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THE HISTORY OF AN AUSTRALIAN FILM

PRODUCTION COMPANY: CINESOUND, 1932-1970

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July, 1972
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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]

[Name]
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the initial formulation of my thesis topic and in the collection of sources in a field where few were readily accessible, I owe a great deal to the encouragement and advice of Ross Cooper. Throughout, the staff of the Film Division of the National Library of Australia generously provided me with services, and I am especially grateful to the Archives Officer of the Film Division, Ray Edmondson, for assistance which often went far beyond the call of his duties.

Amongst those whom I approached for original source material, interviews, and advice, I am indebted to the constant, enthusiastic and thoughtful support of Ken G. Hall. In addition, Arthur Smith, John Warwick, Molly Raynor, Muriel Steinbeck, Stan Tolhurst and Jean Francis gave me much valuable time and assistance.

To fellow researchers I also owe much, especially Anthony Buckley, Chris Collier, Joan Long, Lindsay Wasson and Mervyn Wasson, all of whom provided me with generous access to the results of their research, and took a gratifying interest in the progress of this thesis.

My supervisors, Mrs Barbara Penny and Professor C.M.R. Williams, were most helpful with their comments on various drafts. I am also grateful to the Visual Aids Unit of the Australian National University for preparing the photographs, and to Dorothy Smith for the typing of the final text. Finally, Merrilyn Fitzpatrick provided me with constructive criticism and encouragement throughout the preparation of the thesis, and I am especially indebted to her.
INTRODUCTION

'Personally, I don't gamble ...'

- Ken G. Hall, producer-director of most Cinesound features, in the Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 13 July 1939.

This thesis originated in a desire to define and assess the problems which have prevented the development of a stable film industry in Australia. Although a film industry has existed in Australia for most of this century, and dozens of profitable feature films have been produced in the 1920s and 1930s, the industry has failed since the Second World War to support the production of full-length narrative films; instead the post-war years have seen a dependence on sponsored short films (such as travelogues and advertisements), instructional films and news reports. Such activity is capable of employing hundreds of technicians and of earning healthy profits, but while the industry may prosper with such work it has almost invariably failed financially whenever it has branched off into feature production.

The narrative feature film, especially before the advent of television, was the medium of mass entertainment which most powerfully formed popular fantasies and catered to them. Hollywood was often referred to as 'the dream factory' and its provision of easily accessible and desirable 'escape' from daily routines made it a powerful vehicle for cultural conditioning. In Australia cinema screens have for decades been dominated by American and British feature films and huge profits are made annually from the exploitation of the Australian market by British and American companies. That Australian film-makers should be able to participate with confidence and security in the film trade in their own country is one of the fundamental assumptions underlying this thesis.

Certain answers are conventionally given to explain why Australian feature production has failed since the war:
that Australia lacks technicians and artists of sufficient ability to make worthwhile films, that Australian theatres are dominated by British and American interests who have no sympathy for the local product, or that the local market is too small to support the heavy investment required for feature production. Attempts have been made in the past to overcome some of these problems. Producers like Reginald Goldsworthy in the late 1960s have attempted to ignore the difficulties of the local market and produced films directly for overseas markets. Others, like Chips Rafferty and Lee Robinson, became involved in co-production ventures with other countries and exploited the novelty which outback Australian settings held for audiences both overseas and in urban Australia.

Other film-makers have concentrated on agitation for government assistance, with varied results. Some government action has been specifically designed to benefit the producer: in 1935 the New South Wales Government attempted to compel theatres to show Australian films, but failed to enforce the legislation when the theatrical trade refused to co-operate. In 1971 The Australian Council for the Arts established a Film and Television Development Corporation to encourage the industry with financial grants and loans. The work of the Corporation is still in its infancy, but the first feature to receive assistance, Stockade (1971), failed to impress either the public or the critics; such a failure for a private company would normally mean its disappearance, and while a government corporation may now have the finance to help companies to survive such adversities, it cannot do so consistently without becoming a charity organisation. In the light of the Corporation's activity, a definition of the barriers which hamper the development of indigenous feature production becomes particularly relevant. However, until the recent growth of academic interest in the film industry and the preliminary work of the Corporation, no detailed examination of the industry had taken place since an enquiry by the New South Wales Government in 1934.
The film industry stands apart from other secondary production industries because of the marked element of emotional tension which pervades all of its phases of production and marketing. In part the industry owes its emotional stress to the publicity which is constantly applied to it: such publicity, deemed necessary for the ultimate sale of the film to the public, can turn individuals into public figures as well-known as any political, sporting or social leader. At the same time, the industry has come to accept a self-image which often parallels its public image: the glamour associated with film production, with 'film stars', an extravagant life-style, and a belief in the social importance of feature films, have in varying degrees affected feature film-makers in Australia as much as in Hollywood.

Beyond the ever-present pressure of publicity, the industry's sensitivity is intensified by the potential size of the financial rewards of production: other industries may operate on the basis that their profit may reach 20% or 50%, but seldom is the potential return calculated in terms of several hundred per cent which film producers may win if they are lucky.

Above all it is the elusiveness of the financial reward which strains the temper of the industry. Unlike a mechanical operation such as building, no amount of forward planning or deployment of capital can cover all contingencies in the highly complex industrial process of production and ensure that directors, writers, actors, photographers and others will provide work of the best quality. Unlike other industries, a film production is at its most vulnerable during the period of greatest capital expenditure: the actual shooting of the film in the studio or 'on location'. It is in this short space of a few weeks when the bulk of the money is spent and when many films are disrupted by the weather, staff problems, or technical break-downs, and are abandoned. Yet even if a film survives the production period, risk still remains, since
in Australia no guarantee exists that the film will reach the market under favourable conditions.

The process of marketing has three stages: the producer must first sell or lease his film to a 'distributor', a middle-man acting between producers and theatres; the distributor must then sub-let the film to 'exhibitors', the theatre managers, who in turn must sell the film to the paying public. In the first phase of finding a distributor, the Australian producer is at a disadvantage; most distributors since the war are agencies of British or American production companies which have no interest in encouraging competition from Australian producers. If a producer can succeed in persuading a distributor to handle his film, he has no guarantee that the distributor will promote the film as actively as he will promote his own product from overseas. The producer can try to sell his film direct to exhibitors, or to hire theatres and screen the film himself, but the difficulties of such independence are great: audiences are often reluctant to go to unusual theatres to see films; in New South Wales, public hall regulations prohibit such screenings for profit; and saturation of the market can only be achieved through established theatre chains which deal only with established distributors. On the other hand if initial hurdles are overcome, many advantages are offered by distributors, such as organised publicity outlets and inclusion in 'packages' of programmes offered to exhibitors.

Even when the film reaches the theatres, it may fail because the public is disinterested. The basic problem that a producer faces even before he starts to shoot his film is to predict what public tastes and fashions may be several months or a year ahead. The intangibles of such a prediction are not conducive to large-scale investment: a film such as The Intruders (1969) was based on the assumption that a film derived from a popular television series (Skippy) would find equal popularity and profit; in fact it lost money heavily while the television series continued to reap income from a long series of popular re-runs. Publicity
can reduce the level of risk, but even elaborate advertising campaigns offer no absolute guarantee of commercial success: 2,000 Weeks (1969) received one of the most thorough campaigns for an Australian film for many years, but it still failed to draw audiences into the theatres.

Within such a vulnerable and emotionally turbulent industry, certain attitudes and conditions arise which, although not symptomatic of all production enterprises, are sufficiently wide-spread to affect the tenor of the industry as a whole. First, one seldom finds serious attention given to the creative potential of the film medium as a form of personal self-expression. Instead financial pressure within the industry creates the attitude that film is above all a piece of merchandise and a business proposition. Such an attitude may be held by producers wishing to make quick profits by easy means: in 1935, for example, the New South Wales quota legislation brought forth a rush of films produced quickly and carelessly on the assumption that the legislation would force theatres to screen them, regardless of audience reactions. The same attitude, however, has a positive aspect which is possibly more wide-spread in the industry, that the best possible entertainment must be provided in return for the public's money. But even here, elements of artistic creativity are of secondary importance, since to reach the widest possible audience, films cannot afford to indulge in unduly sophisticated content or methods.

Secondly, some areas of the industry are marked by a strongly defensive attitude towards criticism, with expressions of insecurity sometimes verging on paranoia. The fear of competition has extended to any human activity which takes place during the hours that theatres are open, from sporting functions held at night to family home life: one trade paper in the early 1930s ran an advertisement showing a family seated at home round a roaring fire, with the caption: 'Mr Showman, this is your greatest enemy'. Reactions to criticism have sometimes been actively vindictive: film reviewers who write unfavourable reviews of
popular films may be maligned in the trade press for failing to understand or appreciate the medium. Attempts have also been made to exclude film reviewers from certain theatres or to bring pressure to bear on a newspaper to change its film reviewing staff. Criticism of the trade by an independent trade paper, Everyones, in the early 1930s, led most distributors to withhold advertisements in an attempt to force the paper into liquidation. Again in 1971, criticisms by the Australian Film Development Corporation of the distribution policies of some companies regarding local features brought forth personal criticisms of the director of the Corporation, and the key issues of the Corporation's charges were either evaded or flatly denied.

Thirdly, attention must be given to the tendency of the film production and marketing process to provide opportunities for the exercise of dubious business ethics. The severity of competition for the elusive goal of profit in Australian production has always tended to encourage underhand practices and 'in-fighting'. The industry, of course, has its share of honest men, but as one writer on Australian films noted, albeit with some exaggeration:

In other countries, cinema has risen to be big business, national pastime or high art. In Australia, however, film has always had the element of the con., and its most distinguished figures have often been those best able to separate the gullible from their money.¹

It is not suggested that these elements - the mercenary bias, the self-righteous defensiveness, and the questionable business methods - are either exclusive to the film industry, or are representative of all of its activities. However, even when balanced in other areas by idealism, adventurous 'showmanship' and magnanimous generosity, these elements are never far distant, and it would be false to overlook them. In part they can be attributed to the high level of risk involved in any production, although the challenge of daily risks has at the same time produced alert and inventive

'showmen', as this thesis attempts to show.

As an approach to an understanding of the industry, this thesis has concentrated on a case study of one particular company, Cinesound Productions Limited, spanning the period from relative commercial success in the 1930s to atrophy in the 1960s. Unlike some producers on the fringes of the industry, Cinesound escaped the negative elements discussed above and achieved an unrivalled record in Australia of commercial and technical achievement.

The company came into existence in June 1932 as a subsidiary of a complex group of companies centred on Greater Union Theatres, and involved in all three facets of the industrial process: production, distribution and exhibition. Each phase was undertaken by formally separate companies, united into one organisation by interlocking directorates and common shareholders. Cinesound was formed to take over and expand the group's already existing programme of film production. Between 1932 and 1940, the company produced seventeen feature films as well as a popular weekly newsreel, the Cinesound Review, and many short public relations films. Of the seventeen features, only one failed to make a profit on its initial release, and that film broke even. The record was remarkable, not only for the company's commercial success, but also because it represented eight years of continuous feature production at a time when few companies remained in business for more than two successive features.

Through this case study attempts are made to answer two questions: why did Cinesound flourish in the 1930s, and why is the immediate post-war period such a marked dividing-line in the company's record of feature production, with seventeen profitable features made before the war and none thereafter? Three factors in Cinesound's period of success are given particular emphasis: the organisation within which the films were made and marketed; the staff and the philosophy of 'showmanship' which they applied to their work; and the nature of the films themselves.
Two figures dominate the early history of Cinesound: Stuart Doyle and Ken Hall. Doyle was the Managing Director of Greater Union Theatres until 1937, an entrepreneur committed to exploring the potential of all aspects of the young industry: against strong American competition he pioneered the Australian exhibition of British films, did much to develop the construction of theatres specifically designed for films, and encouraged experiments in Australian feature production during the period of silent films ending in 1929. His desire to experiment further with the production of 'talkies' as a means of expanding his group of companies was directly responsible for the foundation of Cinesound and for its consolidation over the next few years.

Ken Hall, who had worked for some years as Doyle's personal assistant, was appointed General Manager of the new company at its foundation after managing the production of several short films and directing Doyle's first 'talkie', On Our Selection. Hall remained with Cinesound until 1956, serving throughout in the double capacity of supervisor of production and General Manager of the company's business affairs. Like Doyle he was indefatigably committed to his work: he personally directed all but one of the seventeen Cinesound features, and contributed substantially to most of the scripts, so that the productions were built very closely around his own concepts. His personal contribution to the company's progress also lay in the management skills which he brought to his work: despite the complexity of the company's operations, Hall maintained a strong sense of 'teamship' among his staff and encouraged a high level of professional pride in the efficiency and economy of each production, whether it were a feature film, a newsreel, or a public relations documentary.

Both Doyle and Hall shared faith in a concept of 'showmanship' which entailed an ability to sense what sort of entertainment would appeal to the public and how to 'sell' that entertainment effectively; in addition, 'showmanship' involved a sense of duty to the public, to maintain professional standards in entertaining them. This concept
was by no means peculiar to Cinesound, but few of their contemporaries paid heed to the experience of 'showmen'. At Cinesound, however, pride was taken in the showmanship which dominated each production and its marketing: the films can be seen as highly calculated appeals to particular audiences, a synthesis of elements already proven popular in other media (especially theatre and radio) and in other films from Hollywood and England. By making films with the audience predominantly in mind, the Cinesound team believed that they had found the key to the production of films that would find popularity with the minimum of risk.

Whatever the skills of the showmen at Cinesound, and the care with which they were capable of manufacturing their wares, their ability would have been ineffective without an organisation to finance their operations, to protect them from unfavourable pressures and to present their work to advantage in the market. Being an integral part of an organisation which was also involved in distribution and exhibition, Cinesound had immediate access to a developed publicity machine, and to theatres which had a direct financial interest in the fate of each Cinesound production. But although the Greater Union organisation afforded Cinesound some degree of protection, the financial basis of Greater Union was never such during the 1930s that the organisation could support a subsidiary which did not pay its way. Under Doyle, until 1937, the administration was sympathetic to the work of Cinesound, but Doyle had only been able to initiate production at Cinesound by increasing the bank overdraft of the whole organisation: any failure at Cinesound would have meant a reluctant but inevitable closure of feature production. During 1937, Greater Union came under the leadership of an accountant, Norman Rydge, who was concerned above all to bring the organisation to financial security. Rydge was not a showman in the sense that Doyle had been: he was wary of new investment, and conservative in his financial administration. He saw feature production as an unnecessary risk when the same money could be invested more safely in real estate and
theatre construction. Rydge's attitude won supremacy with the declaration of the Second World War: in wartime a financial risk as great as feature production was unthinkable, and so the studios were closed and the continuity of production was broken.

With the cessation of feature production in 1940, problems of exhibition no longer faced the company: creative effort was devoted to the production of propaganda films under contract to various government bodies, especially the Department of Information. Newsreels also gained a new importance at Cinesound and the Cinesound Review became an important vehicle for propaganda. During the war, however, there was little doubt that with peace the studio would return to feature production, and in 1946 Cinesound's staff and technical resources were leased to Columbia Pictures for a more lavish production than had ever been attempted before. The success of this film, Smithy, with both critics and the public, raised high expectations for the future. Yet no new features eventuated, and from 1947 onwards the studio's resources gradually declined and the ability to produce features was whittled away.

The decline of the company was slow, partly because it was modestly profitable to maintain Cinesound for the production of short sponsored films and the inexpensive Cinesound Review. But the demise of feature films was more dramatic. Following the successful release of Smithy, plans were made for the re-introduction of full-scale feature production. These plans were abandoned suddenly in mid-1947 with the announcement of a major shift in the management of the Greater Union organisation, when a fifty per cent interest in Greater Union was bought by the British producer and exhibitor, J. Arthur Rank. One of the primary aims of Rank's expansion into Australia and throughout the world was to ensure better releases for his own British productions in the face of American competition; Rank was accordingly more interested in owning theatres than production units scattered around the globe, and his attitude soon hardened into active discouragement of local
feature production.

Being a wholly owned subsidiary of Greater Union, Cinesound was unable to break away to continue its own production programme although several of the team members, including Hall, explored the possibility of forming private companies. Despite their efforts, 1947 remained a dividing-line in Australian feature production: not only did the most productive company restrict its activities, but the technical resources most suitable for feature production gradually disappeared in the following years. The field was left to a handful of film-makers operating in inferior conditions with results that were unhappy enough to discourage investors.

This thesis cannot pretend to be an exhaustive analysis of Cinesound as a business enterprise: the study has been shaped very much by the available sources. Since Cinesound was a subsidiary of an organisation which has preserved its right to secrecy, the business operations of Greater Union are not examined beyond those few areas where the public was provided with information. The available sources, however, make possible an approach to the company through the film-makers themselves and through the crucial area of their relations with the public. The available information also serves to document the struggle of men committed to the realisation of their ideal of continuous feature production: as such the story of Cinesound has its own interest quite apart from the light it sheds on the troubles of the film industry as a whole.
Chapter One - The Context

Cinesound's origins can be traced back to the early development of film in Australia. In 1913 a group of pioneer film companies merged their interests to form, among other new organisations, a unified production unit within the diverse operations of a larger company, Australasian Films. From that amalgamation in turn arose Cinesound, nineteen years later, the result of the growing complexity of film production and the ability of Australian film-makers to prosper while formally independent of other phases in the industrial process of film production, distribution and exhibition.

By 1913 when Australasian Films came into being, film had progressed from its origins in the mid-1890s as a vaudeville novelty to the level of a flourishing business. The development of the industry was sufficient by the end of the first decade of the century to stimulate attempts to rationalise the industrial process and to co-ordinate and control rival companies involved in similar activities. In the first months of 1913 a group of companies active in all phases of the industry pooled their resources to form two distinct but interlocked organisations: Australasian Films Limited assumed responsibility for their combined interests in production and distribution, and Union Theatres Limited became responsible for the exhibition of films in a combined theatre chain.

The manoeuvres behind the formation and growth of Australasian Films and Union Theatres have bedevilled those historians who have attempted to reconstruct them. Official

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1 This growth in the commercial exploitation of the film medium is covered by R.F. Cooper, Origins of Film in Australia, 1896-1913 (unpublished M.A. Thesis, Canberra, 1971).

2 One of the first serious attempts at analysis was by R. Megaw, 'The American Image: Influence on Australian Cinema Management, 1896-1923', in Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society, vol.54, part 2, June 1968, pp.194-204. Miss Megaw admits to the 'obscure' nature of the company manoeuvres, and despite the thorough detail of much of her analysis, she becomes confused between Union Theatres and a later modification of the company, Greater Union Theatres. Cooper, op.cit., Appendix III, pp.363-67, is lucid in his account but a similar confusion exists between Union Theatres and its successors.
company secrecy did not prevent statements on company structure being made during a Royal Commission into the film industry in 1927, nor did it prevent historical sketches of the company appearing in publications issued on special occasions. But these few first-hand statements have proven contradictory and confusing. One Royal Commissioner in 1927 remarked after persevering in vain to understand the company structure: 'It is pretty difficult to follow', and his attitude has been echoed by most historians. However, in order to appreciate the industrial context from which Cinesound developed it is sufficient to establish a few basic stages in the company's evolution.

The companies which initiated the move towards the merger in 1913 were West's Pictures Limited, Spencer's Pictures Limited and Amalgamated Pictures Limited (itself composed of two companies, J. and N. Tait, and Johnson and Gibson Amalgamated). These companies had reached prior agreement to co-operate in November 1912, and had formed a new controlling company, the General Film Company of Australasia Limited. Early in 1913, this 'combine' was joined by a fourth partner,

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3 Especially in the evidence of two Managing Directors, Stuart Doyle and William Gibson. Commonwealth of Australia, Royal Commission on the Moving Picture Industry in Australia, Minutes of Evidence (1927), for example, pp.41, 360, 372.

4 The most useful of such documents is Union Picture Theatres [sic], Ten Years of Progress in the Motion Picture Industry of Australia (Sydney, 1921).

5 For example, confusion is difficult to avoid in considering the role of the name, J.C. Williamson, in the series of company mergers. The brothers, J. and N. Tait, owned controlling interests in the J.C. Williamson Group, an organisation which owned a theatre chain as well as a distribution exchange and production interests. In 1911, the non-theatrical interests of J.C. Williamson were united through J. and N. Tait in Amalgamated Pictures Limited, which eventually merged with other companies to form Union Theatres and Australasian Films. On the other hand, the theatrical interests of J.C. Williamson became involved in the Hoyts Theatre chain, as the major opposition group to Union Theatres. Thus, the name of J.C. Williamson appeared in two different organisations on either side of the arena in the competition between Union Theatres and Hoyts. [1927 Royal Commission, Minutes of Evidence, pp.33 ff. [evidence of William Gibson], and Smith's Weekly, 24.3.23, p.9.]

