already in the business of exhibiting and distributing films and this aided the proliferation of Australian fictional films. The key directors were self-trained men like Gavin and Rolfe who had some theatrical background, and ex-actors like Longford or ex-cameramen like Barrett. They were fortunate to have in Australia a supply of excellent cameramen like the Higgins brothers, Alf. Noulton, A.O. Segerberg and many others. These cameramen had also mostly trained themselves and were often forced to improvise their equipment and the necessary techniques for sophisticated story films. The casts of these early films, like the stories, were mainly drawn from the older medium of the stage, and this progression had advantages and disadvantages. While superficially similar at first, film techniques and stage techniques rapidly became divorced but the overhang of melodrama in Australian films was one of the factors holding back its full development as an art form, in the years before 1930.
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CONCLUSION

The art of producing photoplays in Australia is, of course, in its infancy, and it would be unfair to judge a locally-made picture by the high standards of American productions. On the other hand, it would be mistaken kindness to the producer to ignore the shortcomings of Australian work merely because it represents the effort of our own people. It involves no discredit therefore to admit that we have much to learn in the manufacture of moving picture plays, and a frank recognition of this criticism will facilitate our progress towards efficiency and success.

Reflections by the film critic of the Sunday Sun, 2 September 1917, on the occasion of a private screening of Franklyn Barrett's The Monk and the Woman.
There is every indication in the newspaper reports of the time that the first experience of moving pictures for Australians was a curiously significant one. Film touched the imagination and stirred the senses to a great degree. People in Sydney and Melbourne revelled in the paradoxical capacity of Film to project simultaneously a sensation of super-reality and super-fantasy. Australians were impressed from the beginning. The first Australian films followed soon after and characteristically, they were of Australian recreations like Manly ferry rides and the Melbourne Cup. The origins of Film in Australia were cosmopolitan; an American magician introduced it, a French cameraman made the first films, and Australian entreprenuers showed them in converted shops and on their vaudeville programs. The first films had trivial subjects; serpentine dances, London Bridge, swans outside Windsor Castle and so on, but even in 1896 there were prophets in Australia who saw great things that the cinematograph was capable of performing. Some dimly perceived its educative future, others its capacity as a news media shrinking distance, still others its literary and artistic potential; but it was in the hands of salvationists Joseph Perry and Herbert Booth that Film took on a new dimension and power in this country. For them, Film was not entertainment but a forceful medium for religious propaganda.

In film history, as in all forms of history, events are rarely completely unheralded; there is nearly always some historical precedent which provides most of the sub-stratum for what appears a
later revolutionary development. Hence previous commentators have erred when they failed to show the historical continuity of the Salvation Army's use of the screen for propaganda purposes. Long before the arrival of dynamic Herbert Booth, the more humble but dedicated Joseph Perry had experimented with visual means of religious indoctrination, and it was Perry who formed the mould within which the grand production Soldiers of the Cross was made. Booth had plenty of successful precedents before him, including the work of Perry, the success of the secular stage play 'Sign of the Cross', and possibly even the American Passion Play of 1898.
Nevertheless, it was his written script and his lecturing oratory (together with Perry's skilful manipulation of the slide and film equipment) that kept the show together and made for its powerful impact. After Booth's departure, Perry kept the Limelight Department alive and in the forefront of the Australian film scene for another eight years and produced the enigmatic Heroes of the Cross (1909). The final closure was not his fault, but the result of the changing nature of the medium and the decision of his superior. This rather bizarre episode, though outside the mainstream of cinematic development in Australia, is nevertheless important not only for the films produced, but also for the creative and technical heritage that Perry bequeathed to the infant industry.

At first the amazing new invention was used to record any moving reality, but soon cameramen and audiences became more discriminating, and by the first years of the new century, the
cinematograph was present at important events in Australia and overseas. As a form of entertainment it was also becoming technically more competent and enjoyable. It took nearly a decade for the first long story films to emerge, and in the meantime the newsreels and other realist films supplied the necessary news that Australians craved. Boer War films were among the first to reawaken interest in the new medium, followed by the doings of royalty, and local phenomena like sporting events. The film of the Inauguration of the Commonwealth taken in 1901 by Perry and Perier, best exemplifies the progress of film technique because of its use of the stationary camera to express the motion of the procession. The purpose of film shows was still mainly to entertain, but to an increasing extent, to inform as well. The behaviour of the people using the mutoscopes in 1903 was prophetic of the future preferences of Australians, who, like audiences all over the world, wished to be transported to a world of fantasy rather than reality when they went to the pictures. The exhibition side of the industry became chaotic in these early frontier days as greedy promoters entered eager to make quick profits from the invention. It was an age of the touring show, and about all was an air of impermanency.

By 1906 it is possible to discern the three sectors of the 'film industry' emerging from the chaos that had preceded it. The first exhibitors or 'showmen' were starting to appear, as they settled down to more or less continuous exhibition of films in Melbourne and Sydney. Among them, the most notable were Cozens Spencer,
T. J. West and the Tait brothers. West and Spencer were foreigners, but the Taits were Australians, and all were aware of the potential of film to entertain mass audiences. All indulged also in film distribution or made their own arrangements for a regular supply of films, and it was possibly blockages in this supply and a realization of a hidden demand in Australia that prompted the first Australian story or 'feature' films. The epic that the Taits and Johnson & Gibson produced married the two mediums of film and stage, and was a landmark in world cinema. Probably as important as its length and subject-matter was the cinematic quality of this film. It is perhaps forgotten now just how revolutionary The Story of the Kelly Gang was at the time, and what an impact it made to earn the wrath of the law-makers and the identification of the adults and children who saw it. This feature laid the path for a host of imitators, but again a sense of historical continuity must be acknowledged. It was ten long years from the introduction of film to this country before The Story of the Kelly Gang (1906), and it was another five years before any large number of locally made story films started to appear on Australian screens.

The early showmen like Spencer, J.D. Williams, West and the Taits were dynamic, egotistical men, who knew what their public wanted and went out of their way to serve them. Profit and patriotism merged when they sponsored local films because they realized very early that what their public liked best were films of themselves; Australians were as vain as the people of any other country. This
brought forth an increasing stream of local films showing everything from industries to recreations as well as significant events. Programmes at this time were described as 'plum puddings', with a little bit of everything, and that is the way the audiences liked them. Spencer and his colleagues also bequeathed a heritage to their followers. They built the first permanent cinemas, established standards of business organization and trained the men who were to succeed them in all phases of the industry. They also made a lot of money. The years before 1910 were a transition time, from the travelling show to the permanent and increasingly grandiose cinemas of the major population areas. It seems evident that the cinemas were also creating a new audience. Where originally they had taken over the music-hall audience ready-made, by 1911 they seemed to be attracting many people who never before went regularly to theatrical entertainments. Audiences were as large in Australia as elsewhere, and the cinemas were often commented upon for their size. Australians went so regularly to their cinemas, that whatever impact was made in the realm of values and attitudes must have been considerable.

The first 'wave' of Australian silent films came in 1911, another during the war years, and yet a third during the early nineteen-twenties. The men who made the films in 1911 were generally self-trained men with some theatrical experience. Directors like Gavin, Rolfe, Lincoln and Longford were sponsored generously by the self-made magnates in the exhibition sector who had made their money by showing foreign films. The cameramen were also largely self-
trained, but surprisingly competent and of world class. The actresses and actors were also of world-standard, as can be judged by the success of Louise Lovely, Annette Kellerman, Arthur Shirley and Snowy Baker in Hollywood. Yet the 'villain' of melodrama still pursued the new medium; it was still tied to the conventions and techniques of the stage, and to some extent these were just not transferable to the screen. The stories the early film-makers chose to put into their films, tended generally at first to be Australian stories or plays, and this was their redeeming feature, for they had to be made in the great outdoors. We, like the Americans at Hollywood, and unlike the French, English and Italian film-makers, discovered the reality of the living, crisp outdoor light and scenery, and it was this quality of our films that kept them from artistic stagnation in the mire of melodrama.

Film came to Australia in August 1896. From its introduction until just before World War One, most of the twentieth century functions of moving pictures were explored in Australia. First and always it was an attractive entertainment, then a medium of propaganda, then a means of information and finally a transmitter of drama. Not only in the 'artistic' field was Australia a testing ground; there was also considerable early 'industrial' development, with cinemas and films becoming a regular part of the Australian's life.

The great pit is that so few of the films remain. Chemistry and time have reaped their toll and to appreciate the films of this early period historians must become archeologists and piece together clues
from unrelated matter. The big questions in Australian film history still remain unanswered. How many films were actually made, and who made them? How exactly did Australian films express and help create the nationalist ethos of the people? What connection is there between film and the stage and other media of entertainment and communication in Australia? Where does Australian film history fit in relation to world cinema; where exactly were Australians innovative and where imitative of world cinematic developments? What form has government interest taken in the Australian film industry over the past seventy years; and why has film censorship been so unopposed here? These are just a few of the questions that still need to be answered if we are to learn as much as possible about this particular cultural development of Australians. This work has surveyed the early development of the Australian film industry; hopefully it will form part of the basis for future workers asking the more complex questions referred to above regarding the development and impact of Film in Australia.