6 1927 Royal Commission, Minutes of Evidence, p.41.
the Greater J.D. Williams Amusement Company Limited. Under
the terms of an agreement with Williams, the activities of
the four partners were centralised in the two operational
companies of Union Theatres and Australasian Films.\textsuperscript{7} Together,
these new companies represented the major forces at that time
in Australian distribution exchanges, production and film
exhibition.\textsuperscript{8} Only later, during the first World War did
strong opposition develop from a rival theatre chain, Hoyts
Proprietary Limited,\textsuperscript{9} and from Australian branches of American
distribution companies such as Fox, Paramount and Metro-
Goldwyn-Mayer.\textsuperscript{10} Thus, although the initial position of the
companies consolidated in Union Theatres and Australasian
Films was strong, competition was not slow to emerge in a
market that was expanding rapidly in response to public
demand for film entertainment.

During the 1910s and 1920s, Union Theatres continued
to expand, buying some competitors outright, drawing others
into the amalgamation, and creating new subsidiaries for new

\textsuperscript{7} This account of the merger is based largely on Cooper,
op.cit., Appendix III, pp.363-67, and on articles by the
anonymous business reporter of Smith's Weekly, 24.3.23
and 28.8.26. The interlocking of Union Theatres and
Australasian Films is apparent in the lists of their first
Directors: those of Union Theatres were C. Spencer, H. Gee,
J.H. Tait, E. Geach, H. Hawkins, J. Williamson, W. Miller,
and W. Gibson; and those of Australasian Films were A.
Brierley, P. McDonald, H. Russell, H. Gee, E. Geach, W.
Miller, and W. Gibson. (Smith's Weekly, 24.3.23, p.9).

\textsuperscript{8} Cooper, op.cit., pp.366-67.

\textsuperscript{9} In 1926, Hoyts Proprietary Limited merged with other
companies to form Hoyts Theatres Limited, a name that is
more familiar today. (Everyones, 24.11.26, p.10). The
group of companies centred on Hoyts did not reach prominence
in the Australian trade until 1915. ('Hoyts Anniversary
Supplement', in Film Weekly, 18.3.48, pp.6-11).

\textsuperscript{10} American agencies did not appear in Sydney until the middle
years of the first World War. (Megaw, op.cit., pp.198-99).
Their appearance was part of a world-wide expansion by
American film companies, made possible by the withdrawal
from the world market of French and German films caused
by European wartime conditions; America took the opportunity
to increase its contribution to the world market from approx-
imately fifty per cent to about ninety. (L.J. Wasson, The
Quota Question in the Film Industry in N.S.W., 1920-1940,
[unpublished B.A. Honours Thesis, Canberra, 1969], pp.3-4.)
theatrical projects. 11 Beginning with authorised capital of £300,000, the assets of Union Theatres had grown by 1916 to represent a capital investment estimated at £2,000,000, which the company claimed was over half of the total capital then invested in cinemas in Australia. 12 By 1927, at the time of the Royal Commission into the film industry, Union Theatres claimed direct control of 42 theatres; 13 trade estimates at the same time suggested indirect control through subsidiary companies of over 30 more. 14 Hoyts, in opposition, claimed direct control of some 65 theatres and association with more than 20 others. 15

The theatres owned by Union and Hoyts represented a small proportion of nearly a thousand that were operating in Australia in the mid-1920s, 16 but the strength of the two chains was derived from their control of 'first release houses' in the capital cities, where the commercial potential of new films was normally tested. 17 In theory this control should have given the theatre chains a strong position from which to bargain with distributors for new films. In practice, however, the distributors, most of them agencies of American companies, took advantage of the competition between the two chains and of their demand for films to fill their theatres; as will be seen, prices for the hire of films were increased and attempts were made to influence the management policies of the two chains. 18

11 Among the companies brought into the 'combine' was Harrington's Limited, a major Sydney film exchange (1913). Among the new companies formed was Union Theatres Investments Limited (1928), to control the development of new theatres in Sydney (see below, p. 9).
12 Megaw, op. cit., p. 198.
13 1927 Royal Commission, Minutes of Evidence, pp. 37, 378.
15 1927 Royal Commission, Minutes of Evidence, p. 402 (evidence of George Griffith, Managing Director of Hoyts Theatres Limited).
16 Megaw, op. cit., p. 200.
17 William Gibson claimed that of the 51 first release theatres in the capital cities, 33 were under the direct control of Union Theatres, and the remainder under Hoyts. (1927 Royal Commission, Minutes of Evidence, p. 57).
18 See below, pp. 11, 15.
Union Theatres benefited to some extent from its association with the distribution exchange operated by Australasian Films. But this exchange provided less than 20 per cent of the total needs of the Union chain, and long-term contracts with American distribution agencies were unavoidable, despite the prices demanded by these distributors.\(^1\)

Just as Union Theatres could not rely solely on Australasian for its film supply, so Australasian was unable to rely on Union Theatres for sufficient earnings to justify the expenses of importing and handling films. Australasian's distribution operations accordingly embraced contracts with hundreds of theatres outside of the Union chain. Because it operated on the open market, and was not restricted to supplying Union Theatres, Australasian became one of the largest distribution agencies in Australia by the end of the 1920s. While Australasian usually released two films each week in 1927, even the largest of the American agencies released only three new films every fortnight.\(^2\)

The films distributed by Australasian came primarily from those producers in the United States and Europe not represented by their own agencies; these included films made by companies such as Columbia which in the 1920s were too small to open Australian branches of their own.\(^3\) In addition Australasian was alone among the major distributors as an importer of British films, although the number of British films considered suitable for Australian screenings was small.\(^4\)

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\(^1\) Details of the position of Union Theatres and Australasian Films is given in a Statutory Declaration made by Stuart Doyle before the N.S.W. Government Inquiry into the Film Industry, on 12.1.34. (Film Division, National Library of Australia).

\(^2\) 1927 Royal Commission, Minutes of Evidence, p.371.

\(^3\) Film Weekly, 22.10.31, p.3, lists eight overseas companies for which Australasian was acting as distribution agent, the most notable being Warner Brothers, Columbia, and a number of British companies.

\(^4\) In a letter to the Editor, Daily Telegraph (Sydney), 21.11.24, Doyle wrote: our company is on the market for every British picture manufactured that will meet the requirements of the audiences of this country, but the number of films produced in England ... compared to other parts of the world, does not represent 10 per cent. Of this 10 per
During the 1930s, however, British films came to play an ever-increasing part in the distribution activities of the companies which succeeded Australasian: the change in staple products from American to British was born of necessity as the output of American companies was progressively channelled into their own distribution agencies set up in the Australian capital cities.  

Australasian's work as a film exchange was supplemented by lesser operations, including a library of educational films for schools, and a variety of industrial support activities, such as a laboratory and a 'Cinemachinery' department for the sale and servicing of projectors and other theatrical equipment. To add to the diversity of Australasian's activities it was also involved in film production, and from its formation the company's production resources were considerable: of the companies which amalgamated in 1913, Spencer's and West's had been active producers for several years, and William Gibson, one of the early directors of Union Theatres, had worked in the production of Australia's first narrative feature film, The Kelly Gang, in 1906, and was known in the trade as the 'father' of the Australian film industry. Spencer's had built a film studio at Rushcutter's Bay and like West's produced regular newsreels and occasional dramatic films for screening in their own theatres. Australasian's own production activities were given continuity by the issue of a weekly newsreel, the Australasian Gazette, and numerous short films, but the activities of the company were orientated above all towards the production of feature films, as Cinesound's were to be in the 1930s. By 1937, over 20

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22 (contd)
   cent. possibly 4 per cent. are suitable for Australian audiences.
   Doyle claimed that in 1924, fifteen British films were released by his company.
23 By the early 1930s Columbia and Warner Brothers operated their own branches in Australia. For further comments on Australasian's distribution of British films, see below, pp. 61ff.
24 1927 Royal Commission, Minutes of Evidence, pp.747-51, evidence of Alfred Duncan, Manager of educational films for Australasian.
26 Megaw, op.cit., pp.194-96.
features were made, most using small budgets, with subjects proven safe by other producers or on the stage.\textsuperscript{27}

Many of Australasian's films failed commercially, but the company continued to subsidise occasional projects, partly because the outlay for silent feature films was usually small (up to £2,000), but above all because of the personal interest in film production shown by William Gibson and, after 1919, by Stuart Frank Doyle. As both a Managing Director and General Manager of Union Theatres and later Managing Director of Australasian Films, Doyle had had long experience in the film industry, particularly in the fields of publicity and theatre management. He had started as a magician in touring variety shows but found the life too precarious and joined a legal firm in Sydney. From there he was employed by the theatre owner, J.D. Williams, as treasurer, and when Williams amalgamated his interests with other companies in Union Theatres, Doyle gradually moved up to a dominant position in the new company.\textsuperscript{28} Doyle was respected rather than liked for his business tactics; while he drew admiration for his ability to fulfil his ambitions, he made rigorous demands on his subordinates and was sometimes resented for his egotism and aloofness.\textsuperscript{29} As a manager, Doyle seems to be characterised by a total dedication to achieving his own extravagant targets: his theatres were intended to be larger and more spectacular than those of his competitors, the films made by his companies were to carry prestige as well as profit, and in all of its varied activities his companies were to lead the field with a grand display. Doyle's impatience to achieve his goals, his dynamic energy, and his own self-assurance is reflected

\textsuperscript{27} Among the films were How We Beat the Emden (first released in 1915), made at a time when patriotic war themes were popular; The Loyal Rebel (1915) and Dope (1924), both adaptations of popular stage melodramas.

\textsuperscript{28} For an excellent account of Doyle's rise to power, see an anonymous article in \textit{Everyones}, 30.6.37, pp.6ff.

\textsuperscript{29} An obituary on Doyle in the Australasian Exhibitor (Sydney), 25.10.45, p.1, expresses a combination of admiration and resentment: 'Doyle was the perfect egotist. His self-confidence was sublime. There was never room for two leaders on any track that he blazed. He could never envisage defeat'.
1. Stuart Frank Doyle
in the close interest which he took in the details of his organisation's operations, overseeing the design of publicity campaigns for individual films, or touching up the displays in his own theatre foyers.  

It is in Doyle's personal adoption of the ideal of Australian feature film production that Cinesound was to find much of its initial impetus, even though he was to become the target of bitter criticism from struggling independent producers. One of Doyle's most outspoken critics was Raymond Longford, who in evidence before the 1927 Royal Commission, claimed that Doyle used his power as manager of a theatre chain to stifle Australian production by denying film-makers the opportunity to have their work screened. Doyle's reply to Longford's charges are credible in the light of his impulsive extravagance and determination to have his way; he stated before the Commission that in rejecting a number of Australian films for release through his theatre chain he was following a definite policy, not of discouraging production, but of trying to restore the confidence in Australian films of a public which had been duped by too many well-meaning failures. Doyle applied the same policy to British films, in which Australasian Films specialised as a distributor:

The difficulty has been in the past that indifferent pictures have been allowed to get on the market until the public obtained the impression that, particularly where British pictures were concerned, the fact that the pictures were British necessarily stamped them

30 Everyones, 30.6.37, pp.11, 18, describes how Doyle personally averted likely box-office failure with an imported documentary film, Beyond Bengal, by creating a mock letterhead (deliberately badly printed and ungrammatical) so that letters could be sent to exhibitors and public figures from a (non-existent) Indian sultan, informing them of the film's release.

31 Doyle stated before the Royal Commission in 1927 that 'Sentiment enters into some things; it does with me in regard to Australian pictures'. (Minutes of Evidence, p.383).

32 1927 Royal Commission, Minutes of Evidence, p.144. In 1924 Doyle wrote: 'unfortunately, like other successful organisations, we suffer by the disgruntled failures in the industry throwing brickbats at those who succeed'. (Daily Telegraph [Sydney], 21.11.24, Letter to the Editor).
as inferior in story and production. The same thing to some extent happened to Australian pictures... We decided that at all times we would only show British pictures and Australian pictures of good average standard merit and by that means try to re-create in the public mind a degree of confidence, which at that stage was lamentably lacking.\textsuperscript{33}

Consistent with this long-term policy of helping producers by winning public interest in local films, Doyle persisted with production within his own organisation and attempted to promote an increasingly sophisticated image for those aspects of the Australian film industry in which his companies were involved.

Cinesound's early years were to be conditioned strongly by the consequence of Doyle's policies, not only in production, but also in distribution and exhibition during the late 1920s. Between 1926 and 1930 he led his group of companies into a phase of rapid expansion which culminated in financial chaos for Union Theatres during the Depression and led to Doyle's removal from office in 1937.

In 1927, Doyle launched an extensive programme for the construction of new theatres designed to accommodate larger audiences than had previously been possible, and to offer the public a more exciting environment in which to see films. In that year the Capitol Theatre in Sydney was opened: seating 2,773, it was Australia's first 'atmospheric' theatre derived from a popular American model, with ceilings designed to represent 'a Florentine garden under the stars'.\textsuperscript{34} Adding further to the structure of his organisation, Doyle formed two new companies to build and control theatres in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide. Union Theatres Investments Limited with a capital of £500,000, was formed in Sydney in 1928 to be responsible for the State Theatre shopping block, a twelve-storey complex housing a luxurious cinema with a

\textsuperscript{33} 1927 Royal Commission, Minutes of Evidence, p.361.

\textsuperscript{34} Everyone's, 30.6.37, p.30, for a description of the Capitol and its novel features.
capacity of 2,580. Another subsidiary, Union Theatres (Victoria) Limited with a capital of £250,000 opened a State Theatre in Melbourne in 1929. In Brisbane the large Wintergarden Theatre was built and operated by Doyle in conjunction with the Queensland chain of Birch, Carroll and Coyle Theatres; and in Perth the Ambassadors Theatre was opened as the city's main prestige cinema.

In all of these buildings modern designs and fittings, including novel air-conditioning systems, were complemented by lavish stage presentations for which Doyle imported overseas producers and performers and established a vaudeville circuit with 20-piece orchestras, to give his patrons both film and live entertainment combined in an atmosphere of cosmopolitan grandeur. Film had started as an adjunct to variety shows at the end of the nineteenth century, but by the end of the 1920s, the reverse applied, and live performers were being used not only to provide backgrounds to silent films but as additional attractions for the public.

The rapid expansion in theatre construction was paralleled by Union's competitor, Hoyts Theatres, who were building the huge Regent theatres in Sydney, Melbourne and


36 Everyone's, 30.6.37, p.30.

37 Ibid. Smith's Weekly, 28.8.26, mentions that plans for the Wintergarden allowed for the expenditure of £130,000.

38 Everyone's, 30.6.37, p.30. In both of the State theatres in Sydney and Melbourne, Doyle took a personal interest in the details of the design, and partly to his own concept of modernity and elegance must be attributed many of the 'amiable idiocies' which Robin Boyd found in those buildings, such as the sign, 'Gentleman's College Room', to indicate the men's toilet in the State Theatre, Melbourne. (R. Boyd, The Australian Ugliness [Melbourne, 1960], p.102).

39 Film Weekly, 5.6.30, p.3, announces plans to re-introduce stage acts in the more important theatres of the Union chain; the move was doubtless inspired in part by the shortage of suitable films at the time.
Adelaide at the same time. But the reasons behind the development were more complex than rivalry between the two chains. In the 1934 Inquiry into the film industry in New South Wales, Doyle stated that pressure from American distribution companies had been responsible for the sudden expansion of both theatre groups, even to the point of over-supplying Sydney audiences with theatres. The reason for American pressure was attributed by Doyle to the simple desire of American companies for greater returns from their films in Australian theatres: better theatres had been needed to expand the audience for films and American distributors had threatened to withhold film supplies and to build theatres of their own if Union Theatres and Hoyts did not meet their requirements. Since American companies provided over 80% of Union Theatres' film requirements, the company had no choice but to comply.

Investment in new theatres was only one aspect of Doyle's expansion drive in the late 1920s. The distribution activities of Australasian were stimulated by the purchase of rights to the entire product of a large British company, British International Pictures. In May 1930, to handle the enlarged trade of the film exchange Doyle formed a new company, the Union Theatres Feature Exchange (later known as British Empire Films), with a head office in Sydney and branches in most states.

Australasian's production programme was also stimulated by new developments. In 1926 a large skating rink at Bondi Junction, Sydney, was converted into a silent film studio, and over £90,000 was spent on two productions alone. While most productions had been previously budgeted at about £2,000, Gibson and Doyle launched For the Term of his Natural Life in

40 For details of the Regent Theatre chain, see 'Hoyts Anniversary Supplement', in Film Weekly, 18.3.48, pp.9, 10.
41 Statutory Declaration by Stuart Doyle, 12.1.34, op.cit.
42 Film Weekly, 8.5.30, p.4.
43 Film Weekly, 15.5.30, pp.8, 10.
1926 with a budget of over £50,000. In a bid to break into the American market, Doyle brought American technicians and players to Australia for the film, among them a director, Norman Dawn, and an actress, Eva Novak. The film was followed by Adorable Outcast in 1928 with a budget of £40,000, again with Americans involved in the production.

Both of these productions, although supplemented by more modest films by purely local staff, drew criticism from Doyle's opponents, especially Longford who had anticipated directing For the Term of His Natural Life himself. Longford claimed that Doyle had 'sold out' Australian production to the Americans, not only by refusing screenings for Australian films but also by employing second-rate American talent to do what Australians could do as well, if not better. Doyle's reply provided yet another illustration of his ambition: the two expensive productions employing American cast and technicians had been launched in the belief that only by transplanting Hollywood techniques could Australian films make any initial inroad into overseas markets.

Doyle's belief turned out to be ill-founded; both films were popular in Australia, but failed to find overseas release on a scale to justify their cost, and much of the company's investment was lost. Doyle was prepared to admit his

44 Americans involved in Adorable Outcast included the director, Norman Dawn, and the actor, Arthur McLaglen. For details about the two productions, see E. Reade, Australian Silent Films (Melbourne, 1970), pp.162, 166.
45 These films included Hills of Hate, The Pioneers and Tall Timber (all released during 1926).
46 Longford claimed that he had in fact been hired to direct the film. (1927 Royal Commission, Minutes of Evidence, p.147 [evidence of Raymond Longford, 16.6.27]).
47 1927 Royal Commission, Minutes of Evidence, pp.149-50.
48 Letter to the Editor, Sydney Morning Herald, 1.11.35.
49 In a statement to Smith's Weekly, 7.6.30, p.7, Doyle stated that of £100,000 invested in production at the end of the silent period, he had made a loss of some £30,000. Although in Australian theatres his large-scale silent productions had been 'successes that were outstanding compared to anything previously produced in Australia', overseas release was negligible:
not one penny could be earned by us, with all the influence we could bring to bear, in either England or America, or any other part of the world, and to-day
mistake; in 1935 he spoke against the still widespread attitude that Australia would benefit by the importation of American talent:

[it] is the mental attitude of the tyro. To be perfectly frank, it was the first attitude of mind assumed by our company in its early beginnings. We quickly learnt our lesson, and I make the confession now because it is pleasant to no decent man to see others committing again the follies of one's youthful ignorance. You cannot dig up a section of the Hollywood motion picture industry, just as you might dig up a few roots of cannas and expect it to sprout and blossom on the soil of your own land as brilliantly as it was doing overseas ... We discovered, however, that those clumps of roots had an irritating habit of withering sadly before they could be acclimatised - and our available capital withered in the same ratio.

Although Doyle's ambitions for silent production foundered, the financial loss was small compared with the liabilities which soon accumulated in other areas of Australasian Films and Union Theatres. Doyle's expansion drive had injected capital and new ambitions into most of the organisation's interests. The timing however was wrong; external pressures of depression soon negated the stimulus of expansion, and many of the new schemes misfired at the company's expense. By mid-1930, Doyle was forced to compensate for the effects of depression by reducing wages and laying off staff. The economic depression was not the sole or immediate cause of the collapse, for the introduction of sound to the film medium had been popular enough to counterbalance the initial effects of the depression. But by mid-1930 internal industry weaknesses were opening the way for depressed conditions in theatres and film exchanges.