* * * *
APPENDIX 1

A. **SOLDIERS OF THE CROSS 1900.**

The story of *Soldiers of the Cross* (1900) was very simple and well-known. Beginning with the Life and Death of Jesus, the martyrdom of many of his early followers was shown by a combination of slides and moving pictures. Given the Salvation Army's mission, the mode of presentation of the 'lecture' was characteristically dynamic. (1) Booth set the mood by warning his audience that what they were about to see was not an entertainment but a great effort to depict the scenes of suffering and glory of the first martyrs. (2) The message was clear; the assembly was to question its faith by comparing its modern ease-loving life with that of the early saints. But the practical purpose of the lecture, Booth explained, was to raise 200 young men and women Cadets for the new Commonwealth Training College in Melbourne. *Soldiers of the Cross* may thus be regarded as the 'first Australian recruiting film'.

The giant screen bordered with slogans such as 'Will ye no follow Christ?' and 'No Cross, No Crown' dominated the Town Hall stage, and as the lights went down only Booth's face was illuminated at the lectern on one side. As the immense coloured pictures illuminated the screen, the audience was hushed into breathless silence, and Booth's booming oratory alone broke the stillness as

1. Booth and the *War Cry* always referred to 'Soldiers of the Cross' as a 'lecture' and never simply as a 'film'. Since it consisted of many short, separate moving pictures dependent on the accompanying slides, hymns, and commentary by Booth, there can be no question of it being the 'first full-length film' - whatever that means? which
his eloquent and burning words described the gory scenes of sacrifice. Perry at the back of the hall manipulated first the slide machines to show still pictures of St. Stephen defying the Sanhedrin, and then without giving the audience pause, started up the cinematograph and showed the young Christian being stoned for his faith. As the short film ran out with Stephen crumpling to the ground, new slides were flashed up showing Paul standing contemplatively over him. "The effect upon the audience as they beheld in a moving picture, the innocent beautiful Stephen cruelly beaten to the earth and killed by the fiendish fanaticism of the formal religionists of his day, cannot be described", said the War Cry.\(^{(3)}\) The Age reviewer wryly remarked the next day: 'on the whole it must be admitted that it is not nice to see a martyrdom'.\(^{(4)}\)

Another set of slides introduced Rome in the days of Nero with Booth continuing the spoken commentary, as he described the pagan capital and the massacres in the Catacombs. The clandestine meeting of the Christians followed with the traitor betraying them to the Roman soldiers. The Christians were given the choice of offering incense to the gods or death; they refused and were massacred. The 'dying writhing saints', the mourning, the grief,

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2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. The Age, 14 September 1900.
the burial, all these scenes flashed before the audience in still and moving pictures to create an impression 'ineffaceable from the memory'. (5) A later reviewer in 1901 thought the Catacombs scenes 'wonderfully powerful', while Booth at the time thundered; 'if these scenes are harrowing to the feelings, it is because they were hard cruel facts in the lives of the early Christians, who knew nothing of a kid-glove religion.' (6)

From the Catacombs, the lecture moved on to the burning of the Valerian martyrs, 'who nevertheless maintained their characteristic faith, sweetness and saintly devotion', culminating with a film of the martyrdom of Bishop Polycarp. At the age of almost 100 years he was arrested in his lodgings. With a prayer on his lips for his persecutors he handed himself over to be bound and led before the Pro-Consul, where he made his last recorded speech. Then, the old man with his long, flowing locks was preceded to the stake in the public square by a howling jeering mob who danced before the benign hero. The Roman soldiers led him to the post surrounded by faggots, the chain was adjusted, the centurion issued the command, the fire was lit and smoke ascended as Polycarp, in imitation of his Divine Master, was seen through the rising flames with uplifted hands praying for his enemies. According to the War Cry reviewer: 'This chapter of the lecture is fascinating indeed...The many scenes...cannot be described - they are beyond the power of words -

5. War Cry, 22 September 1900.
6. Ibid., 18 August 1900.
but the effect and impression produced upon those who witnessed them is one that will never be forgotten.\(^{(7)}\)

Yet another old man - Bishop Calepodius - was shown being drowned by the Roman mob:

It is perhaps one of the most perfect films yet produced. The moving water, the plebeian carrying the weight to the river's brink, the rabble escorting the glorious saint, the tying of the weight upon his neck, and then immediately lifting him over the heads of the men, and throwing him bodily into the water, the splash, the swirling eddy as he sank out of sight, are so real as to create in the audience a spirit of intense excitement. The unfair and unequal contest is too much for British blood. \(^{(8)}\)

On several occasions this sequence received favourable comment. During one delivery at the Collingwood Town Hall, the reviewer reported 'involuntary interjections', deep sighs and moans coming from the audience at this point in the lecture. Generally a regular chorus of 'oh's' accompanied the noiseless, but realistic splash as he landed in the water. \(^{(9)}\)

One of the famous scenes depicted the burning of 300 Christians in a lime-kiln. As the film opened the patient faces of the martyrs were seen through the rising smoke as they encouraged each other.

In the rear were the waving plumes of the Roman soldiery as a priest entered with his fateful offer to the Christians to recant. Neither man, woman or child could be found unfaithful enough to touch the unholy incense and without waiting for the spears of the soldiers

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7. Ibid., 22 September 1900.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., 29 September 1900; 13 October 1900.
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all rushed joyfully forward to plunge over the brink and disappear amid the thickening vapours of the pit. The soldiers 'are seen coming cautiously forward to 'peer through the smoke with blanched, awestruck faces into the boiling cauldron'.(10)

The section which reproduced the emotional scenes that took place within the Colosseum was thought 'unquestionably the best'.(11) Booth deliberately showed his audience modern views of the arena in ruins so that the later pictures of dying martyrs would be all the more effective in stark contrast. The events portrayed in the arena were many. 'They transpire in the cells underneath, in the outer courts, and in the arena itself'.(12) The cinematograph film showed the martyrs slowly marching into the arena. They knelt together while they were blessed by their aged leader and then while they were praying, around a jutting portion of the arena came a huge tiger.

The Christians suddenly shrink back at the sight of the monstrous beast. Little children rush to their mothers - friends, cheap friend. Almost instantly another equally ferocious creature steals behind the first, adding additional terror to the scene, and while in the act of springing upon them the film closes. (13)

Joseph Perry's son, Reg., was later to describe how a slide showing the tiger clamping his jaws on the victim was then flashed onto the screen thus maintaining the heightened emotional level and enabling

10. Ibid., 18 August 1900.
11. Ibid., 22 September 1900.
12. Ibid., 18 August 1900.
13. Ibid.
the next film to be threaded through the projector. (14)

The last scene in the lecture concerned Perpetua, a young Christian mother, who, resisting all entreaties, refused to recant, and so died in the bloody arena. It was dubbed 'the loveliest scene of all'. (15) The lecture, hymns, slides and films had altogether lasted two and a quarter hours, and at a late hour, with a gasp of revelation, the audience awoke to the fact that the grand old benediction was being uttered by the Commandant, and, amid delight, the vast audience swept out again in mighty volume into the Melbourne streets and vanished towards their respective homes. (16)

B. MAKING SOLDIERS OF THE CROSS 1900.

The popularity of their earlier social and biblical films was the immediate stimulus for Herbert Booth and Joseph Perry launching into the more ambitious production of Soldiers of the Cross in 1900. It was conceived from the beginning in propaganda terms, i.e. designed to change men's beliefs, whereas the earlier Social Lecture (1898) had been merely informative, and the Passion films (1899) more educational and even 'entertaining' than reforming. Booth said: 'I am anxious that...hundreds will be drawn to the Cross, thousands will be touched and moved into hitherto active work for the kingdom of God and the Salvation Army will land into the Training Home a host of self-surrendered young men and women, full of

15. War Cry, 18 August 1900.
fire and zeal, to become worthy of being counted among those who have also suffered for Him'.

It has been claimed that the preparation of this 'lecture' took up to twelve months, but it is more likely that the photographic work was completed in six months, although Booth's research may well have been progressing intermittently since the first Passion films of 1899. The actual shooting time is unlikely to have spread over a long period because an examination of the War Cry files reveals that Perry was touring for the last part of 1899 and for much of the early months of 1900. This problem of timing, as with the problem of kudos for the production, will probably never be resolved, but at least the following time-table is consistent with known facts. Perry and Booth together thought

17. Ibid., 18 August 1900.
18. Twelve months is claimed in The Victory, September 1901, and reproduced in Ottman's biography op.cit., and again by Cato op.cit., p.119: 'Twelve months were consumed in preparing the drama for presentation'. Along with many other 'facts' given by Cato, his timing schedule as given below is widely inaccurate, and is based on the erroneous view that the films were coloured, whereas only the slides were coloured, and this could be accomplished locally: 'Pathe at that time specialized in hand colouring the first films. This was a long and laborious job, and allowing the time for travel, must add another seven or eight months to our dates. It takes us to the beginning of 1898 for the writing of the story, the planning of the sequences, the hundreds of experiments in 'effects' and camera angles for a great effort that had never been tried or even thought of before'.
19. See War Cry, 5 August 1899: Perry in Geraldton, W.A. Ibid., 19 August 1899: Booth in Kalgoorlie, W.A. Ibid., 9 September 1899: Dutton in Strathpine, Qld. Ibid., 16 September 1899: Perry to visit Mount Morgan on 5 October. By the end of October, Perry was in Brisbane, see ibid., 28 October 1899. Ibid., 9 December 1899: Perry returns to Melbourne for 9–10 December, and at Collingwood 23 December. Ibid., 30 December 1899: Perry at Newtown (N.S.W.) on
up the idea for a longer successor to the Passion films, late in
1899, and after the success of those films early in 1900, decided
to put their plans into practical operation. The script was
written by Booth with Perry's assistance, and because of Booth's
chronic ill-health and heavy administrative burdens, it is likely
that Perry had to devise and rehearse the necessary technical
effects, and see to the costume-making, set designing and casting
by himself. Filming probably commenced under Booth's supervision
in June or July 1900, and continued through until August when the
'lecture' was nearly completed.\(^{(20)}\) The slides and films com-
prising the 'lecture' were first shown on the evening of 13
September 1900 at the Melbourne Town Hall.

The main location for the film was 'Bellevue House', 1219
Dandenong Road, Chadstone, which ironically had been built as an
hotel at a reputed cost of £7,000-£8,000, and had been converted

6 January 1900: Perry at Newcastle 23 January, Liehradt 28-29
January. \textit{Ibid.}, 13 January 1900: Perry due at Toowoomba and Ipswich,
\textit{ibid.} by 11-12 February. But note that this Queensland tour was can-
celled, possibly because of his film, see \textit{ibid.}, 10 February 1900.
In conclusion, the maximum time Perry could have been working on
Soldiers of the Cross was for a few weeks during late 1899, a few
days over Christmas-New Year 1899-1900, in between busy engagements
projecting at night, and from February onwards when he appears to
have been relatively free.

\(^{(20)}\) \textit{War Cry}, 18 August 1900. In this first report of Soldiers of
the Cross, Booth in an interview, described in detail three of the
films that were to be included in his lecture and named eight others,
thus implying that most of the 'lecture' had been completed by then.
There were perhaps 15 films totalling 3,000ft. of film.
into a private home when the licence was denied the proprietors because of the close proximity of an existing hotel. In 1899 the Salvation Army leased this building for the relatively cheap rent of £80 p.a. and made it into one of its many Girls' Industrial Homes. The inmates supplied much of the labour force for the costume making and acting, while male cadets were brought from the Punt Road Men's Training Home especially for acting in the film. Despite a current myth, no professional actors were used in this first major production. All were volunteer Army personnel supervised by the authoritative Booth, or Perry and his technical assistants, Dutton, Gilmore, Cook and Holdaway.

There have been many amusing anecdotes told about the filming itself, and perhaps time lends colour to the memories of the surviving cast members, but many of these stories are worth reproducing as they summon up the excitement of that first Australian film 'set', seventy years ago in a Melbourne suburb. At the Girls' home a canvas backdrop representing the Colisseum flapped in the breeze from the tennis court fence, while on the court itself

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23. See Jack Cato, 'Melbourne Could Have Become a Second Hollywood', The Age, 22 September 1962. 'That it was no mere amateurish effort, but a 3,000ft. feature film; a moving drama. It was starred by professional actors and actresses, staged and costumed to the best standards of the theatre. It included great mob scenes and was photographed with the aid of 100 camera tricks, invented here for the first time and not used anywhere else for nearly ten years.'
Christians were 'devoured' by 'lions' or forced to jump into 'lime pits' if they would not renounce their religion. The Perry family appeared in the films and slides - the daughters as some of the distraught women on the edge of the pit - while the two eldest sons, Orrie and Reg. were the front and hind legs of a marauding lion. (24)

Another member of the original cast, Colonel Rixon, sixty years later recalled one amusing episode during the filming. In one of the shots, the 'Christians' were given the choice of acknowledging Jupiter or Venus, as their God, or dying in the lime-pit. As each one jumped a puff of smoke poured out. The patriarch who began the jump was Cadet J. P. Rive. Each actor jumped about four feet onto a mattress and timed it so that, whether man, woman or child, they knew in which direction to roll out of the way. The puffs of smoke were steam from a boiler and the tube was manipulated by a later Commissioner - Ben Orames - and Jack Brodie, a sweet Scottish tenor of the time. But the last person to jump was Brigadier Lily Burgess; she hesitated just a moment too long, and Herbert Booth called out sharply: 'Quick Burgess, Quick!' All she thought of was answering her leader's instructions and obeying them, so she snapped to attention and saluted; hence a tragic picture ended with the head of the good woman at the edge of the pit with her hand at her forehead. (25)

Colonel Rixon also recalled how as a lad he and a friend had been tied to a stake and 'burned'. The irony was it was a freezing cold day and they would not have minded if a real fire had been lit to warm them up. In another part of the film his father posed as 'Polycarp' and despite the fact that the smoke from the real fire at the Murrumbeena set nearly smoked him out, he managed to play the grim martyrdom out to the end. (26) It was Charles Rixon who went to the back entrance of the Theatre Royal to accept delivery of a full length tiger skin stretched over a bamboo frame; inside were rings that moved the lips and controlled its gruesome jaws and rolling eyes. (27) In the film, shots of a real tiger at Fitzgerald's circus were inter-cut with this imitation controlled by the Perry boys, so that the overall effect was one of intense realism.

Rixon also said:

The drownings in the Tiber of Christians encased in sacks laden with stones thrown there by the rabble in the streets, provided one of the most thrilling pictures, and people fainted everywhere as the sack containing Officer Gault was thrown into the Richmond Baths most realistically... I was never a star, but I was in many of the pictures. I 'froze' on the ice with Ernest Newby and William Creed. I was one of those heroic soldiers who died rather than recant, and when laid on the funeral pyre showed signs of life when the priest came rushing to them to offer incense. The mother who rushed to me on this occasion was the late Mrs Colonel Sutor, then Major Henley. In the Martyrdom of Stephen, Cadet J. Annetts

26. \textit{Ibid.}
27. \textit{Ibid.}
took the place of that first martyr. And it is beautiful to think that the lad who was photographed as he was 'put to death', has been a praying man all these years, and at 80 years of age is displaying all those qualities that were so energetically evident in his cadet days. (28)

Another actor, Mr. John Wright recalled in 1963, how he had been taken from the Punt Road Training Home to Murrumbeena in February-May 1901, to perform in some additional scenes of massacre and martyrdom that were not directed by Perry but by Brigadier Gilmore, with Captain Cook as cameraman. Mr Wright and his friend Collins played as both soldiers and Christians in the massacre scene. As martyred Christians their role was to lie in heaps, with individuals raising an arm or leg in death throes, and finally expiring with groans. In one part of the massacre scene he was a Roman soldier and with upraised sword chased a Christian across a bridge. When he fell in the water the Christian escaped. The girl he pursued was Lassie Captain Mitchell from some Melbourne Corps. On the other side of the bridge in Christian's rags was Captain Bishop. He, who had been hiding in the bushes, stepped out and pointed 'thataway' to the girl for her escape route. These scenes were made on the outskirts of the estate in a wooded area, for the reason that the Christians were hiding out in the wilderness to escape the pursuing Romans. Unlike many other scenes, here natural backgrounds were used. (29)

Naturally, the complex and sophisticated effects that Perry

28. Ibid.
29. Letter from J. S. Readdy to H. White, op.cit.
had to improvise for the actual production of the slides and films needed to be supplemented by an even greater laboratory back-up.

To process at least three thousand feet of film and over two hundred slides was a gigantic task in itself and would have occupied many hours of painstaking work, especially as the slides were all hand coloured. According to the late Colonel Haworth who worked in the Limelight Department at the Melbourne Headquarters from January to August 1900, filming usually took place on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday at the Murrumbeena Home, and then they began to develop the exposed film from Thursday through until Friday night. (30) Besides the written lecture which Booth had to refine, there was also the need for musical accompaniment. In the reviews it is stated that various musical selections were given from the masses of Mozart and other composers. The National Library possesses some sheets of music entitled 'Soldiers of the Cross' which was composed by Robert McAnally, a brilliant young musician in the Salvation Army band. His music has been claimed as 'the first specially written film music'. (31)

30. See interview with Colonel Haworth (now deceased) in unused film taken for The Pictures That Moved, op.cit.
31. The music is held by the Film Collection, National Library, Canberra, and was donated by the composer (now deceased) who said that it was music for 'Soldiers of the Cross', and this title is written in pencil on the cover, while many of the musical episodes fit the descriptions we have of the slides and films. However, the present writer has his doubts since as far as can be ascertained, McAnally would only have been 17 years old at the time of the lecture, and although he was known as a brilliant musician, it is perhaps more likely that this was the music for Heroes of the Cross made in 1909.

Scene one opened at the Kelly homestead with Mrs. Kelly at home. (1) The troopers arrive soon afterwards, and in the altercation that follows Mrs. Kelly is roughly handled and the trooper offers to let Dan go if Kate gives him a kiss. Ned comes to Kate's assistance and shoots the trooper in the wrist, before making his escape. The second scene reveals the police camp in the Wombat ranges. When some of the troopers leave, the remainder are ambushed by the gang. Kennedy and Scanlon return and are shot down before they can take proper cover while Ned remarks; 'If we had not shot them, they would have shot us. We had to do it'. Constable MacIntyre escapes on a bolting horse as it rushes by, and the Government soon proclaims a reward of 3,000 for the apprehension of the bushrangers.