The availability of commercial sound films and public demand for them necessitated extensive new investment by Union Theatres. The major city theatres were modified to

49 (cont'd)
the film [For the Term of His Natural Life] stands as not recouping to us one farthing, outside of the local sphere.

50 Letter to the Editor, Sydney Morning Herald, 1.11.35.

51 Items in Film Weekly, 22.1.31, p.4, and 7.5.31, p.3, refer to the sacking of theatre staff.
screen 'talkies' and in April 1929 Doyle announced the purchase of the entire first group of 33 sound films produced by Warner Brothers, at that time the leading sound studio in Hollywood. But once the initial novelty of the new dimension had dissipated, popular support for talkies failed to provide the immediate returns that the company had anticipated following the development of its theatres.

Sound provided all exhibitors with technical and financial problems. Those who lacked the capital to invest in sound were forced out of business within two or three years, since distributors found increasing difficulty in finding silent material to supply to them. Those who could raise capital had to choose from a wide variety of equipment, none of which had been able to stand the test of time. Some found that their chosen machine gave faulty sound reproduction; others found that their sound systems were progressively superseded by new technical developments. Others still were forced to close business because of unreasonable terms for maintenance and payment for the new equipment.

The installation of sound did not guarantee audiences for long, as exhibitors soon learned, and with the depression limiting the spending power of the public it became increasingly difficult to entice people into theatres.

52 Sydney Opinion, vol.1, no.1, 1.10.29, p.4.
53 Film Weekly, 23.6.31, p.8, reports that poor sound reproduction has been having an adverse effect on business in some theatres.
54 One method of reproducing sound which had some initial popularity before being outmoded, involved the use of a turn-table with the film's soundtrack on a disc; the motor of the turntable was synchronised with the motor of the projector.
55 Ken Hall, in a letter to the writer, 18.5.72, wrote: 'You could not buy the equipment you could only rent on onerous terms. They constantly up-dated the equipment technically - which cost you more and more rental for something you could never own'.
Spectacular films with popular stars and sensational advertising still won large crowds, but the intense publicity which accompanied the introduction of sound seemed only to encourage disillusionment when audiences found that sound films were not necessarily more entertaining than the silents.

While the big theatre chains could afford to absorb temporary losses caused by re-development for sound, they were faced by another major problem which arose with the building of large new theatres. The 'film famine' of the early 1930s arose primarily from the existence of too many theatres vying for a limited number of films. With audiences reduced by the depression, large theatres could not afford to run films for long periods and consequently a greater turnover of films was required by exhibitors. Such was the shortage of new film that Doyle was forced to close the Capitol Theatre in Sydney for some months to relieve the pressure within the Union Theatres chain. Greater competition also forced up the hiring rates for films, often to impracticable levels. During the last half of 1932 Doyle was forced to meet his film supply demands by making a contract with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer that brought his company a loss of some £15,000; yet the following year Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer demanded an increase in rentals if the contract was to be renewed.

In 1934 it was estimated that the nine first-release theatres in Sydney required a total of over 440 new films a year; in 1933 only 414 first-release productions were available, and fewer during 1932. The inability of film exchanges to provide enough film for all the theatres caused distributors to rush films into release before they

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56 Film Weekly, 16.7.31, p.3, reflects a theme common in the trade press during the early 1930s: because of a shortage of films, a shipment of new American films is to be rushed into release. Another item on the same page argues directly that theatres are being forced out of business, not because of the Depression, but because there are too many theatres.

57 Statutory Declaration by Stuart Doyle, 12.1.34, op.cit.

58 Ibid.
could be adequately publicised, and equally seriously, to pass inferior productions as material for the major theatres. 59

Both the economic depression and the failure of the film industry to justify the rapid expansion of the late 1920s led directly to the liquidation of Union Theatres in October 1931. 60 The liquidation was later interpreted by the film trade as a masterstroke by Doyle to save the maze of companies under his control. 61 Out of the liquidation arose a new but similar group of companies, centred on the exhibition company of Greater Union Theatres Limited.

The annual loss of Union Theatres was estimated by outside observers to have reached about £100,000 in the height of the industrial depression. Doyle's scheme of reconstruction to save his business began when a receiver was put in and the assets of Union Theatres were auctioned. Doyle's plan was to make the assets so unattractive that there would be no bid apart from that of his new company, Greater Union Theatres. The ruse succeeded and Greater Union bought the assets of Union Theatres for the amount of the bank overdraft; simultaneously, in order to provide capital for Greater Union, Doyle was dependent on the income from the theatrical assets on the day of take-over and the following week. Doyle's plan to rid his companies of a heavy accumulated debt did not however free him of a huge bank overdraft of about £450,000, which was not to be cleared for another decade or more. 62

With a new formal company structure, Doyle remained, as before, alert for new ventures which could bring profits beyond those of normal theatre takings. Laboratory services provided by Australasian in Sydney were reviewed and improved,

59 Ibid.
60 The liquidation was announced without comment in Film Weekly, 22.10.31, p.3.
61 The following account of the liquidation is based largely on an anonymous article in Everones, 30.6.37, p.7.
62 Letter from Ken Hall to the writer, n.d. (postmarked 25.6.69, Sydney).
along with the company's 'Cinemachinery' department. Production was an obvious field for development but experience with the costly Australasian productions in the late 1920s had taught him the need for caution. Moreover the gradual consolidation of sound films as the only viable commercial proposition, meant that Australasian's production equipment, intended for silent films, was obsolete. Doyle's initial flirtation with sound was accordingly hesitant. Arrangements were made for a young radio engineer, Arthur Smith, to work in the Australasian laboratory to develop a sound recorder that could be used with existing silent camera equipment. As Smith's equipment gradually evolved, tests were made on a series of short films, and Doyle assigned his personal assistant, Ken Hall, to investigate the commercial potential of these experiments. After several effective tests, Hall, aware of the value of the equipment, sought to convince Doyle of the need to make a final test on a more challenging exercise such as a feature film.

Doyle at first rejected Hall's proposal for a feature because of the high level of risk, both technically and financially. Soon, however, circumstances changed sufficiently for him to approve the commencement of a feature-length adaptation of the stage play, On Our Selection, based on Steele Rudd's stories. Doyle was still careful: his production of The Term of His Natural Life in 1927 had cost more than £50,000, but he allowed only £6,000 for On Our Selection.

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63 This account of the early development of sound is based largely on interviews by the writer with Arthur Smith (Sydney, 8.10.69) and with Ken Hall (Sydney, 24.8.69). Useful detail is also provided in an article on Smith in the Daily Telegraph (Sydney), 7.7.58, p.19.

64 The early shorts included That's Cricket (a semi-instructional film on cricket techniques), and a series of documentaries photographed by Walter Sully about unusual Australian activities, such as Thar She Blows, on the subject of whaling. (Sydney Morning Herald, 18.2.31, p.8; Sydney Mail, 1.4.31, p.10; and Smith's Weekly, 21.2.37, p.7 and 28.2.31, p.7).

65 Doyle, in evidence before the N.S.W. Inquiry into the film industry, reported in Everyones, 7.2.34, p.6.
Doyle's decision to go ahead with a pioneer 'talkie' was a response not only to his own ambition for production, but to a variety of incentives: Hall's confidence that a film could be made; the enthusiasm of Bert Bailey to have film made of his long-running play, *On Our Selection*; and the need to find new answers to the company's problems of finance and film supply.

Not least among the incentives was the need to maintain competition with other companies. When preparations began for *On Our Selection* two other companies were attracting attention for their attempts to establish 'talkie' production. In Melbourne, Frank Thring, who had once been Doyle's rival in the exhibition trade as a Managing Director of Hoyts Theatres, was attempting to import American sound-recording equipment in defiance of a Federal customs levy which virtually prohibited the importation of such equipment.66 Thring's protest succeeded: the Federal Government finally waived the tax of £6,000 owed to them, and Thring began well-publicised preparations for his first feature 'talkie'.67 For other companies, particularly one as delicately financed as Doyle's, the cost of buying and transporting American production equipment ruled out any alternative but to rely on home developments. The need to encourage the experiments of Arthur Smith therefore seemed increasingly necessary if Australasian Films were to retain a hold on the production field.

A second threat to Australasian's primacy in production came from the Australian branch of an American company, Fox Movietone. The branch had operated mainly as a distribution agency for its American head office and had a financial interest in the Hoyts theatre chain.68 Late in 1929 Fox Movietone shipped to Australia a fully equipped sound and camera unit to establish an Australian agency for contributions

67 *Film Weekly*, 29.1.31, p.3. Thring's first films were a 'talkie' version of *The Sentimental Bloke*, released in 1932, and a film of a stage play, *The Haunted Barn*.
to the company's international newsreel. Use of the equipment soon diversified; not only were items produced for the American newsreel, but the company launched its own weekly newsreel exclusively for Australian theatres. The popularity of the Australian Movietone newsreel was fully apparent by 1931, and was an important factor in Doyle's decision to embark on 'talkie' production - not only of an inexpensive feature film but also to revive the defunct weekly newsreel of the silent era, the Australasian Gazette, under the new name of the Cinesound Review.

With the decision to embark on two types of production simultaneously - the feature and the newsreel - Doyle was reliant almost entirely on the enthusiasm and experience of his personal assistant, Ken Hall. Doyle's trust was soon justified: under the direction of Hall, the feature was an overwhelming commercial success when it was released in July 1932. For an expenditure of £6,000, the film returned over £46,000 by the end of 1934, and was still in circulation in the 1960s. Also under the direction of Hall, the newsreel too was quick to establish itself with the public, and within a year it was strong enough to absorb minor competitors and to screen in hundreds of theatres throughout Australia and New Zealand.

69 Film Weekly, 11.8.49, p.3.
70 Ibid.
71 See below, pp. 153.
72 Doyle, in evidence before the 1934 N.S.W. Inquiry into the film industry, reported in Everyones, 7.2.34, p.6. Everyones, 18.11.36, states that income from the film had now reached £48,000, signifying a profit of £23,200.
73 Everyones, 17.8.32, p.5, announces Cinesound's intention (later fulfilled) of absorbing one of the newsreel's Victorian competitors, the Melbourne Herald Newsreel. In Victoria, for many years, the Cinesound Review was officially known as the Cinesound-Herald Review.
74 Gordon Ellis, the manager of Union Theatres Feature Exchange, announced at the end of 1931 that after its first few months of operation, the newsreel was being released in over 200 theatres in city and country areas. (Film Weekly, 3.12.31, p.3).
Cinesound Productions Limited came into existence on 3 June 1932 only after the technical experiments had proved successful and the production of On Our Selection had been completed. Since production had been his responsibility from the time of Arthur Smith's first experiments with sound, Hall was put in charge of the new company as General Manager, director of feature productions and supervising editor of the newsreel. Doyle maintained an interest in the company's activities, but was too often preoccupied with the problems of Greater Union Theatres to participate actively in the company's operations.

The new company was made responsible for all production interests of the Greater Union Theatres organisation, beginning with On Our Selection and the Cinesound Review, as well as responsibility for the laboratory work formerly undertaken by Australasian Films. Although nominally a separate company, Cinesound was firmly attached to the Greater Union family tree, and the directorate interlocked the company with others in the group. With its main functions of production and laboratory services passed on to Cinesound, and its distribution work performed by the Union Theatres Feature Exchange, Australasian ceased to be an operational company but remained in the

75 N.S.W. Companies Office, Cinesound Productions Limited, 'Certificate of Incorporation', dated 3 June 1932. In 1937, Cinesound became a Proprietary company, and in May the name was officially changed to Cinesound Productions Pty Limited.

76 N.S.W. Companies Office, Cinesound Productions Limited: the first 'Register of Directors' in the file, dated 20.7.39, provides the following list:

- Stuart Doyle (appointed 8.10.34, also director of Greater Union Theatres Limited; resigned 9.7.37)
- Edwin Geach (appointed 8.10.34, also director of Greater Union Theatres Limited)
- Kenneth W. Asprey (appointed 8.10.34, solicitor)
- John Gaulston (appointed 8.10.34, also director of Greater Union Theatres Limited)
- Robert Hill (appointed 9.7.37, chartered accountant)
- Norman Rydge (appointed 9.7.37, also director of Greater Union Theatres Limited)
- Bernard D. Rothbury (appointed 9.7.37, also director of Sargents Limited).
Greater Union group as a holding company, owning most of the shares in Cinesound.77

A pattern for Cinesound's activities soon emerged: it was to be above all a company oriented towards the production of feature films. The company came into existence because of a feature film, *On Our Selection*, and the staff seemed to accept unquestioningly that feature production was the only worthwhile test of their ability. The attitude that features form the highest level of film-making activity was elaborated by some producers who claimed that feature production was of sufficient value to the community to warrant the support of public money through government sponsorship.78 Various arguments were used, one of the most persuasive being embodied in the slogan 'trade follows the film', based on the fact that feature films could attain wide circulation overseas and attract tourists, migrants and trade.79 Beyond the role of publicising Australia, feature production employed far more people than any other form of film activity and offered a potential solution to the problem of unemployment among qualified technicians and artists.80 Apart from economic arguments, the feature film had historically played a dominant role in production enterprise: theatrical screenings of films were, and still are, built around feature films; it followed that only a feature would reach a wide audience, and that creative effort put into other forms of the medium would be relatively wasted. Thus, the enjoyment experienced by Ken Hall and his staff in creating entertainment

77 N.S.W. Companies Office, Cinesound Productions Limited, schedule of shareholders, dated 3.10.34, lists 69,902 shares held by Australasian Films (Holdings) Limited, and 14 by each of S. Doyle, E. Geach, C. Marden, K. Asprey, P. Dive, W. Sayle, and J. Evans.

78 See below, p. 29.

79 Wasson, op.cit., pp.1-2, suggests that the phrase was first made popular by an American, W.H. Hays.

80 Wasson, op.cit., p.49. 2,000 members of the Australian Actors' Federation had been out of work since the advent of talkies. (N.S.W. Parliamentary Debates, 1934-35, vol.143, p.5725).
led to a natural attraction towards feature production, for which the potential audience was largest. Planning and preparation for features was consequently a continuous pre-occupation at Cinesound throughout the 1930s. 81

Although it was accepted as highly desirable, feature production was still a luxury. The production of short films and newsreels played an important role at Cinesound by keeping staff employed, and providing a small regular income for the studio. While these activities provided the studio's 'bread and butter', attempts to make features were under a strong pressure to justify themselves by financial gain. Because of the financial weakness of the Greater Union organisation, Cinesound's activities could only be tolerated if they were profitable; any loss would inevitably mean the end of production until Greater Union could recover its stability. Stuart Doyle's own sympathy for production offered some degree of protection while he remained in control of the Greater Union organisation. But failure at Cinesound would have made it difficult for even a man of Doyle's determination to raise new finance, given the scale of Greater Union's existing overdraft. Cinesound was forced to become self-supporting as far as it possibly could, and profits from one feature were used to finance the next. Due to a combination of factors which will be analysed in the course of this thesis, Cinesound did manage to operate on this basis until 1940: its films returned substantial profits, with the exception of Strike Me Lucky (1934) which covered only its production costs. 82 The profit margin varied greatly from production to production: On Our Selection placed the company in a strong position at its formation with a gross return of over 800%. Other films returned less, but the company's balance

81 Wasson, op.cit., pp.64-65, argues that the predisposition of Australian film-makers towards feature production, as opposed to short films, was 'unreasonable' and 'over-ambitious', given the weight of American competition and the struggle involved in establishing a feature production enterprise. The example of Cinesound's survival in the 1930s tends to disprove his argument, however.
82 See below pp.65-66.
remained healthy enough for Doyle to agree to Hall's constant call for expansion: the budgets for each production grew larger (from £6,000 in 1932 for *On Our Selection* to £21,000 in 1936 for *It Isn't Done*), additional studio space was created, new equipment was added to the company's resources and new activities launched in the field of documentary production. Cinesound became under Hall's guidance the centre of Australian feature production: facilities were leased to other producers, and Cinesound set an example of success which attracted a continuous succession of competitors seeking to emulate the company's work. Doyle's ambition for his company seemed to be fulfilled.

Doyle's leadership of the Greater Union organisation became increasingly tenuous as the 1930s progressed. The effects of the depression in the industry had been temporarily forestalled by Doyle's company manoeuvres in 1931, but these efforts had not solved the basic problems facing his organisation. The company's bank overdraft remained high, and not only its bank, the E. S. and A., but other members of the Greater Union directorate grew progressively alarmed at Doyle's expansionist policies. Gradually within the Greater Union organisation opposition took shape, and in 1937 a successful bid to oust Doyle was made by members of the directorate and the E. S. and A. Bank. To save the organisation from its ostensibly ruinous path, a request was made to a prominent Sydney accountant and businessman, Norman Rydge, to take over the position of Managing Director. Rydge came 

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83 See Appendix III.
84 See below, pp.153ff.
85 The commercial success of Cinesound Productions is cited, for example, in a prospectus for Australian National Feature Films, a company which the Australian actor, Arthur Shirley, attempted to establish in 1935. The prospectus is held in item 274/2 of the F. Daniell Papers (unsorted MS, catalogue number 1634, National Library of Australia).
86 Ken Hall, in a letter to the writer, 18.5.72. A biographical article on Rydge in the *Sunday Telegraph* (Sydney), 8.5.60, also refers to the fact that Rydge was 'invited by shareholders' to join the directorate of Greater Union.
to Greater Union with a brilliant background in law and accountancy; he had written texts on the taxation laws of the Commonwealth and New South Wales,\textsuperscript{87} was publisher of a monthly magazine, \textit{Rydge's Business Journal}, which received wide circulation throughout Australia, and in 1936 was Chairman of several large companies including Carlton Investments. The internal political moves of Rydge's appointment were never made public: Doyle issued a Supreme Court writ against Rydge, action undisclosed, and a few weeks later, in June 1937, dropped the case and resigned entirely from the Greater Union organisation.\textsuperscript{88} Making a clean break Doyle turned his entrepreneurial talents to a variety of activities including commercial radio broadcasting and aircraft manufacture.\textsuperscript{89}

By 1942 Rydge had justified his acquisition of power: especially under the stimulus of wartime conditions, the organisation was pulled out of debt and entered an unbroken succession of profitable trading years which continued after his retirement in 1970. Rydge may have pleased the shareholders, but he created strong resentment among film-makers. As a

\textsuperscript{87} Rydge's publications by this time included \textit{Federal Income Tax Laws} (Sydney, 1921), \textit{Commonwealth Income Tax Acts, 1922-1923} and \textit{Regulations Thereunder} (Sydney, 1923), and \textit{The Australian Stock Exchange} (Sydney, 1934).

\textsuperscript{88} \textit{Everyones}, 19.5.37, p.4, refers, without comment, to the fact that Doyle's solicitors had taken out a writ of the Supreme Court of New South Wales claiming damages of £25,000 against Norman Bede Rydge; the cause of action was not disclosed. The writ was later withdrawn. Formal documents are held in the Supreme Court archives, Sydney, but reveal no details about the cause of action: the case of Doyle v. Rydge was no. 1765 of 1937; an application for writ of summons was filed on 20 May 1937, an appearance entered by the defendant on 24 May, and a notice of discontinuance filed by the plaintiff on 31 May, (Government Repository, PN/R41491 [669].)

\textsuperscript{89} \textit{Everyones}, 30.6.37, pp.10, 12. Companies with which Doyle became involved included \textit{Airplane Construction Development Pty. Ltd.}, and the \textit{Commonwealth Broadcasting Corporation} which operated several Australian radio stations including 2UW in Sydney.
2. Norman Bede Rydge
businessman Rydge was suspicious of the risk involved in feature production, and he made it clear to the Cinesound staff that the studio could operate only while its productions were successful. Hall wrote: 'the Powers awaited even a minor crash of one of my films at the box-office so as to have an excuse for closing that "dangerous" film production venture down'. 90 The pressure was similar to that experienced under Doyle: the Greater Union organisation continued to lack the resources to support a sleeping partner, but Rydge shared none of Doyle's sympathy for production.

While Doyle had taken a personal interest in the progress of each feature and had sometimes chosen new story material himself, Rydge made little personal contact with the studio executive or their work. 91 Rydge's aloofness from the company was symptomatic of an attitude to film which differed markedly from Cinesound's own commitment to feature production. Rydge saw production of feature films primarily in terms of their commercial potential, and had no apparent sympathy for the arguments, sentimental or otherwise, which gave film an elevated role in the community. Rydge's lack of sympathy may have been a personal bias or an attitude imposed on him by the economic needs of Greater Union; but, whatever its source it succeeded in making him an unpopular and distrusted figure in the eyes of Australian film-makers.

An opportunity for Rydge to escape the risk of production was to come with the outbreak of the Second World War, 92 but in the meantime Rydge turned Greater Union's resources towards safer business operations in the buying and leasing of real estate and theatre buildings. In the jargon of the trade, Rydge found the 'bricks and mortar' of theatres much safer than film production, and in the immediate post-war years in particular the Greater Union chain was to expand with rapidity at the

90 Ken Hall, in a letter to the writer, 24.3.69.
91 For example, Doyle frequently took a personal credit in the titles of Cinesound productions, but Rydge's name was never associated directly with any production. (See Appendix I for a list of film credits).
92 See below, p.162.
expense of production. With these attitudes characterising the top management of its parent company, Cinesound was very much in the position of having to survive on its own resources.

The position of Cinesound within the Greater Union organisation gave it some element of kinship with other Australian producers. While several other production companies operated as subsidiaries of larger organisations, only one seems to have been in a position where losses made from feature ventures could be readily absorbed, and production allowed to continue. This exception, Efftee Film Productions, was the personal creation of Frank Thring who, at the end of the 1920s, sold his interest in Hoyts Theatres and re-invested his money in theatrical performing companies and film production. Thring managed to subsidise from his theatrical assets a series of ten feature films, some of which were not screened beyond his home state of Victoria or given an opportunity to re-coup their cost. Only with Thring's death in 1936 did his company cease to pursue the elusive profits of feature production.

With Thring's Efftee company and Cinesound, a third producer shared most of the publicity given to Australian films by the daily press in the 1930s; Charles Chauvel in fact seemed to have a greater talent for winning publicity than finding finance for his films: during his thirty or more years as an active producer he was able to raise capital for only nine feature films. Unlike Cinesound and Efftee, Chauvel lacked the security of theatre ownership or investment in other forms of entertainment, and in some areas his first silent films were physically distributed by himself, touring

93 See below, p.206.
94 J. Baxter, op.cit., p.66.
95 Chauvel's feature films were Moth of Moonbi (first released in 1925), Greenhide (1926), In the Wake of the Bounty (1933), Heritage (1935), Uncivilised (1936), 40,000 Horsemen (1941), Rats of Tobruk (1944), Sons of Matthew (1949), and Jedd (1953).
by car between country centres. Chauvel soon, however, became well enough known to find ready city releases for his films and even to win financial sponsorship from Norman Rydge for the post-war production of *Sons of Matthew*. Like Cinesound, Chauvel was dependant on income from one film to finance the next, and it was the financial failure of his productions that caused both the long delays between projects and the scale of his publicity campaigns to attract investors.

The vulnerability of feature production found its supreme illustration in the mid-1930s with the formation of the National group of companies backed by a distinguished interlocking directorate of Sydney businessmen including five knights. While Chauvel was always his own employer and handled every phase of his own productions himself, the National group was formed with the specific intention of establishing a fully operating film industry, employing several dozen staff and engaged in the continuous production of feature films for both local and overseas theatres.

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96 Baxter, op.cit., p.55.
97 See below, p.202ff.
98 Baxter, op.cit., pp.54-65, offers a detailed description of Chauvel's publicity techniques and considers that his 'devotion to the image of the producer was worthy of Cecil B. De Mille, archetype of the jodphurs-and-riding-crop school of film-makers' (p.59).
100 In September 1935, plans for the first film by National Productions were announced at a formal function attended by the Premier of New South Wales, Mr B.S.B. Stevens, at which high ideals were expressed by numerous speakers representing the company. Sir Hugh Denison was reported in *Everyones*, 25.9.35, p.4, as saying: 'we are activated not solely by any spirit of commercial enterprise ... we are hopeful and confident that we shall be able to help along those who have pioneered [the film industry]'.
An enormous amount of capital, estimated at £250,000, was injected into the venture: a studio was built and equipped at Pagewood under the control of National Studios Limited; and a co-production agreement for feature films was made between National Productions Limited and the British company of Gaumont-British. Technicians were brought out from England, a 'star' (Charles Farrell) imported from Hollywood, and the first production launched with vigorous ceremony in August 1936. Yet the film, The Flying Doctor, failed to attract audiences on a scale to justify its budget of £45,000, and the anticipated British release was perfunctory, following changes within the organisation of National's partner, Gaumont-British. Although the loss was considerable, the National group persisted with plans for a similar cosmopolitan production: the next film, Rangle River, had financial support from the American company of Columbia, an American star, Victor Jory, and an American director, Clarence Badger. But again the cost was not returned: income from Australian theatres was small and release in American theatres was not given until several years later. Following the failure of these two productions, the National group faded from the industry: the Pagewood studios lay virtually unused for three years and National Productions remained in existence only to debate the terms.

101 *Everyone's*, 6.5.36, p.8.
102 They were a director, Miles Mander (better known as an actor); a script-writer, J.O.C. Orton; a photographer, Derrick Williams; a production manager, T.D. Connochie; and a sound-recording engineer, Leslie Fry.
103 Gaumont appears to have withdrawn from the British market as a distributor, yet retained legal control over The Flying Doctor in England. Complex legal arrangements were made to transfer the film to a new distributor, but by February 1941, it had earned only £1,275/6/11 in British theatres, signifying a loss, since Gaumont's expenses to be deducted from the British earnings amounted to £1,663/9/6 (financial statements and miscellaneous correspondence in the Daniell Papers, item 2).
104 *Everyone's*, 10.6.36, p.8, reports that the cost of the production is being equally shared between National Studios and Columbia.
of overseas distribution until at least 1941.\textsuperscript{105}

Attempts by companies such as National to emulate the commercial success of Cinesound served to stress the fortunate combination of elements which lay behind Cinesound's profitable career. Charges were made by Cinesound's critics that any company could make a profit if a theatre chain had a financial interest in its films,\textsuperscript{106} but these charges overlooked the fact that companies such as National still failed despite the most generous terms from distributors and exhibitors.\textsuperscript{107} Of much more importance was the way the films were made, the choice of subjects, and how the films were sold to the public. Yet, rather than look to deficiencies in their own work, film-makers such as those who had worked for National, began to advocate government action to support the industry and to reduce the element of risk.\textsuperscript{108}

Schemes for government participation offered a variety of solutions for the industry's ills, but most failed to achieve their objectives. One of the first acts by the Commonwealth government to assist the industry was the appointment of a Royal Commission in 1927 to investigate problems in all phases of film activity. The Commission was prompted by pressure from two main fields of opinion: from those people who wished to see an improvement in conditions for the film industry and from those who wished to see Australian screens

\textsuperscript{105} Papers from the company's records are scattered throughout the Daniell Papers; the latest date of any document appears to be February 1941 (item 2).

\textsuperscript{106} This viewpoint is adopted by Michael Thornhill in 'The Australian Film?', Current Affairs Bulletin, vol.41, no.2, 18 December 1967, pp.26-27.

\textsuperscript{107} The Flying Doctor was distributed free of charge by the Australian branch of Twentieth Century-Fox, increasing the income of National Productions by about 25% (Everyones, 23.9.36, p.3).

\textsuperscript{108} Among the agitants were Frederick Daniell and Noel Monkman, and samples of their letters and submissions to the New South Wales government are included in the Daniell Papers, for example, items 235/3, 236/1, 236/2, and 241/5.
liberated from the domination of Hollywood. Union Theatres and Australasian Films were among the main targets of criticism because of the large role played in their operations at that time by the distribution and exhibition of American films; claims were made that they were pawns of American companies, allowing their policies to be formed in accordance with American wishes. Evidence by representatives from Union Theatres and Australasian Films, however, established to the satisfaction of the Commission that the capital behind the organisations was Australian and that there was no direct American control. Dependence on Hollywood studios for a constant supply of high quality material, however, meant that the American companies were in a position to place strong pressure on Australian theatre companies to make them conform to their wishes, just as the expansion of theatre construction in Doyle's organisation at the end of the 1920s had been prompted by American demands.

The Royal Commission made fifty recommendations to assist Australian producers, although many proved to be unconstitutional in the Commonwealth sphere and were dependent on uniform state legislation. One of the few recommendations of the Commission to be brought into effect was the award by the Commonwealth government of cash prizes for the best films of the year; the competition, however, was never to be fairly tested as an incentive for production. In 1930 the first Commonwealth competition was held and

109 Wasson, op.cit., p.16.
110 1927 Royal Commission, Minutes of Evidence, p.360 (evidence of Stuart Doyle).
111 Commonwealth of Australia, Royal Commission on the Moving Picture Industry in Australia, Report (1928), paragraph 59: 'It is abundantly clear to your Commissioners from the evidence adduced that there is no American combine in existence in Australia exercising a stranglehold over the motion-picture industry'. (Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers, 1926-27-28, vol.4).
112 See above, p.11.
113 See Report of the 1927 Royal Commission, op.cit.
attracted four 'extremely disappointing' entries; only the third prize of £1,500 was awarded to Fellers, a film which received little circulation and found little favour with either the public or the critics. 114

The first Commonwealth competition failed primarily because it coincided with a period of flux in the industry's transition from silent to sound films; few producers were in a position to afford the equipment and larger budgets required for 'talkies'. The Commonwealth competition was revived in 1935, with more satisfactory results; the entries included several films which had proved popular with the public and critics, among them Cinesound's _The Silence of Dean Maitland_ which won the second prize of £1,250 and Chauvel's _Heritage_ which was awarded the first prize of £2,500. 115 Despite considerable public interest aroused in the 1935 competition, no further events were held, possibly because the Commonwealth believed that the prizes were too small to act as meaningful incentives for the 'talkie' industry, and that prizes would probably go each year to the same large and experienced producers such as Cinesound.

With the failure and inability of the Commonwealth government to fulfil the recommendations of the 1927 Commission, the Commonwealth withdrew, and made no constructive steps to aid the film industry until the 1970s. 116 During the 1930s, initiative for aid was instead left to the States, and the New South Wales Government in particular became actively involved in industrial problems, because of the presence in Sydney of the main film companies. In 1934, the New South Wales Government instituted an official inquiry into the state's film industry, an action made necessary by the deadlock in a 'film war' then being waged between

114 Wasson, op.cit., p.37.
115 _Sydney Morning Herald_, 8.3.35, p.11.
116 The government's present programme of support for the industry includes three new organisations, created within the Australian Council for the Arts: the Film Industry Development Corporation, the Experimental Film and Television Fund, and the Interim Council for a National Film and Television Training School.
distributors and exhibitors and between American and Australian companies. The war was largely prompted by the reluctance of exhibitors to accept the more severe terms demanded by distributors, but it had relevance as well for Australian producers. One of the most keenly disputed practices of distribution companies was the system of 'block booking' whereby exhibitors were forced to buy a large number of films in a package deal if they were to be supplied with film at all. While the block booking system had the advantage of providing both distributors and exhibitors with continuity of business, it created a situation in which Australian producers with only one or two films to sell could not get their films into theatres unless they paid the theatre management to shelve one of their package films. In some cases, where the Australian film was of special interest, theatres would be willing to pay the extra costs of shelving films from their regular supplier, but few Australian films could compete on such terms with American productions.

The report of the 1934 Inquiry attempted to resolve some of the problems of the industry by recommending an increase in the 'rejection' rights of exhibitors, to enable them to reject a certain percentage of the films in any block booking offered to them by a distributor, and by recommending the enactment of legislation to enforce the screening of a certain quota of Australian films each year. The result of these recommendations was the New South Wales Cinematograph Films (Australian Quota) Act, proclaimed as law in September 1935. The Act provided for the screening of a quota of Australian films which increased annually, and for the handling of a comparable percentage of local films by distributors. If the films were not available, the distribution

117 Wasson, op.cit., pp.41ff.
118 Ibid.
120 The Statutes of New South Wales (Sydney, 1935), pp.361-373.
companies were expected to invest in production themselves to make up the deficit. Penalties were provided with fines up to £100, although theatres and distributors could escape the requirements of the law if they could prove that hardship would be involved in meeting the quota.

Anticipation of the quota act provided a greater stimulus to the production industry than the act itself, once it became law. Companies competed with each other to produce the first quota films, expecting that theatres would be required to screen their work regardless of the film's quality. Cinesound, which operated the major studios in Sydney, benefited directly from the production boom: the company began to advertise its services to quota producers as early as six months before the act became law, and the studios were leased to several 'fly-by-night' companies. Financial gain from 'quota quickies' was not, however, automatic; the first production intended directly to exploit the quota act, The Burgomeister, ran foul of a quality clause in the act. The clause had been designed to prevent profiteers taking advantage of theatrical quota obligations by foisting cheap, low quality productions on to them, as had happened in England. Not only The Burgomeister

121 Everyones, 6.3.35, p.9.
122 The productions made at Cinesound by other companies at this time included The Burgomeister, The Life Story of John Lee, and White Death.
123 The 'quality clause', section 3.(l)(g) of the Act, stipulates that registration as a quota production should not be granted to those films in which the technical quality and the potential public interest are unduly low, in the opinion of the 'Films Advisory Committee' set up under the Act to advise the Minister. The Burgomeister was made by Harry Southwell at the Cinesound studios in June 1935. It was advertised in Everyones, 25.9.35, p.9, as 'The First Australian Quota Production' but it was not released until several years later, and then only in country centres, under the title, Hypnotised.
but at least two other films produced in response to the New South Wales law failed to win registration as quota productions, in most cases running their companies into bankruptcy since their films were too poor to attract exhibitors, regardless of legal compulsion.

It became evident soon after the passage of the act that, despite the production boom, there were still insufficient films to meet the quota requirements. By the end of 1936, it was also clear that American distributors had no intention of initiating production in Australia: the fine of £100 was preferable to the risk of ten or more thousand pounds in the production of a feature film. A series of amendments to the act failed to improve its effectiveness, and the production boom faded slowly during the latter half of the 1930s. The law was virtually inoperative by 1939.

Although Cinesound profited by the short-lived production boom, the official attitude of Stuart Doyle was one of staunch and outspoken opposition to the act. Feature films produced by his company were making profits without the aid of quota legislation and he was wary of any government intervention in his business. To him, the quota act was not only

124 These were The Life Story of John Lee and Phantom Gold.
125 One distributor, representing the American firm of R.K.O.-Radio, stated: 'The trouble about the quota in N.S.W. is that if we sacrifice ourselves for the sake of the local industry, it will establish a precedent. All the other Australian States will bring in quotas. Produce in this country we will not and cannot'. Quoted by Wasson, op.cit., p.58.
126 Amendments were made in the following Acts of the New South Wales Parliament: Theatres, Public Halls and Cinematograph Films Act (no.44, 1937), and the Theatres, Public Halls and Cinematograph Films (Amendment) Act (no.35, 1938).
127 In a speech given at an industry luncheon, Doyle spoke out against the New South Wales quota: the Act was 'badly designed without any real knowledge of what the industry required' and his predictions had already been fulfilled, that the Act would be 'an absolute and abject failure' (reported in Everyones, 30.6.37, p.18).
destined to failure because of its lack of power, but it was also unnecessary to his own operations and contrary to his philosophy as Managing Director of a theatre-owning company. His attitude to quota schemes was made clear even in his evidence before the 1927 Royal Commission: there he argued with conviction that theatres could not function without audiences, and the public would not come to films it did not want to see, least of all films shown solely because of legal requirements.\textsuperscript{128} The creation of a public demand for Australian films was of far greater importance, and it was such a demand that he aimed to create with the publicity for each Cinesound production.

Cinesound, however, was not averse to taking advantage of some of the incentives offered by the New South Wales Government. An amendment to the quota act in 1938 gave authority to the State Treasury to guarantee the bank overdrafts of local producers, should such encouragement be necessary for the industry to reach the levels determined by the quota.\textsuperscript{129} In a last effort to give effect to the legislation, this clause was brought into operation in 1939: the state Treasury undertook to guarantee overdrafts for four feature films, for a total amount of £52,500.\textsuperscript{130} Cinesound's last feature production, Dad Rudd, M.P., was one of the four covered by the arrangement, but it seems likely that the film would have been made even without the guarantee since it fitted into the established routine of Cinesound at that time.

\textsuperscript{128} 1927 Royal Commission, Minutes of Evidence, p.369. Doyle stated in evidence before the Commission: 'the quota system ... would spell disaster to the industry from the public's point of view ... No quota system can induce this silent mass of picture-goers to attend a theatre to see a picture that they do not want to see, irrespective of its country of origin'.

\textsuperscript{129} Section 7(1) of the Theatres, Public Halls and Cinematograph Films (Amendment) Act, given assent on 22 December 1938.

\textsuperscript{130} The four films, and the amount guaranteed, were: That Certain Something (listed under its working title of Daughters of Australia), £12,500; The Power and the Glory (working title: Man Without a Country), £12,500; 40,000 Horsemen, £15,000; and Dad Rudd, M.P., £12,500. (Film Weekly, 14.3.40, p.5).
The three other films covered by the guarantee - Chauvel's 40,000 Horsemen and two films by a new company, Argosy, That Certain Something and The Power and the Glory - owed more to the government's action: a small and relatively inexperienced company such as Argosy would not have been able to raise capital for two successive productions without such a guarantee. While the films by Cinesound and Chauvel were popular enough to cover their own costs, both of the Argosy productions made a loss which the New South Wales government was obliged to cover under the terms of the agreement.\footnote{Copies of the agreements with Argosy for its two productions are included in the Daniell Papers, items 286/2-6.}

The guarantee clause of the quota act thus represented the only practical and effective aid to the industry from any of the Australian governments during the 1930s, although for Cinesound the guarantee played a welcome but ultimately superfluous role in the company's affairs.

These then were the main elements in the business and industrial background to Cinesound's operations: the company arose as the natural extension of Doyle's ambition for production and the necessity for his organisation to experiment with alternative sources of income to offset the effects of depression in the industry. After Doyle's resignation in 1937 Cinesound was less readily tolerated by a more sceptical management in its parent company, and was forced to prove its commercial viability with every step. Financial pressures on Cinesound moulded its activities in common with most other Australian producers, but the industry's struggle for effective government aid was if anything opposed by Cinesound and certainly had little lasting effect on the company. Since neither the parent company nor government legislation could be relied upon by Cinesound for support, it becomes necessary to look for the factors which contributed to Cinesound's success in an examination of its normal business operations, the nature of its product, and its method of marketing feature productions.
Chapter Two - Cinesound at Work

A) Production

In undertaking the factors which contributed to Cinesound's strength in production, it is necessary not only to look at the industrial context in which the studio worked, but to examine the day-to-day operations of the company. Through such an examination it is possible to isolate elements which created the internal momentum necessary to keep the company actively in production during the 1930s.

From its inception, Cinesound was dominated by the personality and pragmatism of its General Manager, Ken G. Hall. Stuart Doyle had contributed much to the conditions within which Cinesound was to operate, but more than any other single person, Hall gave to Cinesound its high standards of achievement and its sense of purpose. Hall maintained, until his resignation in 1956, a dual control over the company, first, as manager of the company's operations, and simultaneously, as the main creative authority in all of the company's productions, whether feature films, advertising films or newsreels. Those films which Hall did not personally direct were screened for his scrutiny before the final printing stages. In feature production Hall not only produced and directed all but one of the company's films, but also took part in script conferences, frequently writing substantial parts of the script. In addition Hall's direction of the photography and editing was thorough and in the preparation of the sound-track he would even sometimes sing music to the composers. His personal supervision over each phase of production, from the first idea for the script to the quality of the final print, gave a unity of style and concept to the films produced by Cinesound: all reflected Hall's over-riding concern for the production of popular entertainment and his own sense of what constituted that entertainment.

The degree of Hall's control over feature production would have been impossible in the context of a large-scale
3. Ken G. Hall
production industry in contemporary American or British studios where the volume of work demanded that each staff member specialise in a certain activity. In Hollywood it was extremely rare for a director to have control over script-writing, photography, editing or the composition of music. Only those directors with sufficient power, usually gained through personal popularity with the public, such as Alfred Hitchcock or Frank Capra, could gain control equivalent to that exercised by Hall, to produce films entirely as an expression of their own ideas.