Scene three shows the hold-up at Younghusband's station where Ned instructs Steve Hart to go through the pockets of the assembled men, but to leave the ladies unmolested, as Ned jocularly remarks; 'We do not rob ladies or children'. A hawker arrives and the gang dress themselves in new clothes and steal cigars. Disguised in borrowed clothes the gang departs to stick up the Eureka bank. Ned poses as a customer and the clerks let him in after three o'clock. He takes a good haul of gold and notes and the gang returns to Younghusbands. In the fourth scene, Kate Kelly, acting as a 'Bush telegraph', takes food to the gang while Mrs Skillian leads the police on a wild goose chase. Mrs Byrne tells Kate that she has

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1. The version of the story given here is a precis taken from the printed synopsis.
seen Aaron Sherrit with the police, and the gang later call the traitor to his door and shoot him in cold blood. The police inside the house become panic-stricken and two of them get under the bed while the others keep Mrs Sherritt in the room as hostage. As the synopsis said: 'This is the only blot on the police.'

Scene five depicted the events at the Glenrowan Inn after the gang had supervised the tearing up of the rails by some platelayers. At the inn, Schoolmaster Curnow wins the confidence of the gang and manages to escape. He hastens out to warn the train of the sabotage and guides the troopers back to the hotel, which they quickly surround. Shots are exchanged and the police decide to set fire to the hotel. Father Gibney braves the flames to rescue a wounded plate-layer. Mrs Jones' little boy is shot down by a stray bullet and Joe Byrne is killed as he stands at the bar. Dan Kelly and Steve Hart, realizing that they have no chance of escape, decide to die by each other's hands.

In the closing scenes, Ned Kelly, who had successfully made his escape in the night, tries to rejoin his mates at daybreak but he is heavily weighed down with armour and cannot handle his gun properly.

He is seen approaching from the bush, and the troopers fire shot after shot at the tall, silent figure, but the shots seem to take no effect, except to cause him to stagger. Ned Kelly at Bay! He fights hard for his life, but the police find his vulnerable spot and fire into his legs. They bring him down at last and he is captured. Ned begs the troopers to spare his life. Thus falls the last of the Kelly Gang and with the Fall of Ned Kelly, the last of the bush-rangers.

2. From the synopsis, op.cit.
APPENDIX 3

EXHIBITION - COMPETITION OR COLLUSION

In the early years, the different showmen often exhibited the same films on a Saturday night. In 1908, for example, the Bulletin complained about West and Spencer showing the same films and implied that they had an agreement to swap their programmes. (1) This apparent collusion was more likely the result of a shortage of films and consequently a lack of choice. At this time, West and Spencer had to take the films offered by the few overseas producers, and since their weekly programmes had to be filled there were times when each had to take films that they knew their rival was showing. In July 1909, details of a 'Theatrical Manager's Association' were released in the press. (2) By 1911, this 'association', which included J. C. Williamson, Clarke & Meynell, and other theatrical businesses, had eliminated costly competition in London over the purchase of the rights to certain plays.

This meant that a monopsony was created – a single buyer for a large variety of goods – and the rights for a certain play were only bought by one of the companies thus eliminating cut-throat competition. (3) The film exhibitors, many of whom were closely bound up socially with the theatrical business, looked intently on and noted the advantages of only one buyer for the whole of Australia. Meanwhile, the competition continued between West, Spencer, the Taits and J.D. Williams each helping to bid up the prices of films in London and New York. (4) It was to be only a matter of time before they too appreciated the benefits of collusion, so that only one copy of a film was bought for the whole of Australia by a central agency of some sort. Other pressures also made this centripetal move likely. Costs like cinema administration, advertising staffing and so on could all be better handled by a central office. The employers would also be stronger if one united association faced the growing industrial strength of such unions as the Musicians and the Biograph operators. (5)

There was also the response to foreign conditions. In America especially, the trend was plainly towards amalgamation in the film business. In March 1911, the Bulletin complained bitterly about

4. Ibid., 21 October 1909.
5. Ibid., 15 June 1911. Photoplay, 13 April 1912. Musician, 18 September 1913.
what it called the 'Trail of Foreign Combine' beginning to affect
Australian picture shows with a dreadful sameness of films. (6)
The Australian film magnates could not help noting the American
trend, the reasons for it, and the necessity for a similar
development in Australia if they were to survive. The first overtures
for combination were apparently made in 1910, but according to his
own testimony they were defeated by J.D. Williams. (7)

Amalgamation and rationalization of the Australian film
industry commenced when Johnson & Gibson merged with J. & N. Tait
to form the Amalgamated Pictures Company on 4 March 1911, with
interests in film producing and cinemas. Then Spencer Cozens trading
as Spencer's Pictures was bought out for a sum in excess of 45,000
plus 55,000 1 shares in a new company. This agreement was signed
on 18 September 1911, and the new company duly incorporated as
Spencer's Pictures Ltd. This move made the way clear for the
consolidation of West's Pictures (which had already absorbed Pathe
Freres), Amalgamated Pictures and Spencer's Pictures into a giant
production, distribution and exhibition network, incorporated as the

6. *Bulletin*, 23 March 1911, also 3 July 1913; a combine in
   New Zealand — 'like that of all other countries'.
General Film Company of Australasia Ltd. on 19 November 1912.\(^8\)

According to the account in the *Argus*, each company was to retain its individuality but merely agree to share administration, advertising and other overheads, and not compete with each other when buying films overseas.\(^9\) J.D. Williams at first held aloof and denied that this was a ploy for a better offer, but on 6 January 1913 agreement was reached between the General Film Company and the Greater J.D. Williams Amusement Company Ltd. to form two new companies.\(^10\) One of these, known as Australasian Films Ltd. gathered together the production and distribution functions of all the companies, while the second, the Union Theatres Company Ltd., controlled all the theatres. Small exhibitors were indignant about the increased hire charges and decreased film choice that inevitably followed, but in the absence of anti-trust laws nothing was done about

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10. See J.D. Williams protests of innocence, and cartoons satirizing the 'combine' in the trade journal he dominated, *Photoplay*, 27 April 1912; 25 May 1912; 8 June 1912; 20 July 1912; 10 August 1912, 14 December 1912. Despite these protests he was helped by the other exhibitors when his film exchange caught fire early in January 1913, and he softened his line when he thanked them in the same issue of 4 January 1913. Five days later he had joined them, see *Argus*, 8 January 1913.
the cartel. (11) These two companies, at times competing and at other times co-operating with Hoyts theatres, were to dominate the Australian film industry throughout the twenties, and after come reconstruction due to the Depression of 1931 emerged into the sound film period as Cinesound and Union Theatres.

11. Bulletin, 16 January 1913. Argus, 17 March 1913. Australasian, 22 March 1913, when there was a proposed appeal to the Attorney-General by the smaller exhibitors that apparently came to nothing.
GOVERNMENT INTEREST IN THE FILM INDUSTRY: 1908-1913.

Government interest in the film industry was at first slight and equivocal; in some respects it hastened and ordered development, while in others it hindered. Given the paternalism of Australian governments during this period, it was perhaps inevitable that sooner or later the State would take an active and growing interest in such a new and powerful medium of entertainment and communication that was attracting so many of its citizens and which appeared to be making so much money. Almost simultaneously, all three levels of government; local, state and federal, became involved in all three phases of the industry; production, distribution and exhibition. Local and state governments were mainly interested the field of exhibition; with regard to fires, Sunday shows, conditions of theatres, and to an increasing extent, censorship; while the Commonwealth government impinged upon the distribution of films because of its customs duties, and upon exhibition because of its entertainment tax. The federal government was also to become the major censoring body during the 1920's. Yet the Commonwealth government and some of the state governments were also not slow in appreciating the propaganda power of films and they became positive sponsors of many local documentaries, besides establishing their own cinematic departments. The huge film-making complex known today as the Commonwealth Film Unit at Lindfield (N.S.W.) had its origins in this period.

1. MUNICIPAL AND STATE GOVERNMENT ACTION

While police had been called to clear the aisles of even the
first film shows given in Australia by Carl Hertz back in 1896, serious action by local governments was not taken against cinemas until after 1908. They first became concerned over picture shows because of their real and potential fire hazard, and from 1908 until 1913 under the influence of strong community pressure, various regulations and acts were passed by municipal and state governments to make cinemas safer. (1) These regulations culminated in the various 'Theatres and Public Halls Acts' that were in operation in most states by 1913, and facilitated both the inspection of the cinemas for health purposes and supervision of the films shown for censorship purposes. (2)

One of the most controversial actions that many local governments chose to take was the closure of cinemas on Sundays. In November 1910, the Melbourne police prevented government buildings leased to a picture proprietor being used for Sunday films, and in February 1911, Sunday film shows were prohibited in licensed theatres in Adelaide. (3) In May 1911, a N.S.W. act was also passed prohibiting such shows unless they were of a religious or quasi-religious nature, and the collection had to be taken up after the show. (4) The Argus thought this quite reasonable, but the Sydney picture proprietors petitioned the government repeatedly about the damage caused their theatres by 'larrikins' and 'rowdies' who refused

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3. Argus, 7 November 1910; 22 February 1911.
to pay after the show. (5) By June of that year, Geelong churches were successfully protesting about a Geelong City Council annexe being used for this purpose; and the following February 1912, Sunday boxing and film shows were prohibited in Brunswick. (6) During 1912 and 1913, the battle between the lovers of a 'continental Sunday' and the 'wowsers' reached fever heat with meetings in Brunswick, Williamstown, Richmond and St. Kilda. (7) At a sitting of the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Cotter remarked during the discussion that the Government seemed to have been caught on the crest of a 'wouser wave'. (8) In nearly all cases Sunday shows were closed down, despite the protests of workers and the cinema owners. (9) By that time many of the small, temporary suburban tent shows in Sydney and Melbourne had disappeared, and had been replaced by more permanent structures that were slowly being brought under the operation of the various 'Theatre and Public Halls' acts. (10) From 1911 onwards it became one of the regular duties of the Sydney Metropolitan Licensing Inspector to inspect cinemas regularly to keep aisles clear and maintain health standards. (11) Soon he was to have what he regarded as the onerous duty of supervising what films were shown. The Victorian Department of Health in August 1912 even interested itself in the

4. Ibid., 30 May 1911.
5. Ibid., 1 June 1911.
6. Ibid., 7 June 1911; 2 February 1912.
7. Ibid., 1 April 1912; 3 April 1912; 2 May 1912; 21 November 1912; 23 April 1913; 10 October 1913.
8. Photoplay, 4 January 1913.
phenomenon of 'theatre packers' who were employed in many of the cinemas where seats were not numbered. (12) Taken altogether, these actions led to cleaner, safer, more comfortable cinemas, but it was to be nearly half a century before adult Victorians could enjoy Sunday film shows.

2. FILM CENSORSHIP.

At first there was no need for censorship since most films from 1896-1906 were short novelty or realistic films of an innocuous nature. While it is difficult to establish exactly when film censorship began in Australia, it is clear that from 1907-1913 there was increasing interest being taken of the new entertainment by certain sections of the community and the authorities at both a state and federal level. From 1907 onwards as films became longer and more concerned with telling melodramatic stories, those members of the public concerned with 'public morals' soon protested to the government about the possible injurious effect of such films on young or impressionable minds. The police in N.S.W. and Victoria were also independently concerned with the poor image of the law enforcement officers in the numerous bushranging films made after The Story of the Kelly Gang (1906). A combination of these factors led to the banning of certain films in N.S.W. and Victoria at least as early as 1909, and from then onwards, especially in the former state, an informal, inefficient form of censorship evolved that was largely

under the control of the Police Licensing Inspector, responsible to
the N.S.W. Chief Secretary. During World War One, a strict federal
censorship for military purposes was instigated, culminating in the
regulations establishing a permanent Commonwealth Film Censorship
in March 1917. Thereafter, a dual system of censorship was in opera-
tion - both state and federal - and anomalies arose which caused
hardship to the distributors and exhibitors of films. As early as
1920, Australian film censorship in its various forms, was recognised
as one of the strictest in the world, a reputation that has endured
until today.(13)

It has already been mentioned earlier how a film of Queen
Victoria's coffin slipping from the carriage was censored by author-
ities in England or Australia in 1901, and how in 1903, proprietors
of the peep-show kinetoscopes showing films in Melbourne had been
prosecuted for indecency.(14) Most of the early film-makers, like
Charles Urban in London, censored their own films, and in 1906 he
destroyed many unsuitable films of bull fights, Chicago slaughter
yards and executions of Manchurian bandits at Mukden.(15) Spencer,
of course had his problems with the religious management of the
Lyceum from 1906 onwards, which continually objected to films of
horse-races, poorly-clad girls, and scenes of general debauchery.

The Story of the Kelly Gang was prohibited by the Victorian Chief

secretary in Northern Victoria where the gang had once roamed, and there were many instances of self-censorship like the following, published in the Bulletin in 1907:

A cinematograph man tells how Pa Corrick borrowed his machine to try some pictures he'd just received from foreign parts. Ma Corrick and all the young Corricks were present, and son Leonard worked the machine. The first picture came from Paris and wouldn't have suited a chapel audience. Pa watched grimly while Leonard turned. Ma looked horrified at the girls. Then, as something happened on the screen, Pa hurriedly exclaimed: 'Girls, Girls, turn your heads away; Leonard, shut your eyes, my boy, and turn as quickly as possible and get the thing over.'

Reg. Perry can recall being told to place his Salvation Army hat over the lens of the projector during certain unsuitable scenes at Salvation Army screenings, and on one occasion he was 'carpeted' before his chief for showing a boxing film.

In July 1910, a deputation from the Launceston Council of Churches, consisting of the Revs. S. Baker, J. L. Cope, A. P. Bladen, Major McKenzie and Mr. G. T. McKinlay, waited on the Mayor and asked him to use his influence to prevent the exhibition of the moving pictures of the Johnson-Jeffries fight at Reno. They were distressed at the possible effect on Tasmanian youth from watching such violent films, especially as the winner had been a negro:

The Mayor, in reply, assured the deputation of his abhorrence of the brutal display of strength that had been made by the two participants in the fight, the result of which had been magnified by some people into the supremacy of the black race. He was quite in sympathy with the movement to prevent the exhibition of the pictures. They were of no educational value and could not advance the community.

However, when he wrote to the government in Hobart he was told that the government had no power to prohibit the pictures, and that no action was contemplated against the promoters. A similar situation over the same film prevailed in Adelaide in February 1911. (19)

In 1911 and 1912 the complaints from the 'wowsers' grew more hysterical and became intermingled with their campaign against Sunday film shows. In April 1911, the A.N.A. passed a resolution in Victoria calling for the appointment of a censor of moving pictures, and in Sydney the Minister for Education, a Mr G. S. Beeby was quoted as saying that the picture show, instead of being an educational influence as was originally expected had become a serious menace necessitating legislative action. (20) The number of children before the courts as a result of being unnaturally stimulated by romantic thieves in pictures, was increasing, and everywhere lax parental control was blamed as children were stealing money to go to the pictures, and failing in their studies because of the over-stimulation of their imagination through watching films. (21) The acting Chief Secretary of N.S.W., Mr Flowers became concerned over

18. Tasmanian State Archives, PD 1/228.; from an unidentified newspaper cutting in the file. See also letter from the Launceston Mayor to the Tasmanian Premier, 19 July 1910, in same file.
21. See, Argus, 23 November 1911, and Bulletin, 30 November 1911: about two boys burning down a shack under the influence of films, and Mr Flower's reaction. Argus, 19 February 1912; Dr. Duhig, Roman Catholic Bishop of Rockhampton attacks moving pictures, and in a leader of 22 February 1912, the Argus told him to mind his own business. Ibid., 25 April 1912; 26 April 1912; and 27 April 1912, Police furnish reports to magistrates on juvenile crime and the connection with pictures, while the Argus again says it is the parent's responsibility.
the exhibition of pernicious and improper films in May 1911, and the
Bulletin spoke of a new phenomenon; 'Flowerism' instead of 'wowserism'.
His concern was shared by Brisbane Home Secretary, Mr Appel, who in
June of that year said bushranging films which romantically incited
youth to a life of crime should be censored. Petitions from
various women's organizations like the National Council of Women,
the Society of Professional Women's Workers and the Mother's Union,
continued to inundate the desks of various government officials in
many of the eastern states, and by the end of 1911, Police in Queens-
land, N.S.W., Victoria and Tasmania were freely censoring films
shown in their states.

As an example of how the first Australian film censorship oper-
ated within the states, it is interesting to take the case of N.S.W.
which was one of the earliest to take such action since Sydney was
the entrepot port for most of the foreign films imported and shown
in Australia. In 1908 it had become clear that the advent of the
new cinemas had rendered parts of the old Theatres and Public Halls
Act of 1896 obsolete, and new regulations were framed and the
Theatres and Public Halls Act of 1908 was passed, taking full effect

22. Bulletin, 22 June 1911. Note that writers to the Bulletin often
complained about the unfairness of the 'wowserism' in calling for the
banning of local bushranging films while foreign films of 'gore and
crime' were allowed to be shown, see ibid., 13 April 1911.
23. Argus, 16 June 1911.
24. See ibid., 29 June 1911; 15 May 1912; when the Presbyterians were
preparing a report criticizing the pernicious effect of pictures which
were creating 'a new set of values'. For police action in Queensland,
see Bulletin, 7 September 1911, and in N.S.W., ibid., 21 November 1912.
from 1 August 1909. (25) This proclamation affected 802 theatres and halls, and permitted the Minister (the Chief Secretary) to censor cinematograph films as he saw fit, according to Section 27:

The Minister, whenever he is of opinion that it is fitting for the preservation of good manners and decorum, so to do, may, notwithstanding the terms of any licence under this Act, by writing under his hand, prohibit, or regulate the holding of any public entertainment. (26)

The usual method at first was for showmen to submit synopses of films they wished to show in the city of Sydney to the licensing inspector of the Police force. At first these synopses were only for films to be shown in the first-release houses, since it was thought that most films had a first screening in Sydney or its suburbs, and if they were passed could then be shown throughout the state. So the first censor was a policeman, without special training or competence for his job, who added the censoring of written synopses and films to his already over-loaded allotment of work inspecting food and drug manufacturers and seeing that theatre aisles were kept free in case of fire. If the licensing inspector found something in the written synopsis that smacked of the objectionable, he would tell the Chief Secretary; an appointment to see the film would be made with the relevant showman, and if, on viewing, the film turned out to be objectionable, the objectionable material would

26. See for instance the banning of Longford's Woman Suffers (1918) film, when this section was cited: Letter from Under Secretary to Mr. A. H. Townsend, Commonwealth Film Censorship, 29 October 1918. N.S.W. State Archives, 18.46762.
often be cut out by the obliging showman there and then and handed to the police inspector. (27) If, however, the film was considered objectionable in its entirety (this must have been a weighty decision for such untrained men without a literary or artistic background), then the film could be totally prohibited, and the showman was notified accordingly.