In smaller production companies, such as those found in Hollywood in its infancy, in many European countries, and in Australia, it was more feasible for individual directors to dominate all phases of their own productions, and in Australia in the 1930s, Chauvel and Thring exercised a control similar to Hall's. Others, however, experienced direct supervision from financial backers: The Flying Doctor (1936) and Rangell River (1937) by the National group were sufficiently controlled by a committee of investors for the system of production to be parodied in a later film by members of the group, That Certain Something (1940). While Hall did not escape the pressure of financial controls over his productions and was forced to shape them accordingly, such pressure at Cinesound was always indirect and Hall retained full discretionary powers to spend the studio's money as he saw fit. Hall was too aware of responsibilities to the staff and to the future of his company, to mismanage his existing resources, and he served as his own disciplinary check on wasteful projects.

Hall had been placed by Doyle in charge of Cinesound and its productions when the company was formed in June 1932.

1 The film, which tells a story set in a film production studio, depicts a film director as one perpetually harassed by the petty demands of the supervising committee. That Certain Something was written and directed by Clarence Badger who had made Rangell River for National Studios.

2 Hall refers to his 'absolute duty' to the people working for him to keep them employed, in a letter to the writer, 31.5.72.
He had already guided the production unit through the making of *On Our Selection* and had served for long enough as Doyle's personal assistant for Doyle to realise his ability as a manager.

Hall's background lay in public relations rather than in production: from the start of his working life he was associated with newspapers and publicity, as a cadet reporter on the *Evening News* in Sydney, and after 1918, as a member of the publicity department of Union Theatres. His first months in Union Theatres gave him a solid background in the detailed processes of publicity, from the writing of press releases to the design of advertising displays. To extend his experience further, Hall, although still in his 'teens, was placed by Doyle in the position of Manager of the Lyceum Theatre in Sydney, and eventually, at the age of 21, he was made publicity director for the entire Union Theatres - Australasian Films complex. His rapid rise in Doyle's organisation was an early indication of the enthusiasm and commitment that Hall brought to his work in the film industry; far from deriving his energy from financial incentives, Hall seemed to draw most from a developing sense of 'showmanship' which became the guiding philosophy behind his production activities in the 1930s, and which will be discussed at length in Chapter Four.

From Union Theatres, Hall moved to the Sydney branch of the American production and distribution company of First National Pictures, where he again directed the work of the publicity department. There, Hall's interest in production began to develop: in 1935 he was sent by the company to Hollywood to broaden his knowledge of the American industry, and had ample opportunity to observe productions in progress. Like Charles Chauvel who also spent some time as an observer in Hollywood, Hall learnt a great deal from

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3 The following biographical details owe much to an interview with Ken Hall, recorded by the writer on 24.8.69, and also to articles in the *Exhibitor's Monthly*, 7.5.36, and the *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 8.6.65.
his experiences there; but unlike Chauvel who returned to Australia to emulate the public manner of the more extroverted Hollywood producers, Hall returned with a sharpened awareness of the business organisation of production and a respect for budgets and time schedules.

After his return from Hollywood, Hall had his first opportunity to become directly involved in production. As publicity director at First National he had often been given the task of re-editing imported films, either to avoid censorship problems, or to improve a film's popular appeal. In 1928, First National imported a German film, The Exploits of the Emden, which included scenes showing the sinking of the Emden by H.M.A.S. Sydney during the First World War. The German bias to the story and the casting proved to be incongruous for Australian audiences, and in order to give the film stronger local appeal, the Managing Director of First National, John C. Jones, asked Hall to give the film a more acceptable perspective. With two cameramen, Hall spent a week at Jervis Bay shooting the old H.M.A.S. Sydney and other destroyers during naval exercises and managed to simulate the battle between the Sydney and the Emden. Hall also wrote and directed several scenes in which sailors played the part of crew on the Sydney. One scene provided 'comedy relief' with a sailor busily collecting his debts before the engagement with the Emden begins. Already, in

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4 Baxter, op.cit., p.59. See above, p.27.
5 In one film, for example, Hall inserted a subtitle to 'marry' a man and a woman who would otherwise have lived in sin (Daily Telegraph, 8.6.65). Such self-censorship was possible only in the early 1920s when the censor allowed film importers to see films before they were screened for the censor; later, when this system was disallowed, Hall was sometimes obliged to travel to New Zealand to re-edit a film before it reached Australia. (Hall interview, 24.8.69).
6 The film was originally titled, Unsere Emden, directed in 1926 by Louis Ralph.
7 Naval Board archives, Melbourne, file G560/201/103-149, includes information about the film's production. In January 1928, Sir Victor Wilson, President of the Motion Picture Distributors' Association of Australia, supported Hall's representations to the Australian Naval Board. Sensing the historic and propaganda value of a film about
this exercise, Hall revealed his sense of balancing
dramatic scenes with comedy and of straining resources to
achieve spectacular action sequences. His re-construction
of the film proved effective: the film not only received
good notices from local critics but also earned a large
profit for First National.

More important than this assignment in forming Hall's
approach to film production was his opportunity as publicity
director to see large numbers of American and European films
and to observe audience reactions to them. From this
experience Hall was to adopt almost instinctively a style
of direction that resembled as closely as possible the style
of popular films from overseas, and to gain a knowledge of
those techniques of story construction which seemed to
appeal most strongly to audiences. This close and continued
familiarity with popular entertainment was supplemented by
a thorough understanding of all aspects of the motion
picture industry, gained not only from his work in the
publicity departments of Union Theatres and First National,
but later from his position as general assistant to Stuart
Doyle.

In 1929, Hall returned to Union Theatres to supervise
a publicity campaign for the opening of Doyle's most
ambitious building, the State Theatre block in Sydney.
This major public relations job was followed by appointment
as Doyle's assistant, and it was in this position that Hall
was assigned to investigate the commercial worth of the

7 (contd)
the Sydney which was soon to be scrapped, the Naval Secretary
approved full co-operation with First National. Only the
Navy's minimal expenses during filming were to be charged
to the company. Access to the Sydney was approved and at
Hall's request, J.W. Seabrook (a participant in the Emden-
Sydney engagement) was given leave from the Naval Board
to provide technical advice to the film-makers.

8 A critic in the Sydney Mail, 3.10.28, p.20, wrote that it
was 'an excellent film ... and throughout realism in the
battle scenes is authentic but restrained'.

9 The film ran for three weeks at the Prince Edward Theatre,
Sydney, commencing on 21 September 1928.
sound-recording experiments being conducted by Arthur Smith in a corner of the Australasian laboratory. Thereafter, as champion of the early experiments in talkie production, Hall became increasingly responsible for the application of the new sound equipment to the production of short films and, later, for the encouragement of refinements such as mobility and sound-mixing. It was then only a natural extension of his existing duties for Hall to become director of the first major test of the equipment in the production of On Our Selection, 10 and to be appointed General Manager of the new company of Cinesound Productions. During the following years, Hall was to give Doyle no reason to reconsider his appointment, and as Cinesound's record of successes grew, Hall's control of the company became increasingly independent of Greater Union, provided that Cinesound remained a profit-making enterprise.

Hall's independence and range of control were themselves not enough to create conditions for the continued commercial success which Cinesound experienced in the 1930s. Rupert Kathner was one contemporary Australian who made several films almost single-handed, but all ran into serious debt and received little sympathy from critics. 11 Necessary concomitants of control were the ability of the director to realise his concept of what his films should be like. In Kathner's case there certainly seemed to be a disparity between his ambition for his films and their ultimate achievement. At Cinesound, Hall was more fortunate: during the 1930s he was able to build up a nucleus of permanent staff consisting of about thirty specialists to turn his concepts into tangible products. To Hall in his role as producer-director and, in many cases, writer of the Cinesound

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10 Rumours exist that an American, Clyde Hood, was first chosen to direct On Our Selection. Hood had been brought to Australia under contract to Union Theatres to mount stage presentations at the State Theatre, Sydney, but he was killed in a plane crash early in 1931. (Interview with Arthur Smith, 8.10.69).

11 For example, Phantom Gold (1937) and Wings of Destiny (1940).
films, must be attributed much of the content of the Cinesound features. But also to Hall in his second role as manager of the studio's operations must be attributed much of the strength and efficiency of the staff: together they formed an experienced production team which no other Australian studio had the opportunity of permanency to challenge.

Hall's achievement as manager was to nurture in the permanent staff a spirit of teamship which became one of the studio's most valuable resources in the face of economic and technical challenge. A certain amount of resentment against Hall and Cinesound was inevitable from those outside the organisation, given the success of the company and the difficulty of finding employment in such a relatively small enterprise. But on speaking with members of the Cinesound staff it becomes clear that, within the company, loyalties to the company's work were very strongly felt and that Hall was held in a high level of personal respect. 12

Hall's style of management emerges as one that maintained a fine balance between discipline necessitated by the job and flexibility in his personal relations with the staff. Hall was concerned not only with serving his company and the Greater Union organisation, but also with keeping his staff in employment and in maintaining their satisfaction in their work. He made little attempt to gain specialised knowledge in technical areas such as sound-recording or photography, and the staff in the daily work of their own specialised fields were their own masters. Their overall achievements, however, were moulded and directed by Hall towards the goals of the studio.

Hall's ambition for Cinesound was concerned above all with making films that would properly satisfy the public's desire and need for entertainment. 13 The financial reward of popularity was of secondary concern. Even though

12 For example, interviews by the writer with Arthur Smith, 8.10.69, John Warwick (assistant director), 12.6.69, and Stan Tolhurst (actor), 17.7.70.
13 See below, Chapter Four, Part A.
the financial success of Cinesound's films has been Hall's usual method in discussion of estimating the popularity of his films,\(^{14}\) the association of the Cinesound films with profit is misleading, since Hall's avowed concern was first and foremost with entertaining the largest possible audience, and his work would be shaped to that end. It is not creating a false or idealised picture of the Cinesound staff to describe Hall's work as dedicated, and to find similar dedication in his subordinates. Arthur Smith, for example, explained when asked about his salary at Cinesound:

I started off at £15 a week ... and I think in about a year they reduced me to £12.10.0 because of the Depression or some darn thing ... we didn't care much, we were too interested ... we thought we were building up a big future for ourselves ... business was growing all the time, we thought we were going to get bigger and bigger and we didn't worry about the salary or the hours worked. Nobody got any overtime; we used to work a 60 or 70 hour week, and nobody thought anything about it.\(^{15}\)

The high level of morale at Cinesound and the integration of the staff seems to have derived from a variety of factors: the company's continuing record of success, the attention given to the company by the press and radio, the relative security of employment in comparison with work offered by other production companies, and the fact that Cinesound's resources of staff and equipment represented an unrivalled production force within Australia. But Hall's personal contribution as manager of the company cannot be underestimated. His ability both to respect the contributions from his staff and to win their respect is very apparent from interviews with Hall and others who worked at Cinesound in the 1930s. Hall's admiration for Arthur Smith, George Heath, Frank Harvey, and others on his staff testifies to his ability to select men skilled in their own fields and

\(^{14}\) In an interview in the film Forgotten Cinema (by Anthony Buckley, 1967), Hall stated: 'Masterpieces don't make money ... only one ... of the 17 films I made for Cinesound didn't make money and that broke even'.

\(^{15}\) Interview with the writer, 8.10.69.
able to attain professional standards irrespective of the scale of the challenge. In response, it is rare to find even guarded criticism of Hall in interviews with his former staff; while Norman Rydge and even Stuart Doyle were often criticised, Hall was usually spoken of in warm terms. The commitment of the staff to Cinesound arose not only from the lack of feasible alternatives, but emerged in the pride and enjoyment of the staff in working towards the studio's goals. Partly through his nurturing of this spirit and his encouragement to his staff to fulfil their professional ambitions in their specialised fields, Hall was able to maintain virtually the same nucleus of staff throughout the 1930s and the war years. 16

The phenomenon of the team spirit at Cinesound and of Hall's contribution to it can be seen most clearly in comparison with other producers of the same period. Harry Southwell and Charles Chauvel were among the producers and directors who hired Cinesound's studio and technical staff to make films of their own during the 1930s. With the exception of Chauvel's 40,000 Horsemen in 1940 none of these films achieved a commercial or artistic standard that could compare with Cinesound's own productions. The Burgomeister, made by Harry Southwell in 1935, was withdrawn from distribution by its producers after its low standard disqualified it from registration as a quota production in New South Wales. Again, White Death (1936), made largely on the Barrier Reef for Zane Grey, was based on a screenplay by Frank Harvey, the author of many Cinesound scripts, but the result was less than satisfactory, technically and commercially. The staff loaned to Grey for White Death seemed uncertain about the motives behind the production and the professional standing of Grey's company, and one recalled:

They never made an honest attempt to make a picture up there ... they just wanted a lot more money to live on.17

16 See Appendix I, for a list of credits from the feature films, from which can be easily seen the continuity of staff at Cinesound.
17 Interview with Arthur Smith, 8.10.69.
Obviously, then, the availability of reliable equipment and experienced staff was not enough to make a successful picture, and Hall's ability to mould the resources of scriptwriters, technical staff and actors into a coherent unit must be seen as one of the prime factors contributing to Cinesound's success; without Hall's overall direction there seemed to be little to unite the separate skills of the company's staff.

Hall's staff came from a variety of backgrounds, and, particularly with actors, the task of unifying their work presented a major problem. Radio and theatre were the two obvious sources from which Cinesound could draw its cast members, but neither source was ideal: radio actors who delivered lines well would frequently have difficulty remembering them, and would move awkwardly and photograph badly; while theatrical performers on the other hand often had difficulty in muting their stage style to suit the more subtle needs of film acting. When Hall first began to direct, his lack of experience in handling actors emerged in a reliance on the advice of Bert Bailey in *On Our Selection* and, in later films, on the dialogue coaches, George Cross and George Parker. Bailey, Cross and Parker had acted for decades on the stage and encouraged performers to overact for the screen, with expansive gestures and deliberate articulation of lines. As Hall's experience grew, his control became more effective in modifying the work of his cast to conform with the conventions of Hollywood and British cinema.18

Once a style had been established, theatre and radio became invaluable as a source for 'character' actors, and considerable imagination was displayed in creating a wide range of characterisations from the troupe of regular players. Alec Kellaway was perhaps the most notable example of the variety achieved by Cinesound's character actors: he first appeared in *The Broken Melody* (1930) as a worldly pickpocket; in *Let George Do It* (1938) as a suave magician;  

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18 Interview with Hall, by the writer, 11.2.69.
in Dad and Dave Come to Town (1938) as an effeminate shop assistant; in Gone to the Dogs (1939) as a criminal, 'Mad Jack'; and in Come Up Smiling (1939) as a slow-witted boxer known as 'The Killer'. Kellaway's versatility was matched, although with less conviction, by players such as Sidney Wheeler, a radio actor whose roles ranged from 'Australia's Wallace Beery' in Lovers and Luggers (1937) to a parliamentarian in Smithy (1946) and Ronald Whelan who appeared in most Cinesound films after 1936 as a villain, whether a sadistic circus hand in Orphan of the Wilderness (1936) or a surly Spanish sea-captain in Lovers and Luggers.

The stage also provided Cinesound with a group of vaudeville and comic performers who brought their acts virtually direct to the new medium. George Wallace, Roy Rene, Bert Bailey and Fred MacDonald all played roles which they had perfected on the stage before they came to work at Cinesound: Wallace as the slapstick comedian and tap-dancer, complete with his famous fall onto his left ear; Rene with his Jewish caricature and 'blue' jokes; and Bert Bailey and Fred MacDonald in their roles of Dad and Dave which they had played for years on the stage.

Although Australian theatre and radio provided Cinesound with character actors and leading players for light comedies, a serious shortage existed of players suitable for leading 'straight' roles. The production of The Silence of Dean Maitland (1934) in particular was delayed for several months while the company searched for an actor to play the leading role; finally a British actor, John Longden, then visiting Australia, was chosen for the part. Cecil Kellaway, the brother of the character actor, Alec Kellaway, was one of the few Australians who could carry a dramatic film as the main character, and two Cinesound

19 Reports of the search for a suitable actor vary considerably, and it was clearly exaggerated to some extent by publicity agents. The Auckland Star, 8.7.33, quotes a search lasting six months, while the West Australian, 26.6.33, states 'more than 18 months'.
4. Alec Kellaway in *Lovers and Luggers* (on the left is Campbell Copelin).

5. Alec Kellaway in *The Broken Melody*.

The character actor.
6. Alec Kellaway in *Come Up Smiling*

7. Alec Kellaway in *Dad and Dave Come to Town*  
(on the right is George Lloyd)

*The Character Actor* (continued)
3. Alec Kellaway (left) in Gone to the Dogs. On the right is Ronald Whelan in one of his many roles as villain. In the centre is Lou Vernon.

9. Ronald Whelan (left) as the villain in Lovers and Luggers. On the right is Claude Turton (Cinesound's make-up artist) as the evil Charlie Quong.

The Character Actor (continued)
films were especially designed to suit his particular style and personality. But like Cecil Kellaway, most players who achieved public recognition in Australian films were forced to depart for England or America to develop their careers. Despite Cinesound's continuity of production and the host of smaller companies in operation at the same time, film acting offered no promise of regular, suitable work, and the turnover of players was rapid and consistent throughout the 1930s and 1940s. Jocelyn Howarth, Shirley Ann Richards, Peter Finch, John McCallum, Janet Johnson, John Warwick, Molly Raynor, Mary Maguire, Margaret Vyner, Chips Rafferty, Ron Randell, and Grant Taylor were all promising players - in films by Cinesound and its contemporaries - who were forced to go overseas to find continuity of work.

Two methods were available to Cinesound to maintain a supply of suitable actors and actresses for 'straight' roles: by making long-term contracts to retain existing players or by intensifying the recruitment and training of new 'talent'. Although long-term contracts with particular performers were common in America and England to guarantee the availability of suitable players, Cinesound made only one such contract, partly because of the expense of the contract, and partly because very few individual performers would be required continuously in each feature over the period of a contract. Cinesound's sole contract, with Shirley Ann Richards, came into effect one month before the start of production on It Isn't Done in September 1936, and gave Miss Richards a small regular allowance with a higher salary during working weeks. The contract, covering a period of two and a half years, was extremely unusual in the Australian industry, where producers had no alternative but to contract with their case and technicians on a 'picture-to-picture' basis.

20 These were It Isn't Done (1937) and Mr Chedworth Steps Out (1939).
21 Letter from Miss Richards to the writer, from Los Angeles, 9.6.69.
In addition to drawing on the stage and radio for its performers, Cinesound attempted to create a pool of players, trained in film techniques, who could be drawn on for 'bit' parts in new productions and who required little coaching on the set where time was expensive. The existence of the pool boosted Cinesound's status as a major production company; from the talent schools Cinesound could select especially gifted performers and give them guidance and encouragement to develop their ability. Brian Abbott and Elaine Hamill were two students from Cinesound's talent schools who were given special 'grooming' for major roles in a number of films to compensate for the shortage of suitable actors from the stage.

Cinesound did not open its own talent school until February 1939, and it was to close when feature production was interrupted by the war in 1940.22 But throughout the 1930s, Cinesound maintained a close formal relationship with a local school known as the Cinema Academy, with instructors such as George Cross and W. Lane Bayliff, who themselves appeared regularly in Cinesound productions. Ken Hall and his 'talent scouts' frequently visited the Academy to watch plays performed by the students, and the school exploited this fact in its publicity by stating that it was run 'under the patronage' of Cinesound. From this association, Hall gained immediate access to supporting players who were anxious to gain experience and could give professional polish to the smallest roles in each production.23

With his technical staff, Hall had more opportunity to maintain a continuous nucleus of staff, since, unlike actors, the same technicians could be used on successive productions. Thus, the problem of finding new staff was not recurrent, particularly since Cinesound could offer far better working conditions than other companies formed to

22 A prospectus for this school is included in item 326 of the Daniell Papers. The opening of the school was widely publicised and a long article about it appeared as far afield as the New Zealand newspaper, Evening Star, 4.2.39.
23 Evervones, 9.1.35, p.29; Daily Telegraph (Sydney), 25.9.36, p.7.
make only one or two features. While Cinesound's permanent staff numbered about thirty, during the shooting of a feature this number would often double, with electricians, carpenters, costume designers, and general production assistants to support the regular staff. Many technicians and production labourers were 'free-lance' labour, available for any local production, but Cinesound also drew heavily on sources within the Greater Union organisation, with staff that worked as well in the laboratory of Australasian Films or in the presentation of stage items to accompany film screenings in Greater Union theatres. Bert Cross, who was in charge of the laboratory when On Our Selection was made, became Hall's chief technical adviser on that film, and Jack Souter, production manager on most of the Cinesound features, had performed similar work in the Greater Union theatres, supervising the dressing of sets.