Prohibition of a film, then as now, was an expensive business for the showman, many of whom imported their own films from overseas and had a lot of capital tied up in multiple copies. So this explains why they were so obliging to the authorities in cutting offensive material out, and why there were so few protests about the 'artistic rape' which was being perpetrated. It also explains why quite a few tried to show banned films in the back corners of N.S.W. under a different title to avoid discovery. However, the officers of the Chief Secretary's Department and the police very soon caught on to this trick, and from about 1910 on, full descriptions of banned films would be printed in the Police Gazette including the offensive portions in lurid detail, and copies would be sent throughout the state. (28) In this way, each country policeman added to his already considerable duties the task of supervising the film entertainment of his local population. He had become something like a Nigerian District Officer with a great deal to do in many different.

27. N.S.W. State Archives, Letter to Secretary, Premier's Department, by Inspector Fullerton, reporting on procedure followed in State Censorship, 18.45341.
28. Ibid. See also letter to Chief Secretary's Department from Inspector Kendall, 23 October 1914, N.S.W. State Archives, 14.49761.
spheres beside security, one of which was the protection of the morals of his flock. If nothing else, at least the synopses could be relied upon to relieve the boredom of outback policemen each time the Police Gazette arrived at the local station. Even if many policemen never had the unpleasant (or pleasant?) task of finding and proscribing such concealed films; they had the synopses of the films and could let their imagination run on about the perfidies of film producers.

The subjects depicted on cinematograph films that were objected to by the N.S.W. Chief Secretary's Department were as follows:

(a) Scenes suggestive of immorality or indecency.
(b) Executions, murders, or other revolting scenes.
(c) Scenes of debauchery, low habits of life, or other scenes such as would have a demoralizing effect on young persons.
(d) Successful crime, such as bushranging, robberies, or other acts of lawlessness, which might reasonably be considered as having an injurious influence on youthful minds.

(29)

In the first few years of its operation, the 1908 Act mainly controlled health and safety standards in theatres, and it is not until 1912 that what appears to have been the first film prohibition took place, although before that date it is likely that 'objectionable' films were passed by the Licensing Inspector after certain 'on the spot' cuts. (30) The Robbery at Old Burnside Bank was banned by a letter from the Minister on 26 July 1912 for 'inciting to crime'. (31)

The Road to Ruin was also totally banned in the same year, and

29. Letter from Kendéll, op.cit.
30. Letter from Fullerton, op.cit.
31. N.S.W. State Archives, 12/42936.
thereafter the tempo increases with several Australian films being banned in 1913 (Thunderbolt, the Kelly Gang and Ben Hall; all were bushranging sagas) together with foreign films like The Blackmailer and The Gambler's Honor. (32) In 1914, Dying of Hunger was destroyed in the presence of Mr Fullerton, the Licensing Inspector, and exception was taken to The Vampire, and to certain films showing battle scenes like War's Grim Reality. (33) In the same year a Gaumont film King of the Seven Dials, showing scenes of the American underworld, and a man stealing a handbag out of an open car, was also banned. (34) From 1 August 1909 to 3 September 1913, 25 films were prohibited by the Minister under Section 27 of the Act. (35)

But this ad hoc system could not continue. For one thing, the licensing inspector protested about his growing duties as a film censor as the influx of films increased to a flood in 1912-1913. There were just too many film synopses to be read, just too many doubtful films to be seen. There were also loop-holes and leakages. Since not every film was actually scrutinized, distributors soon woke up to the ploy of euphemistically phrasing their hottest synopses so that they seemed harmless enough. It was left to the vigilantes of the community - the various Church and public morals committees - to pick up any such slips with their ever-watchful eye. But these same organizations were also protesting about 'lax censor-

32. Ibid., 12/42948. 13/44433, 16/46888, 16/46902.
33. Ibid., 14/49722. 14/49723. 14/49755.
34. Ibid., 14/49755.
35. Ibid., 14/44432, letter from Under Secretary to Mayor of Sydney, 3 September 1913.
ship', and they started to press for the establishment of a special scrutinizing body of officials. No less would satisfy them. Their appeal did not fall on deaf ears because the Chief Secretary was also becoming increasingly disturbed about the administration of the regulations of the Act which was being effected by a police officer with delegated powers. Really he had no such power, and there were already murmurs of discontent from the distributors and exhibitors who wanted to know exactly where they stood. (36)

The war saved the situation. Although much had been accomplished by 1913, and in fact one could see that film censorship in an official, institutionalized form was coming in Australia as early as 1913, the onset of World War One gave the Federal government its pretext for the introduction of an extremely rigorous censorship (on all media) under the guise of military necessity and security. (37)

The creation of this military censorship prompted the formation of an Official Board of Censors in N.S.W. to deal with objectionable cinematograph films. This board comprising the Chief Secretary

36. Photoplay, 20 July 1912; 23 November 1912.
37. Statutory Rules, 1916 no 148, War Precautions Regulations 1916. Regulation 28 d is amended to read as follows:
28d. (1) The Chief of the General Staff or the Deputy Chief Censor or any person whom the Chief of the General Staff or the Deputy Chief Censor may authorize...may by order in writing require the owner, lessee, or person apparently in charge of any cinematograph film to submit before publication to any person named in the order, by showing the same on a proper screen, any film which relates or refers to the present war or to any subject connected therewith or arising therefrom or which depicts anything in the nature of a cartoon or otherwise that might be considered offensive to the subjects of any allied or neutral country or which relates or refers to any of the subjects mentioned in Regulation 19. See also Statutory Rules, 1917, no 178; 1918, nos 128 and 226; 1919, nos 137, 151, 171, 205 and 238.
(George Fuller) as Chairman, the Minister for Education, the Under Secretary, the Director-General of Public Health and the Inspector-General of Police was gazetted on 15 December 1916, and it first met on 20 December 1916, when the new board banned *Twilight Sleep*. (38)

As was to be the procedure with later films, *Twilight Sleep* had been referred to the Board for final decision by the Licensing Inspector, after consultation with officials from the Chief Secretary's Department. While it was agreed that their reasons for banning the film (which had already been screened continuously at the Lyceum for several days) should not be disclosed, the Board did record its reasons as follows:

1. The exhibition of the film would be an offence against good manners and decorum.
2. The film is considered to be a misrepresentation of 'Twilight Sleep' and may induce women to insist on 'Twilight Sleep' in cases where it is unnecessary or even injurious to the mother or child. (39)

In making this decision, the Board was guided by the advice of the President of the N.S.W. Branch of the British Medical Association, which in a letter of 18 December 1916 said that the film was objectionable on the following grounds:

1. An exaggerated representation of the sufferings of women during normal child-birth is calculated to lead to a further reduction of the birth-rate.
2. The method popularly known as 'Twilight Sleep' consists in the injection of two powerful drugs, namely morphine and scopolamine. Experienced obstetricians are agreed that these drugs should not be used in every case, and when used, should be given with extreme care on account

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39. Ibid.
of the undoubted danger of the action of morphine on the unborn infant.

3. The advertisement of any special method of treatment to the general public can serve no useful purpose if the determination of its employment is left to the members of the medical profession. The effect of the exhibition of a film of the nature of that advertised on girls and young women must be to stimulate morbid curiosity and possibly to awaken a false hope that the parturient act can be accomplished with safety in the absence of all pain.  

Films concerning birth and birth control such as abortion were to be an especial target of the N.S.W. censors, such as Where are my Children?. So too, were films of venereal disease; Remorse, Damaged Goods and The End of the Road. Other subjects included incitement to crime as in the Australian bushranging films, showing the Chinese community in a bad light (the local film Satan in Sydney was, however, passed by the Board after its exhibition had been temporarily halted by the police), and films of prostitution like Smashing the Vice Trust.