Since no trade unions existed in the film production industry, it was possible for technical staff to perform more than one function at one time, a factor which contributed greatly to the company's speed and efficiency in comparison with some American studios where duties were formally demarcated. Technical staff were often called upon to supplement the casts when suitable players were unavailable. John Warwick, who served as Hall's assistant director until 1935, and his successor, Ronald Whelan, both had had experience as actors and took important parts in many films. Claude Turton and Dorothy Dunckley were others on the technical staff who frequently took acting roles; both were specialists in make-up, and Turton in particular took roles which exploited his skill as a make-up artist, from an Afghan hawker in The Squatter's Daughter (1933) to an inscrutable Chinese barkeeper in Lovers and Luggers (1937).

The key positions in Hall's technical staff were held by people from a wide variety of backgrounds, but all of whom displayed resources of imagination and ingenuity in creating effects to strengthen the quality of each production. Whilst many members of the staff had opportunities to make distinctive contributions to Cinesound's features,
three in particular emerged as major artists in their own right and whose performance substantially affected the final results of particular productions: Frank Harvey as scriptwriter, George Heath as photographer, and J. Alan Kenyon as supervisor of 'special effects'.

Harvey joined Cinesound initially in September 1936 as 'director of dialogue', to assist Hall on the set by coaching players in their lines. From this position, Harvey became involved in script conferences, and Hall became increasingly dependent on his contribution to the writing of each script. Harvey's background lay firmly in the theatre, both in Australia and in England, and he had written, produced and acted in numerous productions including Cape Forlorn, which was filmed in England. Before joining Cinesound he had worked as dialogue director with Efftee and had written the script for Zane Grey's film, White Death (1936), but this experience had not altered his bias towards theatrical conventions when working in the film medium. His work at Cinesound, both as an actor and as a writer, reveals this theatrical bias: his scripts tend towards fulsome dialogues with witty repartee and epigrammatical statements, and his acting, particularly in Tall Timbers (1937), tends to exploit dramatic gestures and facial expressions far more intensively than was then required for screen 'naturalism'. Under Hall's direction, Harvey's dialogues were simplified and images allowed to express more of the script's content; his acting too became increasingly restrained as he adjusted to the demands of the film medium. Despite his initial shortcomings,

24 Harvey was given a formal credit for the screenplay of every film after It Isn't Done (1937) with the exception of Come Up Smiling (1939). (See Appendix I for credits).

25 Biographical information on Frank Harvey is included in an article in the Daily Telegraph (Sydney), 27.8.36.

26 This assessment of Harvey's work is based primarily on an interview with Ken Hall, by the writer, 11.2.69.
10. Ken Hall, Frank Harvey and Bert Bailey during the shooting of one of Dad and Dave Come to Town.
Harvey's work remained important to each Cinesound production: his ideas were valuable, even if their form of expression was not always ideal, and by the time of Dad Rudd, M.P. (1940), both his acting and his writing had become intelligent and forceful elements in the composition of the entertainment.

George Heath became Cinesound's director of photography during the production of Thoroughbred in 1936. Most of the previous Cinesound features had been photographed by Frank Hurley, a documentary film-maker who had won fame for his films of Antarctic expeditions and New Guinea exploration. Hurley, however, found difficulty in adjusting his working methods to the demands of a tightly scheduled feature production: Hurley was a 'loner', better suited to filming his own documentaries at his own pace and in his own style. He proved particularly ill-at-ease inside the Cinesound studio where the lighting was artificial.27 Heath adapted much more easily to studio work and soon developed into a technician of world class.28 His work on the Cinesound features was always attuned to the demands of the film and its future audience: his images show few of the pretensions to grandeur which are to be found in the work of Hurley, and instead his photography is clear, expressive and undemanding.

Like Heath, J. Alan Kenyon had little trouble in adjusting to the needs of film production. Kenyon had worked as a set designer on the stage before joining Cinesound as an expert in 'special effects'. From the production of Thoroughbred (1936) onwards most Cinesound films were marked by a display of Kenyon's ingenuity: the enormous bushland setting for Orphan of the Wilderness (1936), the underwater setting for Lovers and Luggers (1937) or the extravagant fashion display at the climax of Dad and Dave Come to Town (1938). One of his most ambitious effects was the simulation of a 'timber drive' in Tall Timbers (1937):

27 Hall interview, 11.2.69.
28 Baxter, op.cit., p.69.
11. J. Alan Kenyon, and his model forest for Tall Timbers (one of the trip wires can be seen in the top left-hand corner).

12. George Heath
after the failure of attempts to stage a genuine drive, in which a hillside of half-cut trees are supposedly felled like a pack of cards when trees at the top of the slope are dynamited, Kenyon staged a drive in miniature inside the Cinesound studio, using dozens of model gum trees, each with its own trip wire. These studio images were then intercut with genuine shots of individual trees falling, and the resulting montage drew praise from many critics as well as providing a spectacular and surprising climax to the film.

With technical staff of the calibre of Heath and Kenyon available in Australia, Cinesound had little need to draw on overseas technicians as it had with performers. But a shortage of script-writers existed before Harvey came to Cinesound, and in 1935 the studio had brought an American writer, Edmond Seward, to Australia to script two films - Thoroughbred and Orphan of the Wilderness. Originally an animator with Walt Disney, Seward had been trained as a writer in several Hollywood studios and provided Cinesound with two workmanlike scripts which marked a strong improvement on the loosely constructed stories of the previous productions.

In 1939 when Cinesound's pace of production had quickened sufficiently for Hall to consider the creation of a second unit for feature production, it was seen as necessary to bring a director from England to ensure that the unit would be controlled by someone fully versed in the

29 A critic in the Bulletin, 15.9.37, wrote about the timber drive sequence: 'this has been done on a bigger scale and with much more convincing effect than anything Hollywood, with all its resources, has ever managed. The effect as a succession of great trees thunder to the ground is electrical'.


31 Information about Seward is included in a story about Cinesound at work in the West Australian (Perth), 3.1.36.
demands of commercial feature production. In April William Freshman arrived in Sydney under contract to Cinesound and was assigned by Hall to script and direct the comedy, *Come Up Smiling*. Freshman had worked in England as a scriptwriter, actor and assistant director, and had been associated with several major British productions, including *Greek Street*, *Luck of the Navy* and *The Iron Duke*.  

His work at Cinesound was closely supervised by Hall, who visited the set daily and viewed each day's 'rushes' whenever they became available, and the finished film was impossible to distinguish from the style of other Cinesound features. Although Cinesound's intention was to continue with the development of a second feature unit, the imminence of the Second World War caused a delay and then abandonment of the plans, and Freshman returned to England.

From these sources - local and overseas, theatre and radio - Hall built up a unit of highly skilled professional staff, giving the studio a leading role in the industry. When the studio's feature programme was interrupted by the Second World War, the industry's reliance on Cinesound was such that one writer later commented:

> So much had depended on Cinesound, so much work had come from there and so many people had been employed in its productions, that when it closed half of the working technicians in the film business found themselves out of work.

The work of the studio's staff was marked from the start by a spirit of self-reliance and confidence which seemed to arise partly from their strong position in the industry. Especially in its first three years, however, Cinesound operated with relatively poor equipment, largely designed by the studio's own staff in response to specific needs. In contrast, attempts to establish continuous feature

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32 Film Weekly, 6.4.39, p.10.
33 Interview with Ken Hall, recorded by the writer, 9.6.69.
34 Baxter, op.cit., p.78.
production at Efftee and National Studios relied on equipment imported from America and England, but such importation required enormous capital. The cost of importing sound recording equipment alone was about £25,000,\textsuperscript{35} an insurmountable sum for the Greater Union organisation in the early years of the Depression; without the invention of a sound-recorder by Arthur Smith at the Bondi laboratories of Australasian in 1931, Cinesound could not have come into being.\textsuperscript{36}

The skill of Cinesound's staff in devising refinements to its basically primitive resources was exemplified in the production of \textit{On Our Selection} in 1932. Arthur Smith's early experiments with sound had produced a machine which had shown itself on a number of short films to be of a quality comparable to the standards of imported films. The production of a feature film, with synchronised dialogue and 'location' shooting, however, raised new problems.\textsuperscript{37} The studio at Bondi Junction, where the film was to be produced, had been re-converted back to its original function of a roller-skating rink after the cessation of silent production, with the laboratory remaining in rooms at the rear of the building. The rink was too lucrative for Doyle to allow it to close for several months while \textit{On Our Selection} was being photographed and recorded, and a make-shift compromise was reached; a small, box-like stage was built in the centre of the rink and around it the skaters played and watched. Work in the studio offered none of Hollywood's glamour, as Hall recalled:

> It was built out of beaver board, padding inside - it was about thirty feet by forty feet, I suppose. It was hellish hot inside with the lights on, because we had the old-fashioned open banks of light that they use for silent

\textsuperscript{35} This is the sum paid by Efftee in the early 1930s (see above, p.18).

\textsuperscript{36} Hall, in a letter to the writer, 18.5.72, wrote: 'without Arthur Smith there would not have been a Cinesound'.

\textsuperscript{37} The following discussion of these problems is based largely on the writer's interviews with Arthur Smith (8.10.69) and Ken Hall (24.8.69).
13. The hand-drawn camera 'dolly' during the shooting of Grandad Rudd. Frank Hurley is crouched behind the camera and Ken Hall stands beside him.

14. Filming the 'Melbourne Cup' for Thoroughbred

Makeshift production methods
pictures and a lot of arcs. Well, arc-light is shockingly hot, especially in the confined padded space . . . they used to skate around this place all night long and if I was working late at night we used to go out and shout at the skaters to stop for a while, while we made 'a take' because the place was not sound-proof - never was.38

To give mobility to the sound-recording equipment for location scenes at Penrith, similar make-shift arrangements were improvised. From their reading of early television manuals, Arthur Smith and his assistant, Clive Cross, drew a method of synchronising the motors of the camera and the sound equipment, which were often far apart and which were driven by a bank of heavy batteries carried in a truck. The method of synchronisation involved the use of specially made 'slip ring' motors which were heavy, cumbersome and unreliable. Throughout the production Smith and Cross learned by trial and error how to force their unwieldy equipment into service: how to replace a broken diaphragm in the company's only microphone, or how to handle a heavy and dangerous steel-armoured cable. Similar improvisations occurred in other phases of the production: during the editing stages, a machine was made from meccano parts and an old film printer to produce a 'wipe' effect for scene transitions; and a laboratory technician, George Malcolm, devised a method of 'mixing' sound so that music could be dubbed behind a crucial dialogue sequence in the film, without the benefit of a proper mixing or re-recording equipment.39 From such

38 Interview with Ken Hall, recorded by the Australian Broadcasting Commission, n.d. (1969).
39 Ken Hall, in an interview with Raeburn Trindall, published in Industrial Photography and Commercial Camera, April 1968, p.33, described George Malcolm's work:

He double printed the music behind the dialogue on the printer, put the track half down and put the voice over that, and we get a result. It wasn't perfect, but you could hear music behind the old bloke's speech ... We couldn't have any laps or wipes, we just had straight cuts until George came up with his projection printer. It was in operation at Cinesound for years.
experience the staff developed a sense of personal commitment to their own work and a close understanding of their machines, which became one of the company's main assets in the following years. Arthur Smith's recording equipment, although modified continually by new refinements, remained basically the same as that first designed in 1931 for On Our Selection, and was kept in service at Cinesound until Smith's retirement in 1958.

As the company's activities stabilised and the needs of feature production were better understood, Doyle allowed the studio to expand in area and to improve the quality of its equipment. Late in 1934, motivated partially by anticipation of the New South Wales quota act, and partially by his own ambition for production, Doyle temporarily closed the Cinesound studio, and sent Ken Hall and two of the studio's technical staff abroad to buy new equipment and to study techniques being used in Hollywood. Doyle announced the venture in characteristically grand terms:

If we are to aspire for world exhibition, and that, I take it, is the suggestion of the Film Quota Act, then we must get from the teacher [Hollywood] ... the ideas and equipment designed to make the classics of the future.40

Four months in Hollywood not only confirmed Hall's attitude to the need for proper organisation in an efficient production enterprise, but also enabled him to engage the services of the American script-writer, Edmond Seward, and the actress, Helen Twelvetrees, for the film Thoroughbred. Hall also returned to Australia with a wide range of new equipment,41 including a highly mobile De Brie camera which Doyle described as 'humanised' because of its freedom of movement, three additional Bell and Howell cameras to keep Cinesound's three studios in operation simultaneously and playback equipment to facilitate the filming of musical items. Most important of all was a background projector, which enabled films to be

40 Everyone's, 25.9.35, p.8.
41 Ibid.
set in remote locations, without the expense of transporting an entire production unit there. Instead one cameraman could be sent - as Frank Hurley was sent to Thursday Island to shoot background scenes for *Lovers and Luggers* - and the cast could perform in the studio in front of a projected image of the distant location. The background projector was used extensively in every Cinesound feature, to enable George Wallace to dangle from the wings of a plane in *Gone to the Dogs*, or to enable the use of London as a setting for *It Isn't Done*. Together with the other imported machines, the background projector gave Cinesound a degree of technical facility beyond that of any other Australian production company, and no further major purchases of equipment were found necessary until after the war.

Studio space also expanded rapidly in the early 1930s. In addition to the converted skating rink known as the 'No. 1 Studio', at Bondi Junction, a smaller and less well-equipped studio was operating in 1932 in the Melbourne suburb of St Kilda, and was used primarily as a base for the Victorian representative of the Cinesound Review. In August 1933, the company opened its 'No.2 Studio' at Rushcutter's Bay in Sydney; this property had originally been built as a film studio by the Spencer's company in 1912, and had been re-conditioned and equipped for 'talkie' production by Cinesound after the success of *On Our Selection*. The Bondi studio remained the head office of Cinesound until 1951 when the company moved to different premises in Balmain, but Cinesound never had enough productions of its own to occupy all three studios. Independent producers were invited to lease the studios and hire any staff required, and many productions were made in this way, among them *The Hayseeds* at Rushcutter's Bay in 1933; *The Burgomeister* at Bondi in 1935; and *Show Business*, begun by A.R. Harwood at the Melbourne studio in 1936. Cinesound's space and equipment were attractive to producers who lacked their own resources: rental

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43 See below, p.211.
15. The Cinesound sound-truck in the early 1930s, during the shooting of a newsreel item on the army. Arthur Smith is furthest to the right.

rates were moderate; the staff experienced; and few alternatives of equal quality existed, although the Efftee studio at St Kilda, Melbourne, offered 'a much more modern and commodious proposition' before it was closed in 1936.

As Cinesound's technical resources grew, the efficiency of the company increased: studio sequences for On Our Selection had taken seven weeks, and location work a further six weeks, but most productions after Hall's return from Hollywood in 1935 were completed in forty working days. At the same time, while schedules grew tighter, production costs rose, with greater overhead expenses and ever-increasing requirements to sustain and develop the professional image of the company: from £6,000 paid to produce On Our Selection in 1932, costs rose to an average of about £20,000 for films made after 1935. Correspondingly, an increasing need arose for effective performance during the few weeks of shooting, when most of the money for a production was spent. Cinesound's reactions to the pressure of budgets and schedules reflected the ambition of the unit, for attempts were still made in most productions to mount elaborate scenes to provide highlights that audiences would remember and talk about to their friends.

In 1933, The Squatter's Daughter set a precedent for spectacle with a climactic bushfire sequence. The fire was staged primarily around a bush pool where an explosive fire was made of highly inflammable nitrate film stock and

For their Rushcutter's Bay studio, Cinesound charged £100 a week, plus salaries for technical staff running from £60 to £75 a week. Efftee in Melbourne charged £200 'with everything thrown in'. (Everyone's, 2.1.35, p.26).

Ibid.

Sydney Morning Herald, 13.10.31, p.8, reports that the 'interiors' were completed after seven weeks in the Bondi studio. Four weeks were anticipated for the location scenes, but according to Film Weekly, 26.11.31, p.21, shooting was only then nearing completion.

See Appendix III.
diesel oil. Not surprisingly, the fire went genuinely out of control: skins blistered in the heat; the camera blimp caught fire during a tracking shot; and the actors taking refuge in the pool nearly fainted from suffocation because of the oxygen absorbed by the flames surrounding them. 48 The danger and excitement are fully apparent in the finished sequence: the acting is far more natural than elsewhere in the film, and a genuine sense of urgency comes through, particularly in the heroine's hysteria.

Although the importation of background projection in 1935 allowed many scenes of spectacle to be staged within the studio, the exhibitionism of the unit persisted, particularly with the sets and effects designed by Alan Kenyon. Even in a minor comedy like Gone to the Dogs (1939), the unit created an extravagant haunted house complete with transparent ghosts, headless figures, booby traps and a large upside-down room.

Technical tricks such as those used in Gone to the Dogs were a reflection of the adventurous attitude which Hall and his staff had to the manipulation of their resources. From the first feature in 1932, technical 'gimmicks' were an essential part of production, especially in the studio's comedies: in On Our Selection slow motion was used to stress the comic slowness of the Rudd's draught horse in a country race meeting; another shot was reversed to show a dog backing away from the smell of a bad egg; and, most impressively, the flashback to a murder scene was superimposed over an eerily lit close-up of the murderer's face. Similar effects were seldom attempted by other Australian directors of the 1930s, intent as they were on producing films cheaply, quickly and with the minimum of fuss. They show on Hall's part an enjoyment of film-making and an awareness that such bravura flourishes would pleasantly surprise sceptical audiences who expected little from Australian films.

48 Hall interview, 11.2.69.
The quality of the end product, in the spectacular scenes especially, became a point of honour with the Cinesound teams: extravagant sets and complex set-pieces of action, provided a challenge to the studio's ingenuity and professional skill. Such scenes could also show that, despite the limitations of its resources, Cinesound was capable of challenging the entertainment and box-office value of Hollywood productions. Such reactions to the pressure of feature production depended not only on the skill of the staff, but also on their overall guidance by Ken Hall: under Hall the work of the technical staff was oriented firmly towards winning a positive response from the audience that would finally see the film. The failure of other producers to make as much use of the same resources when they leased the studio suggests strongly the sense of purpose and business-like attitudes which lay behind the organisation of each Cinesound production.

B) Distribution and Exhibition

After the completion of each Cinesound production, responsibility for it passed on to two other companies in the Greater Union group: the films were distributed in all Australian states by British Empire Films (B.E.F.) and their first screenings in the capital cities were held in Greater Union theatres.

The process of distribution usually began with a number of trade previews to arouse the interest of exhibitors. Soon afterwards a premiere was held, sometimes in more than one theatre and in more than one city in order to exploit more thoroughly the interest created by advance publicity; Dad Rudd, M.P. (1940), as an extreme case, was released simultaneously in five cities on the east coast of Australia, and in addition screened simultaneously in two city theatres in Sydney.49 After the premiere season, the films sometimes transferred to a smaller city theatre such as the Civic in

49 Film Weekly, 9.5.40, p.11.
Sydney for a longer run, before being released to suburban and country circuits. About a year after the first release, the film usually re-appeared in the city theatres for a second release, often on a 'double bill' with another Cinesound film. Thereafter the programme would return as often as audiences continued to support it. The Silence of Dean Maitland (1934), for example, was re-released in 1937 on the same programme with On Our Selection and was popular enough to be specially re-advertised in the trade press and screened widely throughout Australia.\textsuperscript{50} On Our Selection and a shortened version of Let George Do It (1938) were still being screened in country centres in the 1960s. With this vigorous system of re-releasing former successes, B.E.F. gave audiences everywhere frequent opportunities to see most of the Cinesound features at any time during the 1930s, and the studio's reputation came to rest on its entire body of work, and not only on the new films currently being released for the first time.

Although all city screenings were held in Greater Union theatres, the films were available to any suburban or country exhibitor, and the vast majority of B.E.F.'s business came from exhibitors outside of their own chain. Accordingly, the first Greater Union screenings were vital to establish a reputation for the film, and it was important that each Cinesound film received optimum conditions for proving its commercial worth.

The fate of a film in a city theatre could be affected both by the time of its screening and the location: the wrong time of year and the wrong theatre could seriously prejudice the film's chances of attracting the audience it may have deserved. Periodic fluctuations in attendances could be predicted with some degree of certainty: peaks were experienced during school and public holiday periods, and troughs occurred immediately before and after these peaks. Cinesound's films were accordingly released at peak periods, at Easter, near Christmas, or during the May and

\textsuperscript{50} Everyones, 20.10.37, pp.16-17.
September school holidays. The choice of theatre, however, involved more subtle factors than the choice of season. Theatres in Sydney, as in other cities, were popularly associated with a particular type of film: the Capitol Theatre in 'down-town' Sydney was the usual home of broad farces and unsubtle action films; rapid turnover of programmes was maintained, the seats were cheap, and the theatre appealed to people seeking the most undemanding entertainment. More sophisticated productions were better suited to 'prestige' theatres like the State, or the Lyceum. Thus Cinesound's gentle satire on British snobbery, *It Isn't Done* (1937), was screened at the Embassy, the home for productions with some 'serious' intent, while a farce like *Let George Do It* (1938) would have been out of its element anywhere but at the Capitol. Not all films divided easily into either camp; for *Dad Rudd, M.P.* with its twin elements of farce and drama, a compromise was reached by releasing the film simultaneously in both the Lyceum and the Capitol. Errors of judgement did however occur: *Grandad Rudd* (1935) had fared well in premiere seasons in Perth and Hobart, but in Sydney it failed to find an audience. The failure was attributed directly by the trade press to Greater Union's decision to release the film in the State Theatre:

> Ever since the trade screening every straight-seeing observer has forecast the result of putting 'Grandad Rudd' into the State Theatre instead of into the Capitol where 'On Our Selection' established extraordinary figures. The State definitely is not the house for pictures of this type; but that an Australian picture of a different style can capture solid patronage there was proved by 'The Silence of Dean Maitland'.

Careful treatment of Cinesound's productions arose not only because Cinesound and its theatrical outlets were part of...
of the same organisation, but also because the films played an important part in the operations of the distribution company of British Empire Films. The popularity of the Cinesound features helped directly in allowing B.E.F. to overcome their reliance on British films which otherwise may not have attracted exhibitors. Some theatres preferred to wait a year or more until a Cinesound film was being re-released and could be booked on easier terms, but generally the Cinesound films were an effective catalyst in the sale of B.E.F.'s British products.

Public support for Cinesound films made them reliable products to screen in city theatres during holiday periods when competition was strongest and when 'special' attractions were needed. The shortage of suitable 'specials' for long seasons during holidays was a recurring problem for B.E.F. during the 1930s and the availability of Cinesound material helped to ease B.E.F.'s dependence on British films or products hired from other exchanges. The pattern of B.E.F.'s operations changed substantially after the Second World War as the quality of British films improved and the Australian market for them grew larger. At the same time, the potential contribution of Cinesound to B.E.F. decreased, since Australian films were no longer required to attract exhibitors to the exchange, and this factor was to be one of several which had an unfavourable influence on Greater Union's post-war evaluation of Cinesound's future.

During the 1930s, Cinesound's position in the Greater Union organisation did not give the company undue advantage over other producers: after 1947 changes in the structure of the industry made it extremely difficult for some Australian films to gain access to major distributors and major city theatres, but in the 1930s very few Australian films failed to find release through a major exchange. In

52 Interview by the writer with Mervyn Jones, manager, Civic Theatre, Canberra, July 1969.
53 See below, p.204ff.
the distribution of Australian films, B.E.F. was far more active than other distributors54 and in September 1933, the Greater Union organisation attempted to establish a permanent home for Australian films in the old Haymarket Theatre in Sydney, re-conditioned and re-opened as the Civic. Publicity surrounding the opening described the Civic as 'Australia's new national theatre, devoted to the presentation of Australian pictures', and the first screening (of Cinesound's recently completed feature The Squatter's Daughter), was attended by the Governor of New South Wales, the Premier, members of the State Ministry, and the Lord Mayor of Sydney.55 Despite the prestige of its opening, and the popular success of The Squatter's Daughter,56 the theatre's all-Australian policy soon decayed because of the lack of suitable films, and within a year, the Civic had settled into a pattern of screening minor first release American and British films and second release programmes which it maintained throughout the 1930s. Cinesound's next film, The Silence of Dean Maitland, was screened instead at the larger and more sophisticated State Theatre.57

With only one film did Cinesound have a direct advantage over its contemporaries: Strike Me Lucky (1934) was Cinesound's least successful film, both commercially and artistically, and it failed under the quality clause of the New South Wales quota act to receive registration as a quota production.58 Other low quality films which failed to win

54 Between January 1936 and December 1941, B.E.F. released three Australian films (Splendid Fellows [1936], White Death [1936], and Racing Luck [1941] in addition to thirteen Cinesound productions; Universal released five; two were released by National Films of New South Wales; and one each by Twentieth Century-Fox, Columbia, Paramount, United Artists and R.K.O. (Film Weekly, 4.2.43, p.5.)
55 Everyones, 6.9.33, p.6, and Sydney Morning Herald, 29.9.33, p.3.
56 Business in the first week of The Squatter's Daughter at the Civic was six times the theatre's average when it had operated as the Haymarket (Everyones, 4.10.33, p34.)
57 Everyones, 18.4.34, p.10.
58 Strike Me Lucky is included in a list of ten rejected films in Film Weekly, 8.5.47, p.5.
registration were either withdrawn from circulation by their backers, as were The Burgomeister (1935)\(^59\) and Below the Surface (1938),\(^60\) or were forced to accept release through 'independent' distributors such as National Films of New South Wales, which seldom had access to the major city theatres.\(^61\) Strike Me Lucky, however, received an energetic publicity campaign and a release in Sydney's Capitol Theatre. Although the result of the Sydney screening was un Rewarding,\(^62\) B.E.F.'s vigorous promotion managed to win enough bookings for it from suburban and country exhibitors to cover the costs of production, and with its second and later releases the film slowly began to show a profit.\(^63\)

In addition to release in Australian theatres, Greater Union constantly looked to foreign markets for the sale of Cinesound's productions. Overseas release was usually restricted to New Zealand and Great Britain. New Zealand release was immediate and tied closely with the Australian trade, but British release was more difficult to arrange.

\(^59\) The Burgomeister, produced by the Film Players Corporation, was to have been distributed by R.K.O., but their support was withdrawn when the film failed to win registration. It was later given limited release by National Films of New South Wales under the title of Hypnotised and was shown in England as Flames of Conscience. The Film Players Corporation made no further films.

\(^60\) After Below the Surface was rejected as a quota production, the backers, a large music house in Sydney, withdrew the film, presumably to protect their name. Interview with Stan Tolhurst, by the writer, 17.7.70 (Tolhurst acted in the film and also worked as art director).

\(^61\) Among the Australian films released by National Films (no connection with National Studios or National Productions) were Show Business (1936) which received no screenings in the city of Sydney; Wings of Destiny (1940) which was shown for one week as a supporting feature at the Capitol; and the revised version of The Burgomeister, known as Hypnotised, which was screened only in country areas.

\(^62\) See below, p. 75-76.

\(^63\) Interview with Ken Hall, recorded by the Australian Broadcasting Commission, n.d. (1969).
since Greater Union did not have its own outlets there and was reliant on being able to sell the film to a British distributor. Such deals were usually made on the distributor's own terms since Greater Union had little bargaining power with only one or two films to sell at any one time. British release was therefore sometimes delayed for more than a year and the films were usually re-edited and re-titled to remove parochial Australian elements and to strengthen what the British distributor considered would appeal to British audiences.

Although they were sold as 'special' attractions in Australia, there were no such connotations in the British release: most were shown either as supporting features or as routine main features, but the outcome of British release could not always be predicted. While On Our Selection, with its broad Australian humour, understandably failed to attract British audiences, the last two 'Dad and Dave' films proved highly popular with the British trade as useful, inexpensive comedies, and Dad Rudd, M.P. played in over 1,400 theatres during the first years of the war. One of the most successful of Cinesound's releases in Britain was The Silence of Dean Maitland (1934) which had been made specifically by Cinesound for sale to the British market; according to one report, the film earned £45,000 in the United Kingdom and the British trade press carried double page advertisements for the film stating that it was 'Sweeping the Country Like Wildfire'.

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64 See Appendix I for British release titles.
65 Stuart Doyle described the British release of On Our Selection as 'very disappointing' and anticipated a return of £2,000, compared with £46,000 in Australia. (Everyones, 7.2.34, p.6.)
66 Film Weekly, 5.6.41, p.17.
67 Sunday Sun (Sydney), 31.8.47 (cutting in the Daniell Papers, item 261/1).
68 Today's Cinema (London), 30.10.34, pp.16-17.
Yet, despite the popularity of some films, British release could not be relied upon for even a small income, and Cinesound continued to budget each film according to the likely return from the Australian and New Zealand markets. So long as negative costs could be covered in Australian theatres, sales to the United Kingdom were welcomed as surplus profit, usually in the form of a lump sum paid by the British distribution company before release began. 69

Apart from the United Kingdom, distribution in other countries was difficult to arrange, especially in the United States where the vertical integration of the industry meant that most exhibitors were tied directly to production companies. In a few cases, however, independent exhibitors could be found: *Orphan of the Wilderness* (1936) in particular won considerable attention as a 'novelty' item on 'double bill' programmes and was given a New York release in 1938 under the title of *Wild Innocence*. 70 The difficulty of finding an American release is reflected in the failure of *Thoroughbred* (1936) and *The Broken Melody* (1938) to find a distributor despite the competence of Hall's direction and the presence of the Hollywood performers, Helen Twelvetrees and Lloyd Hughes.

The American market remained virtually untapped until the early 1950s when the huge demand for feature films among commercial television channels in the U.S.A. made possible the sale of a block of fourteen features. By 1952, when the sale was made to the Hollywood company of Samart Pictures, two of Cinesound's 'stars' - Shirley Ann Richards and Cecil Kellaway - had become well known to American audiences through their work in Hollywood and their presence

69 No reliable information exists on the amounts paid by British distributors, but *Everyones*, 18.4.34, p.10, reported that M.G.M. had recently paid £6,000 for *The Squatter's Daughter*.
70 The film opened as a main feature on 10.11.38 at the Belmont, New York, a theatre which usually showed European and 'art' films.
did much to interest the American company in the films.71

Australian television was slower to explore the possibility of using Australian films: only in 1971 did the Australian Broadcasting Commission begin national screenings of 15 Cinesound features and found that the network's ratings rose rapidly as a result.72 The popularity of the A.B.C. series encouraged other channels to buy Australian films from the 1930s to present in their own series such as 'Colonial Classics'73 and by the end of 1971 names such as Ken Hall, Charles Chauvel and 'Dad and Dave' were becoming familiar to a new generation of Australians.

During the 1930s, Cinesound's access to the Greater Union chain provided the company's films with opportunities that were taken to the full, and even a low quality film like Strike Me Lucky was released in the major theatres of the chain. Not only was Cinesound's commercial success greatly facilitated by the availability of suitable theatres, but other producers benefited as well from the ready access to Australian theatres during this period. Through distributors such as B.E.F. all but very poor productions could gain an opportunity to be tested before the public under good conditions. Those that failed did so for reasons other than their trade arrangements: because of inadequacies in control over production resources, in advance publicity, or in consideration of audience reactions. Cinesound's performance during the production phase has already been discussed, and in the following chapters attention will be given to the company's relations with its audience — in both its publicity and in its films.

71 Film Weekly, 30.10.52, p.16. Ken Hall wrote a letter to the editor of the Sydney Morning Herald, published on 29.10.52, p.2, to answer criticisms (for example by the actor Charles Tingwell, Sydney Morning Herald, 27.10.52, p.2) that the screening of the films on American television would damage Australia's cultural image in the U.S.A. Hall argued that the films were being bought as 'entertainment', regardless of their source, and were never intended to represent the Australian way of life.

72 Letter from Ken Hall to the writer, 15.3.71.

73 The 'Colonial Classics' series was first presented in Sydney by Channel TEN in mid-1971; it included The Flying Doctor (1936), Typhoon Treasure (1938), The Power and the Glory (1941) and several films by Chauvel.
Chapter Three - Publicity

Internal machinery for the making and distribution of films were only some of the prerequisites for Cinesound's prosperity. The presence of staff and equipment and the availability of theatres could be easily negated by the mishandling of relations with the people who finally justified a production by paying admission to see it. The public relations of any production company were (and are today) formed not only by the work of the company's own publicity department, but also by the nature of its end product, the films themselves. This chapter looks at the methods and aims of Cinesound's publicity, and the next at the quality of the studio's films.

The importance of publicity in Cinesound's operations can best be seen by comparison with other companies. At Cinesound the publicist was always one of the first members of staff appointed to a feature production, so that every opportunity could be taken to bring the film to the attention of the public, from the time of the preliminary plans to the close of production.\(^1\) Such publicists, usually journalists,\(^2\) prepared news releases for the press and radio, arranged interviews between the film's 'stars' and representatives of the media, and guided visitors over the studio. As the film neared its release, most of the promotional work was taken over by the permanent publicity section of Cinesound's distribution agency, British Empire Films. There, specialists already engaged in similar work for other films would prepare the film's 'printing' - posters, press handouts, stills, souvenir booklets and so on - and co-operate in selling campaigns with the major

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1 Ken Hall in an interview with the writer, 15.2.69.
2 One staff publicist was Godfrey Kelly, formerly a professional journalist with Sydney newspapers and editor of the Daily Mail until it changed control and became Labor Daily. (Cinesound Herald, July 1937, p.14.). Other publicists included Cam Pratt and Nancy Gurr, both with careers as professional journalists before joining Cinesound.
theatre circuits and with independent theatre managers.

Not all producers accepted the need for publicity on the scale undertaken by Cinesound. Many producers preferred to leave publicity entirely to the film's distributors, relying mainly on advertising associated with specific screenings. In 1969, for example, Ken Hall watched with growing concern the progress of a new Australian feature, *Squeeze a Flower*: virtually no news was released to publicise the film during its production, and the public had little chance to hear of *Squeeze a Flower* until a few weeks before it came to their local theatre. Hall expressed no surprise when the film received little support from the public, and stated his firm belief 'that the failure of latter-day producers in this country to use, or even understand, the vital publicity medium, is a major reason for the consistent commercial failure of Australian-made films over the past ten years'.

In contrast, advance publicity for the Cinesound films made them known to the public months before they were screened. During the production of *Tall Timbers*, for example, the filming of a complex timber-felling scene was covered by radio and press reporters and attended by hundreds of spectators (some of whom were used as 'extras') from the nearby town of Stroud in New South Wales. Similar coverage was arranged for a scene in Taronga Park Zoo featuring a character dressed as a gorilla for *Gone to the Dogs*, and for the filming of animals inside the Bondi studio for *Orphan of the Wilderness*. The work of the staff publicist became an essential part of the calculations behind each production, aiming always to arouse public curiosity about the film's highlights.

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3 Hall interview, 15.2.69.  
4 Ken Hall in a letter to the writer, 11.6.72.  
5 The event was reported in anticipation by the Sydney Morning Herald, 20.1.37, and even though the felling sequence failed to produce the spectacle expected of it, the story of the failure still made a news story in the Sun (Sydney), 22.1.37.
Until 1937, the publicity staff at Cinesound worked under the guidance of E.G. ('Herb') Hayward, the publicity director of the entire Greater Union organisation, and to Hayward must be attributed many of the intensive methods of Cinesound's publicity. In 1937, Hayward left Greater Union to join the Hoyts theatre chain, and Cinesound was given a publicity director of its own, in recognition of the company's continuing publicity needs. The new director was Bill Tinkler, formerly a newspaper reporter in Sydney and a publicist with the Sydney branch of M.G.M.; he remained exclusively with Cinesound until the cessation of feature production in 1940. With Tinkler, Hall revived a system of newspaper publicity which Hall had first instituted as publicity director at First National Pictures in the 1920s: each month illustrations, stories and news items were sent in the form of galley proofs to suburban and country newspapers and magazines where such material was always welcome to fill up space. While this method of winning free space was effective for country papers, special attention was needed for the daily newspapers in the capital cities, and here efforts were made to establish personal contacts with the newspaper staff and to prepare material specifically to meet their needs. 

The importance attributed to publicity at Cinesound was reflected in the intensity and extravagance of the selling campaigns prepared by British Empire Films (and its predecessor, the Union Theatres Feature Exchange) at the time of the release of each production. The campaign to launch the first Cinesound feature, On Our Selection, in 1932, was a rich demonstration of the publicity techniques exploited on all of the Cinesound features.

To begin the campaign, the Union Theatres Feature Exchange offered prizes to exhibitors for the best publicity ideas for selling the film. The first prize of £30 was awarded in 1933 to a Rockhampton exhibitor who paraded a

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6 Ken Hall in a letter to the writer, 11.6.72.
7 Film Weekly, 7.6.32, p.7.
horse-drawn float through the town's streets carrying live animals and characters dressed as the Rudd family.\(^8\) This rather standard effort, however, was eclipsed by the vigour of the publicity drive which accompanied the film's premiere in July 1932.

The first public screening of *On Our Selection* was held in Brisbane at the large Tivoli Theatre. Heavy press advertising, using a set of advertisements designed under Hayward's direction in the head office of Greater Union, was supplemented by an extensive variety of publicity stunts and promotional gimmicks. For weeks before the opening night slides advertising the film were shown in the theatre while eucalypt essence was wafted through the theatre by fans. Competitions with small cash prizes were held to discover the best 'wayback' jokes and the bushiest beards. The joke competition alone received 1,500 entries. The oldest Queensland settler to contact the theatre was invited to Brisbane to see the film with all expenses paid. Because of the relevance of scones to one scene in the film, a competition was held with a silver cup as prize for the best batch of plain scones made from Simpson's flour. An *On Our Selection* barn dance was held at the Trocadero Dansant on 19 July, and attracted over 2,000 patrons: 'a sight that has not been seen in Brisbane for many years'. Personal appearances were made at the theatre by Bert Bailey and other members of the cast. Bailey was met at the railway station by radio, press and civic leaders, gave radio talks about the film and attended many public functions which were widely reported in the city's newspapers.

The governor of Queensland, Sir Leslie Orme Wilson, his wife and suite attended the film and throughout the Brisbane season, advertisements carried a coat-of-arms and the claim of vice-regal patronage. Theatre employees, in the costume of the Rudd family walked through city streets and travelled on the back of a dilapidated 'selection' truck, handing out leaflets and announcing the screening times. 10,000 leaflets

\(^8\) *Everyones*, 30.8.33, p.35.
were distributed outside schools, and at Saturday matinees, free On Our Selection sweets were given to the children. Whip-cracking demonstrations also attracted attention.  

The Brisbane campaign, organised by the manager of the Tivoli Theatre, Ted Lane, in collaboration with the staff of the Union Theatres Feature Exchange, was so thorough that Lane was rumoured to be 'offering a prize to anybody who can discover a street in Brisbane that does not carry a message about the Australian comedy'.

Not only in Brisbane, but in most cities and towns, publicity functions in aid of charity won the support of civic leaders. In Sydney, for example, a photograph was taken of six men sporting huge false beards. They included two members of the New South Wales Legislative Council, a Brigadier-General, and the New South Wales Minister for Justice, constituting the *On Our Selection Barn Dance Committee*. The dance, in aid of a hospital fund was held in a city store and required all men attending to wear real or false beards in the style of Dad Rudd in the film.

The techniques of 'ballyhoo' used by Cinesound and the Union Theatres Feature Exchange were by no means exclusive to them: they were used by other producers and distributors in much the same way, if not always on the same exhaustive scale. The techniques represent a generally accepted promotional style which had much in common with the methods of a sideshow act, with exhibitors cast in the role of 'spruiker'. During the 1950s and 1960s this fashion of publicising films became less widespread, diluted by other methods, such as a greater reliance on film critics to provide testimonies of a film's worth. Fancy-dress balls, bizarre competitions and street parades were still used

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9 The publicity campaign is reported at length in the following papers: Film Weekly, 21.7.32, p.4; Everyone, 27.7.32, p.9; and the Brisbane Courier, 13.7.32, p.3 and 21.7.32, p.14.
10 Film Weekly, 21.7.32, p.7.
11 Everyone, 27.7.32, p.7.
for appropriate films, but with neither the frequency nor the variety achieved during the 1930s.

The reasons for this marked change in publicity techniques are difficult to define, but may be considered in the light of a general change in the role played by cinema in public entertainment. Cinesound's methods of publicity were most commonly used in the 1930s to promote 'action' movies such as westerns or broad comedies, a type of entertainment now normally supplied by television. Cinemas have since turned increasingly to more sophisticated material for which these methods are not always appropriate. In the 1930s, however, the exhibition trade was characterised by keen rivalry among theatre managers to devise unusual stunts, and a section of the trade press was regularly devoted to a survey of recent campaigns. The degree of public participation in the stunts for *On Our Selection* is one indication of the potential strength of these methods when applied to the right film.