On 1 March 1917, the Commonwealth established its own federal censorship in Melbourne, and from that date onwards all imported films had to be submitted for approval before they could be released from custom bond. The N.S.W. Censor Board breathed a sigh of relief and went into 'suspended animation' believing that its job would be taken over by the Commonwealth. This was not to be the case, however, for the State authorities soon realized that they had different standards from the Federal censors. As the Minutes of the Film Censor Board stated the problem:

40. Ibid., 16/46845.
The creation of the Commonwealth Censorship has not, however, entirely removed the need for the State Board, as there still remains the necessity for censorship in regard to (a) the spoken play, (b) the locally manufactured film, and (c) the imported film which may be admitted by the Commonwealth Board, but for some reason may be barred by the State Board. As an example of the latter, the film 'Vanity' may be mentioned. This film was released from Bond by the Customs Authorities in Sydney. In other words it was not viewed by the Federal Board, but was permitted to be screened in Sydney as the result of a favourable opinion of the Customs Officers here. The Members of the State Board were unanimous in condemning the film for the reason that the Chief of Police - the central figure - was represented as a scoundrel using his position in the Police Force as a cloak to carry out his nefarious practices. This picture was subsequently passed by the Federal Censor Board who have been asked by this Department for a copy of their report, but so far, although a reminder has been sent, the request has not been complied with. (41)

Thus, began the great bug-bear of Australian censorship; its lack of uniformity. Distributors and showmen were not slow to protest, both at the unwieldy nature of a dual censorship, and at the extra cost of sending films five hundred miles away to be censored in Melbourne. (42) Both the federal and the N.S.W. authorities tried to minimize the friction of the new system. At first the Federal Board of Censors consisting of Dr. J. Cumpston (Federal Director of Quarantine), Mr Archibald Strong (Melbourne University), and Sir Harry Rollaston (formerly Comptroller of Customs) had synopses of films sent to Melbourne for perusal and if any appeared objectionable, then the film had to be forwarded for viewing. (43) By April the system had changed, and synopses were no longer acceptable necessitating the despatch of all films to Melbourne for screening. After

42. Australian Variety & Show World, 23 February 1917; 11 April 1917.
43. Theatre Magazine, 1 March 1917.
severe hold-ups and numerous protests from showmen losing money over the system, it was decided to station two Federal censors in Sydney to act for the Melbourne Board. Accordingly by mid-April 1918, Mr. George Black, M.L.A. and Mr. J. Brown took up their onerous duties in Sydney. (44) From then on the Sydney based Commonwealth Censor was to make most of the decisions concerning imported films, although it was not until 1925 that Sydney's superiority over Melbourne in this direction was recognized.

To try and ease the problem of dual supervision, the N.S.W. authorities repeatedly approached the Commonwealth Censors for permission to have one of their representatives present at Commonwealth screenings so that the showmen could be informed before their film was released from bond, if exception was likely to be taken of their film in the State of N.S.W. (45) The Commonwealth consistently refused to co-operate in this manner, and throughout the-twenties there were to be continual protests as films passed by the Commonwealth were banned in states like South Australia, N.S.W. and Tasmania that had gone to the trouble of establishing their own local censors. (46) Victoria avoided the problem by placing its full trust in the Commonwealth, at least in the early period. (47)

44. Australian Variety & Show World, 19 April 1918.
45. N.S.W. State Archives, 18.45280. Report from Chief Secretary's Department dated 13 May 1918, entitled; State and Federal Censorship of Imported Cinematograph Films.
46. Tasmanian State Archives, Chief Secretary's Department files, CSO 22/240/157, 157/1/18 Picture Censorship Board; Provision to meet expenses. Appointment of Board etc.
47. N. M. Hunning, op.cit., p.291.
Before leaving this outline of the origins of Australian film censorship, it is interesting to examine the circumstances surrounding the censoring of locally-produced films in the period before 1920. (48) As has already been noted, the first Australian films to run into trouble with the censorship authorities were the bushranging films, like Thunderbolt and Moonlight, of 1911. The N.S.W. Police were almost paranoid in their refusal to allow bushranging sequences in films. The Queanbeyan police for instance, were certain that the film of The Squatter's Daughter (1910) by Bailey, which innocently included the same Ben Hall sequence that had been permitted in the stage play, was a ruse to slip in a bushranging sequence under the guise of another play. They protested to the Sydney Chief Secretary's office and an embarrassed official of that department had to advise the Minister that although Ben Hall and his Gang (another film altogether) had been banned, they could not consistently ban the film of The Squatter's Daughter after allowing it on the stage. (49) The film was accordingly allowed to be shown in N.S.W. Less fortunate was Robbery Under Arms, finally made in 1920 after repeated attempts to have the scenario approved by the Chief Secretary's Department. The script for this film was continually disapproved of by the Police who felt that the troopers depicted in the play were shown in a poor light. (50)

48. Mrs. I. Bertrand is at present writing a thorough account of Australian film censorship origins for an M.A. (1971), La Trobe University.
49. N.S.W. State Archives, 13/44430.
50. Ibid., 20/46215. 18/45262.
Later, as censorship became less primitive, more sophisticated plots would cause the censoring authorities to go into action. In August 1914, Sea Dogs of Australia was taken off the Sydney screens because of military fears that the enemy would learn something secret about H.M.A.S. Australia that appeared in the film. (51)

Alfred Rolfe ran into trouble while he was filming The Sunny South in 1915 because over zealous military officers thought he was an alien, and Franklyn Barrett with his Enemy Within (1918) and Raymond Longford and his Sentimental Bloke (1919) both had trouble using policemen in their films. (52) Longford submitted his script for perusal before shooting began, as was the accepted custom of the day, and was told that no objection would be raised to his film, except that if trouble did ensue from the two-up sequence he would be held responsible. (53) His earlier film Woman Suffers (1918) had already suffered from N.S.W. censorship when it was banned in that state, even though it had been shown quite freely in South Australia. (54)

Gavin submitted his scenarios for approval for both The Martyrdom of Nurse Cavall and The Murder of Captain Fryatt, and the second film was only barely passed after a full meeting of the Censor Board. (55)

The Monk and the Woman (1917) ran into severe boycotts from the Catholic Federation that repeatedly unsuccessfully petitioned the

51. Sydney Morning Herald, 5 February 1934.
53. N.S.W. State Archives, 18/46700.
54. Ibid., 20/46216.
55. Ibid., 17/45697.
Chief Secretary’s Department to have the film banned, but possibly because of contemporary anti-Catholic feeling, the Censor Board upheld the film’s original passing.\(^{(56)}\) The Life Story of John Lee was passed on condition that the execution scene at the end was eliminated, and Beaumont Smith’s Satan In Sydney was ensured of box-office success after it was finally passed by the Censor Board after a police officer had stopped its screening for a few days.\(^{(57)}\) In 1920, Barrett’s Breaking of the Drought had questions asked in the N.S.W. Parliament over the principle of whether or not local films were allowed to show Australia in a poor light. This film had shown mice eating wheat in the silos of a drought-stricken Northern N.S.W. area, but the whole message of the film was to show the courage and determination of the farmer and how Australia blossomed again after a severe drought. The repercussions led to a new regulation being framed that persisted for three decades prohibiting the export of an Australian film that ‘showed Australia in a poor light’.\(^{(58)}\) Such were the vagaries of local censorship, that Australian film-makers had to contend with on top of all their other problems.

3. **GOVERNMENT FILM PRODUCTION**

Almost at the same time that the Salvation Army ceased making Propaganda films, another institution – one of the newest and

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56. Ibid., 17/45789.
57. Ibid., 18/46763.
58. Ibid., 20/46234.
destined to be the largest - became interested in the promise which
films held for advertising Australia. In 1909 the Commonwealth
government entered into a contract with Pathe Freres (a French firm
which had established a laboratory in Melbourne with a staff of
operators and technicians) to produce a number of scenics and indus-
trial films in all states to promote Australia abroad. It was a
recognition by the Australian government of the propaganda power of
the new medium.

From 1903 the External Affairs Department had been receiving
letters from interested parties offering to advertise Australia by
means of lantern slides and cinematographe films, but no action was
taken until 1908-1909. (59) By then there was increasing government
interest in the relevance to the new media to Australia's problem
of communicating her existence and growth possibilities to the rest
of the world and to her own city-bound citizens. Captain Collins,

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59. Commonwealth Archives Office, Canberra. In every instance
correspondence was destroyed and references are to Registers of Cor-
respondence to External Affairs Department.
1903/5610. 28/9/03. From Commissioner, Salvation Army. Requesting
financial assistance towards the encouragement of immigration to Aust-
ralia by the Salvation Army. Further letters on same subject by Col-
onel D. Lamb, Salvation Army, London: 1907/6319.
1907/6218. 28/8/07. From J.P. Perry, Salvation Army; Melbourne. Re-
questing that the Salvation Army, Melbourne, be made the medium for
carrying into effect any scheme for advertising Commonwealth by Kine-
matographe art. Further correspondence on this matter continued
through 1908, and when Pathes were awarded the contract Brigadier J.
P.Perry protested - see 1909/281 - and even interviewed the Minister.
Other miscellaneous offers came from E.C.Tupper 7/1/04, 1904/160, and
1904/2345 offering to advertise Australia. Also 1907/7001, 16/7/07,
from Wm.Winson applying for employment as a lecturer to advertise
Australia. Also 1907/8004, from Sec.Australasian Cinematographe Co.
22/8/07, requesting a grant of 3,000 to assist in furthering their
scheme for Advertising Australia by means of cinematographe views.
Australia's representative in London, continually asked for slides and films to satisfy the English public's curiosity about Australia. There existed a definite need to make Australia known overseas - both to attract migrants and capital, and to sell our primary and secondary products. At first, the Commonwealth government did not make its own films, but followed the precedent set by the various States who already had ad hoc arrangements with private photographers to film scenes and events as required.

During 1909, Messrs. Sutto and Herrult, the two commissioned Pathe cameramen, travelled free across much of Australia recording many of her beauty spots and primary industries. The States vied with one another in their eagerness to be fairly represented on film. Altogether fifteen films were despatched to the Pathe head office in Paris to be developed and coloured in certain parts. The contract was a valuable one for the time at £2,200 but the results were regarded as unsatisfactory by Captain Collins in London.

60. See Leader, 20 April 1912 for photograph of the 'Commonwealth Biograph Car' which toured English counties with Australian films. 61. Commonwealth Archives Office. See A1910/784, 2/2/10 from Hon. J.M. Fowler (W.A. Premier) Infmg. much indignation expressed re P.F. pictures no one of which relates to W.A. 62. Ibid., see 1909/1114. Executive Council minute authorising expenditure of £2,200 to Pathe Freres advertising resources of the Commonwealth by cinematographe films, 27/1/1909. The unsatisfactory opinion given in 1909/9697, 23/7/09 and Pathe Freres refuse to take responsibility since they claim they were unduly hurried, see 1909/10232, 1/9/9.

The films were favourably received by the Melbourne critics, see Leader, 15 January 1910; Commonwealth moving pictures especially produced by Pathe Freres, sole rights held by West's. Melbourne and Its Surroundings and The Wool Industry. Ibid., 29 January 1910; 2nd. series at West's Picture Palace. Irrigation in Victoria, and Hydraulic Sluicing for Gold in Grahamstown, N.S.W. Ibid., 5 February 1910; 3rd.
As the Pathe contract had proved expensive and unsatisfactory submissions were made in 1910 within External Affairs concerning the desirability of employing a Government cinematographer. The following year this was approved as 'an experiment for one year' and a suitable advertisement appeared in the September gazette and selected newspapers. (63) Many of the thirty men who applied, for instance, Lacey Percival, Bert Cross, and Frank Hurley, later became famous directors and cameramen within the Australian film industry.

The successful applicant, A. J. Campbell, was a Victorian aged 43. He was married, 'of sound health and willing to travel'. His references from the Working Men's College, Kodak Ltd. and the Tourist Bureau, established his competence as an expert 'artistic' photographer and cinematographer, experienced in rural conditions. The 'first official government cinematographer' took up his duties on 6 December 1911 as a 'temporary employee' for the following twelve months. At the end of that period his appointment was extended for a further year. He unwisely felt that this was the right time to ask for a rise. This provoked some investigation from his superiors as to exactly what he had been doing and whether he deserved the extra remuneration. The result was a thorough check of his work, and it revealed inconsistencies and unorthodoxies that finally led to his

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63. Commonwealth Archives Office. Al. Item 13/14458. This file on 'The first official government cinematographer' is still extant, although Bert Ives' file seems to be missing, presumed destroyed. Ibid., Al. Item 13/14458.
dismissal in May 1913, and to a great deal of bitterness on his part.

While inefficiency was undoubtedly the main reason for Campbell's dismissal it is significant for the later development of Government film-making, that one of the charges brought against him concerned his 'tendency to strive after 'artistic' effects'. The same report went on to establish the department's accepted policy: 'the Department simply requires prints of useful advertising value of good technical quality, sharp and clear. To meet the demand of the High Commissioner's Office, for the present at any rate, 'artistic' quality must, to a large extent be sacrificed to quantity'. (64) Quality was sacrificed for quantity, and art for expedience, and these were the precedents that were laid for Government film-making in this country. On 15 June 1913, the Sydney Sun said: 'Two or three months ago, the Commonwealth Government decided to reconstitute a department of motion picture photography to advertise the Commonwealth abroad. A previous experiment in the same direction was unsuccessful for certain reasons.' (65) This was the only reference to Bert Ive's unhappy predecessor - the 'first official Government cinematographer' passed from view, but the policies he had clashed with remained.

Born in 1875, Bert Ive was 38 when he joined the Photography Branch of the External Affairs Department, and for the next 23 years as a 'temporary assistant' he was the mainstay of the Cinema Branch from which the present Commonwealth Film Unit has evolved. He was

64. Ibid., Al. Item 13/14458.
65. Sun, 15 June 1913.
undoubtedly a more competent man in his field than his predecessor for his technical ability is commented upon by all who remember him. His career began shortly after the turn of the century when he became a cinematograph operator in Queensland vaudeville-film shows. Despite his success, the life of a travelling cinema showman was not a secure one, and it was probably concern for his family which prompted his application for the position of 'official government cinematographer' when it was re-advertised in May 1913.(66)

During his long employment by the Commonwealth government, Bert Ive led a colourful life, and travelled almost incessantly. During the First World War, he filmed Launching of H.M.A.S. Brisbane, and other patriotic local events, and the Timber Industry in 1918 which was shown as a short with Longford's Sentimental Bloke. Ive also had such miscellaneous duties as photographing German internees in World War One, and advising the States about their cinema equipment. He was responsible for most of the excellent 'Know Your Own Country' series which were widely shown in Australia during the 1920's, and for the gazette 'Australia Day-by-Day' which was also shown overseas. The Cinema Branch continued to expand, but the policy concerning government films remained unchanged: political or social comment was forbidden, and originality frowned upon. Propaganda documentaries and straight industry studies were all that successive governments demanded of their cameramen.

66. I am indebted to Mr. Ivan Ive, son of Bert Ive, for information used here and taken from the family scrap-book of newspaper cuttings.
It was in film production, therefore, that the Federal Government first became directly involved with the Australian film industry. Before 1910 the film industry had largely been left to grow up in its own way, but during the Great War and later, State and Federal Governments increasingly became involved in the other facets - with distribution through the customs duties on imported film, and in exhibition by entertainment tax and film censorship. This government intervention increased during the 1920's to culminate in the Royal Commission into the Australian Motion Picture Industry in 1928 and the N.S.W. Quota Act of 1935.

* * * *
APPENDIX 5

THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME
Every effort was made for authenticity in the many Australian war films designed to spur recruiting. This is a scene from Australasian Films Ltd. production; Will They Never Come?

Source: Lone Hand, 1 October 1915.
Films like this one exploited Australian war hysteria over German atrocities. It was made shortly after the event, and was one of the first Australian films to be shown on Broadway, New York in 1916.

Source: Theatre Magazine, 1 January 1916.
SNOwy BAKER,
Leaping from one motor car to another after the spy in "The Enemy Within."
The Hayseeds Series

Beaumont Smith's Record Breaking Australian Comedy Photoplays.

The only Pictures of Their Kind in the World.

Showmen who have sown The Hayseeds Series have reaped a Harvest of Profit.

Series No. 1.

"OUR FRIENDS—THE HAYSEEDS"

4000 ft. Over 80 Sydney shows have booked it and more than 50 per cent have re-booked it. The Pavilion Theatre, Brisbane, last month showed an increase of 120 per cent on the corresponding weeks of 1916, 1915 and 1914. Releasing in Adelaide about October 1st in New Zealand at an early date.

Series No. 2.

"THE HAYSEEDS COME TO TOWN"

This sequel is everywhere classed "Better than the first." The reactions in Sydney are betting the Hayseeds No. 1 without exception. Releasing in Melbourne, and Brisbane about October 1st.

Series No. 3.

"THE HAYSEEDS BACK-BLOCKS SHOW"

This has just been completed. It's a real Australian. There have been better comedies than the Hayseeds pictures. Releasing in Sydney about October 1st.

Owned and Controlled by

BEAUMONT SMITH

SYDNEY BOOKING OFFICE:

Queen's Exchange, 129 Bathurst Street. H. Tiley, Manager.

BRISBANE BOOKING AGENTS:

Smith and Brook, 46 Queen Street.

The Hayseeds Series

PLATE 26

Beaumont Smith was one of the new directors to emerge during the post-World War One period and he made many successful Australian films during the 1920's and 1930's.

Source: Theatre Magazine, 1 June 1918.
Melodramatic gestures, but realistic interior settings were characteristic of many films made in Australia during the 1920's. Agnes Dobson is here shocked at a denouement in The Face at the Window (1919), a science-fiction thriller about a mad doctor and an evil murderer.

Source: Courtesy of Miss A. Dobson. National Library collection, Canberra.
Raymond Longford was to be the most important Australian silent film director of the 1920's.

Source: Picture Show, 1 November 1921.
PLATE 29
'The Temptation'
Raymond Longford's The Sentimental Bloke (1919) demonstrated to the world that Australia could make first-class films. Note Arthur Higgins' crisp photography.
Source: Courtesy of Mrs E. Longford.
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The Melbourne Cup (1896)

The Inauguration of the Commonwealth (1901)

Forgotten Cinema (1967)

The Pictures That Moved (1968).

II. MANUSCRIPT SOURCES

The Longford collection held by Mrs. E. Longford, Sydney.

The Barrett collection held by Miss Barrett, Sydney.

The S. S. Crick collection held by Mr. Wotton, Sydney.

The Percival collection held by Miss Percival, Sydney.

The Ive collection held by Mr. I. Ive, Sydney.

The Louise Lovely collection held by Mrs. Cowen, Hobart.

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