Energetic promotion, however, was not enough to bring success to a film, if the film itself disappointed expectations aroused by the publicity. Charles Chauvel was one producer whose campaigns matched Cinesound's for vigour and thoroughness, but some of Chauvel's films, such as *Heritage* (1935), aroused unfavourable 'word of mouth' publicity which contributed to their commercial failure. The power of adverse 'word of mouth' criticism was reflected again in the release of Cinesound's *Strike Me Lucky* (1934), in which the company came closer to commercial failure than with any other feature. Intense publicity surrounding the film's production and release was equivalent to that given other Cinesound films, and, bolstered by the name of Roy Rene, the publicity enabled the film to break records set previously by *On Our Selection* in 1932. Over 14,000 people attended the film in its first two days at the Capitol Theatre, Sydney, compared with 12,700

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12 In Canberra, for example, during 1971, promotional gimmicks similar to Cinesound's were used by cinemas to advertise horror films; men with green face-masks and black robes handed out leaflets to the city's shopping crowd to publicise the film *Count Yorga, Vampire*. 
for On Our Selection in the same theatre. But the weakness of both the script and Rene's performance drew poor reactions from the audience and the film's box-office figures declined rapidly as word spread about the film. After a week at the Capitol it was transferred to another city theatre, the Civic, where it ran to 'below average' business for an artificially sustained three weeks.

'Ballyhoo' for particular films was only part of the vast volume of material issued by the Cinesound publicists. While most producers in the 1930s used publicity methods similar to Cinesound's to boost the release of particular films, few were in a comparable position to develop a public image of themselves as producers. Cinesound's public image of 'a little Hollywood' became possible when the company had established a footing as a production company; only then could the cultivation of Hollywood characteristics gain conviction from the apparent permanency of the company.

The key to Cinesound's image as an American-style production company lay in its adoption of the 'star' system. The appeal of film stars to popular fantasies was already established for Cinesound by the Hollywood and British production industries: glossy fan magazines were readily on sale in Australian bookstalls; most newspapers ran film columns which carried gossip items prepared by the publicists of Hollywood studios; radio stations regularly broadcast

13 The figures are given in a trade advertisement in Everyones, 21.11.34, pp.18-19.
14 The first week at the Civic was rated as 100% of average (Everyones, 28.11.34, p.10); the second, 80% (Everyones, 5.12.34, p.10); and the third, 55% (Everyones, 12.12.34, p.29)
15 One of the most popular fan papers was Photoplayer and Talkies (Sydney), published during most of the 1930s, containing pin-up pictures of Hollywood stars, stills from forthcoming films, and gossip from Hollywood studios.
16 Even the Sydney Morning Herald ran a weekly film segment in its women's pages which reported current gossip from the studios, despite the presence elsewhere in the paper of a film critic who frequently expressed a sceptical attitude towards Hollywood's propaganda.
programmes designed for film fans; and the films themselves type-cast stars to cultivate personae that carried calculated appeals to specific social groups, such as the housewife, and the 'family man'. Cinesound exploited this ready-made market by 'discovering' and grooming its own stars and by associating the studio with Hollywood stars brought to Australia to appear in local films.

One method used by Cinesound to form its image as a studio capable of turning local players into stars lay in its imitation of Hollywood's 'talent schools'. Such schools fulfilled an important function for the studio by providing a pool of trained players to replace those who departed for Hollywood or London to further their careers. But publicity surrounding the schools had an additional purpose and directly exploited the special meaning which the schools had for 'film-struck' Australians. A prospectus for one such school was headed 'Your Chance for Film Fame!!' and stated that

Cinesound emulates the major studios of Hollywood in its decision to impart dramatic knowledge to screen aspirants. For the very first time, here is your REAL chance to achieve authentic training for a film career.¹⁷

The school was open to all types of people, young or old, beautiful or ugly, and the brochure promised that Ken Hall himself would maintain 'close personal touch' with the school to make sure that anyone with worthwhile talent was discovered.

The school was conducted inside a working movie studio, Cinesound's No. 2 studio at Rushcutter's Bay, and was supervised by Alec Kellaway, himself an experienced film and stage actor. Kellaway was assisted by another figure whose name and background made a direct appeal to romantic fantasies: M. Slavinsky 'late principal with Pavlova and Col. de Basil's Monte Carlo Ballet, and experienced instructor of terpischore in all its phases'. M. Slavinsky was in charge of the teaching

¹⁷ The prospectus from which this passage is quoted and on which the following paragraphs are based is located in the Daniell Papers, item 326.
of poise, deportment, dancing and 'rhythmic movement as it applies to the screen'. Throughout the course students had an opportunity to appear in plays performed for the public and for the studio's talent scouts, and to find work as 'extras' in current Cinesound productions. By exploiting the aura of Hollywood to attract extras and bit players to the studio, Cinesound not only filled a need in the Company's operations but boosted its image as a sophisticated and fully developed studio, an appropriate image for Australia's leading production house.

Most of Cinesound's Hollywood image depended, however, on the stars created by the studio itself, and, secondly, on stars imported from Hollywood. The publicity given overseas stars was to a large extent aimed to boost the prestige of the company, since these stars already had what the trade called 'marquee value' and were known to the public before they came to Australia. For the locally created stars, publicity was a direct investment for the future: local stars, if they succeeded in winning the public imagination, could avert the need to import Hollywood actors, and could give glamour and prestige to films made with totally local casts.

Two Hollywood stars were brought to Australia by Cinesound during the 1930s: Helen Twelvetrees, who arrived late in 1935 to make Thoroughbred, and Lloyd Hughes for two films, Lovers and Luggers (1937) and The Broken Melody (1938). Other overseas players, such as John Longden and Charlotte Francis visited Australia on tours with local theatrical companies and were employed by Cinesound between their other engagements. Helen Twelvetrees and Lloyd Hughes however were brought to Australia under exclusive contract to the studio. Such importation showed considerable initiative on Ken Hall's part: the only precedent of any significance had been the use of Hollywood actors and technicians to make For the Term of His Natural Life and Adorable Outcast in the late 1920s. In the mid-1930s, the National group imported the Hollywood actors, Charles Farrell and Victor Jory, but the use of overseas stars did not become commonplace in the Australian industry until the 1950s when
production units from Hollywood and England began to visit Australia to make films in collaboration with local studios.

Cinesound's two Hollywood stars were given wide press coverage and enthusiastic public receptions on a scale that fully justified Cinesound's investment in them. Helen Twelvetrees was paid £200 a week during her eight weeks in Australia, approximately ten times the salary of Cinesound's own stars such as Shirley Ann Richards. Miss Twelvetrees' popularity had faded considerably by the time Cinesound could afford to hire her: in the late 1920s and early 1930s she had been one of Twentieth Century Fox's leading stars, but her status had waned so far by 1935 when she arrived in Australia that her most recent film was being released only as a supporting feature. Yet to Cinesound she was a valuable asset: her name was not easily forgotten, she was not expensive, and she brought the prestige and magic of Hollywood to the small Australian studio. The inference was not so much that Helen Twelvetrees was past her prime and reduced to taking crumbs where she could find them, but that Cinesound was now sufficiently strong to attract the attention and services of Hollywood.

Her arrival was attended with the full force of a Cinesound publicity campaign, and the response indicated that Cinesound succeeded in capturing the imagination of a large section of the public. Aeroplanes greeted Miss Twelvetrees' ship at Sydney Heads, and performed aerobatics as the ship sailed in; 'floral greetings' were taken aboard, including an enormous floral horseshoe in which Miss Twelvetrees posed for press photographers. Arriving at the wharf, she was faced with 'the biggest barrage of camera and Press reps ever accorded any celebrity'. Despite heavy rain, 'a huge crowd' waited on the wharf. After a short speech which was broadcast directly over a Sydney radio station, Miss Twelvetrees moved

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18 Films in which she played leading roles include *The Ghost Talks* (1929), *The Painted Desert* (1931) and *Is My Face Red?* (1932).

19 The film was *She Gets Her Man*, released to coincide with her arrival in Sydney.
Arrived Sydney yesterday by the Monterey, she was greeted by huge crowds, before she could leave the ship. She has been engaged to play in the film "Thoroughbred."

on to more formal receptions. Wherever she went in public, the Greater Union publicity team 'arranged' for large crowds to gather, sometimes requiring police cordons to clear the way; the exact details of her movements would be carefully publicised so that people would know where they might see her, and she travelled everywhere in a conspicuous black Pontiac, driven by a chauffeur, often with a pilot car ahead to herald her arrival.20

Miss Twelvetrees was seldom neglected by the press and radio during her short stay in Australia; the publicity created an image of glamour and sophistication which happened to be quite illusory, but the difficulties experienced by Cinesound with Miss Twelvetrees' temperament and her personal problems were well-kept secrets.21 An afternoon spent yachting on Sydney Harbour, the decor of her flat in Sydney, the clothes she brought to Australia, her attendance at balls, a visit to Taronga Park Zoo - all were systematically designed as news items for the public media.22

Like Miss Twelvetrees, Lloyd Hughes was a fading and relatively inexpensive star. In the 1920s he had appeared

20 The welcome was fully covered by the trade press, for example, Everyone's, 4.12.35, p.7, and by other papers, including Smith's Weekly, 7.12.35.
21 These problems are explained in the interview with Hall, 15.2.69.
22 For example, the magazine Decoration and Glass (Sydney), February 1936, featured photographs of Miss Twelvetrees' flat in Sydney; and a photograph of her appeared on the cover of the yachting journal, the Open Boat, 18.1.36. One widely reported incident had minor repercussions in the film industry: Miss Twelvetrees attended a civic reception where the Lord Mayor of Sydney gave her a kiss to which the daily press gave considerable prominence, for example in the Sun (Sydney), 3.12.35. In order to attract similar publicity, Charles Chauvel invited the Premier of New South Wales, B.S.B. Stevens, to the National Studios where the Premier was photographed kissing the female star of Chauvel's new film, Uncivilised. Not to be outdone, Cinesound arranged for none other than the Prime Minister to visit the set of Thoroughbred to watch Miss Twelvetrees at work, but, according to Film Weekly, 26.12.35, propriety forbade more being released to the press than a photograph of Mr Lyons talking to the actress.
Helen Twelvetrees
Goes to Work...

The
Beginnings
of
a
Film.

When Helen Twelvetrees
was named to appear in a
movie, she knew she had to
make the
decision.

She agreed to play the
leading lady,

Helen Twelvetrees.

She was determined to
make her way in the
industry.

19. From the
Women's Supplement
of the
Sydney Morning Herald, 5 December 1935.
in a number of major Hollywood productions, but by 1937 he was working mainly in B-features.23 Commercial value was still retained in his name since he had been a major star within the memory of most Australians, and as with Helen Twelvetrees, his arrival was exploited to the full for the prestige of Cinesound's association with Hollywood. Like Miss Twelvetrees, he was greeted by civic and film industry leaders and was photographed consistently by the press. The particular image given Hughes was again larger than life; he was depicted as a sophisticated family man, relaxing in a swimming pool with his neatly groomed children or dressing formally in a dinner jacket for meetings with the press.24

In both of his films for Cinesound Hughes was given roles which suited the highly romantic image of his off-screen persona. In Lovers and Luggers, for example, he played a world-famous pianist with the euphonious name of Daubenny Carshott who decides to prove his manhood and win the heart of a high-society lady by diving for pearls off Thursday Island.

The acquisition of Hollywood status was partly achieved by the annexing of stars who expressed the Hollywood ethos both on and off screen. But the image of the studio was further enhanced by the attachment of Hollywood characteristics and star status to many of the actors and actresses who took leading roles in Cinesound films. The studio would use performers already famous from the local stage such as George Wallace, Roy Rene or Cecil Kellaway, but these tended to retain their vaudeville image during time at Cinesound. Hollywood images were instead usually created for new actors and actresses making their first important appearances in a Cinesound film. Of the stars discovered and groomed by

23 His Hollywood films as a major star included The Sea Hawk (1924), The Lost World (1925), Sally (1925), Heart to Heart (1928), Moby Dick (1930) and The Miracle Man (1932).

24 His arrival is reported in Everyone, 9.6.37, p.9 and 16.6.37, p.26, and a collection of press cuttings covering his public appearances at balls and charity functions is included in the Cinesound Scrapbooks (Film Division, National Library of Australia).
Cinesound, (among them, Jocelyn Howarth and Ron Randell), the most elaborate publicity campaign centred around Shirley Ann Richards, and elements in her training and public life are relevant to an appreciation of the important role which Hall and others attributed to the cultivation of a special image both for the star and for her studio.

To achieve a solid basis for the studio's investment in Miss Richards, much time and energy was devoted to 'grooming' her both for public appearances and as an actress. Her training was classical and thorough; as well as deportment, speech articulation and the study of expressive techniques, her tutors, George Parker and Frank Harvey, took pains to develop her knowledge about the acting profession and to improve her ability to understand and cope with a variety of roles. Miss Richards recalled:

I read all the great plays from the early Greek times up to Ibsen and Shaw and the contemporary authors ... Each play was matched with a history book of the era so that I could understand why characters reacted as they did. My studies with [Frank Harvey] included the ideas of the great philosophers, and when he learned that I wrote poetry, we embarked on poetry readings. When he learned that I was studying ballet ... he made me read and discuss the biographies of the great ballet dancers. And so it went - always interesting and challenging.25

Private tuition was supplemented by the creation of a public image sustained throughout the two and a half years of her contract with Cinesound beginning in 1936. As with the imported Hollywood stars, care was taken to develop an appeal to women: clothes, cosmetics, home settings and glamorous pastimes were all positive components of the campaign.26 Her image was perhaps most clearly set in one

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25 Letter from Miss Richards to the writer, from Los Angeles, 9.6.69. Her first volume of poetry, The Grieving Senses, was published in Boston in 1972.

26 For example, the Sunday Sun and Guardian (Sydney), 13.12.36, featured photographs of Miss Richards modelling hats; the Sun (Sydney), 7.4.37, introduced a homely touch with a story on her leisure activities which included knitting ('the soft colors of the wool were restful to her eyes after being in the glare of film lights'); the Argus (Melbourne), 6.3.37, printed a photograph of her dressed in high fashion and posing in a marble hallway with a borzoi hound; and the Mail (Brisbane), 11.4.37, ran an article ostensibly written by Miss Richards herself about the superstitions in which she believed.
publicity photograph entitled 'Dignity and Impudence', two aspects of her persona being emphasised by the studio; the photograph showed Miss Richards in a gay costume playfully posing with an elephant at the Taronga Park Zoo.27 Her image was expressed not only through publicity photographs but also through public appearances and through the roles given her in the Cinesound films. For one of her public appearances she attended a luncheon for young women at a department store and addressed the audience on the subject of her daily life as a film star and gave advice to them on fashions and acting.28 Given the short time in which she achieved star status after being discovered, it seems evident that one of the quickest ways to become a star was to assume the role in public of being one.

The training which Shirley Ann Richards received at Cinesound proved to be enough to equip her for a moderately successful career in Hollywood. In 1939 she left Cinesound for the U.S.A. and within two weeks, she had won a leading role in a short dramatic narrative called Woman in the House. After this performance she was signed to a long-term contract with M.G.M. on agreement that she made a slight alteration to her professional name29 and attended the studio drama school to cultivate an 'international accent'. No other training proved necessary.30

Even after the departure of Shirley Ann Richards to Hollywood, Cinesound continued to profit from their investment in her. News of her rapid progress in Hollywood was publicised by the studio with credit implied Cinesound for attaining a standard which was acceptable to Hollywood. In 1946 she made a short but well publicised return visit to Australia and, among other functions, attended the premiere of Smithy;

27 The photograph was printed in Woman, 29.10.36.
28 The luncheon was reported in the Daily Telegraph (Sydney), 31.3.37.
29 She became Ann Richards to avoid confusion with the American actress, Anne Shirley.
30 Letter from Miss Richards, op.cit. Her films in Hollywood included Dr. Gillespies' New Assistant (1943), An American Romance (1944), Love Letters (1945), The Searching Wind (1946), and Sorry, Wrong Number (1948).
her importance on that evening was signified by the fact that her gown had been provided at the studio's expense, while the female star of the film, Muriel Steinbeck, was obliged to supply her own costume for the occasion. Even more indicative of Miss Richards' importance was the large number of personal appearances which she made at matinees and evening sessions of Smithy during the premiere season at the State Theatre, Sydney, even though she had no direct connection with the film. Hollywood experience had clearly turned her into a figure who carried far more prestige for the Australian studio than her successors in the local industry.

Through the exploitation of the star system Cinesound did much to develop a public image of professionalism that could stand comparison with Hollywood. By the mid-1930s the name of Cinesound itself became an asset which strengthened the commercial value of the studio's films. Public participation in publicity campaigns - from competitions to talent schools - helped this company image to penetrate more deeply into the market than could be achieved by paid advertising. Only with such publicity could the films themselves be given a fair opportunity to prove their worth in the theatres.

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31 Interview with Muriel Steinbeck, recorded by the writer in Orange, New South Wales, on 28.3.1970.
Chapter Four - The Films

Art Showmanship

Because of the uncertain standing of Cinesound within the Greater Union organisation, the supporters of feature production were under continual pressure to prove the commercial value of their work. Only by producing commercially successful features could they justify their position in the organisation and sustain continuous production. Cinesound's relations with the paying theatre audiences were therefore crucial. On the tastes of the public depended the maintenance of Cinesound as a feature film producer, and the company's commercial success owed much to the quality of its finished productions and their ability to meet public demands.

The satisfaction of public wishes was not only necessary to sustain the company, but was also, it seems, the over-riding concern of Hall and his colleagues at Cinesound. Not only were 'art' films impossible in Australia because of lack of finance, but they were also scorned by the Cinesound crew. Hall and the Cinesound team had been reared within the entertainment trade in Australia, in either the theatre or the silent film industry: all were 'professionals' in entertainment, and few, if any, conceived of film as a medium for conscious self-expression. In Hollywood and England at the same time, if studios were sufficiently strong, prestige films might be made, such as Royal Cavalcade, a British drama produced for the Jubilee celebrations of 1936, or a piece of experimental bravura like Orson Welles' Citizen Kane (1941). These were considered 'art' films, not intended to produce large profits, but made because they were the vehicle for a valuable statement or for the display of a special talent. They were an indirect investment for the studio: although immediate financial loss might result, such films could boost the morale of talented staff, and improve the reputation of the studio and of films generally, particularly among the intelligentsia, political and religious groups and other areas where movies might have been underestimated, ignored or criticised. In Australia in the 1930s, however, no company was sufficiently established
to afford support for the artistic film-maker. Work from all studios, especially Cinesound, was strictly focussed on entertainment designed to reap solid returns from the cinema box-office.

Cinesound's approach to film as entertainment was rooted in the concept of 'showmanship'. The concept had meanings which varied throughout the film trade and the term tended to be used indiscriminately by the trade press. An exhibitor might have considered himself a showman in a literal sense, and Norman Rydge possibly saw his work as a showman primarily in the light of the theatres in the Greater Union organisation. But at Cinesound under Doyle and Hall, showmanship was applied to a different area of the industry: to them, it lay in their ability to sense the mood of an audience and mould their productions to please that audience.

At Cinesound, and in other areas of the film trade, the concept of showmanship tended to express two values. On the one hand, it was used to describe the business of making money from entertainment: the public was stereotyped as fickle, and the good showman was one who ran his theatre economically and used great ingenuity in enticing customers to the box-office. On the other hand, showmanship suggested a feeling of responsibility to provide the public with the best possible entertainment for its money. By providing such entertainment the showman justified his position in society. Both facets of showmanship were implicit in Stuart Doyle's initial motive for commencing production at Cinesound in 1932. Overseas films were failing to gain the expected returns for Union Theatres, and On Our Selection was produced to fill a gap in what the company could offer the Depression audience. The motive was thus clearly economic, the exploitation by the supplier of a particular demand: as a showman Doyle observed the Depression audience and predicted that if they would not see the British dramas he was importing then instead they would want to see broad Australian comedy. The publicity for the film however suggested another motive, that Doyle was in fact providing a service to the community: 'What Australia needs now is a darn good laugh!' The film's success fully vindicated him: it was very obviously what Australia did want or need at that time.
The principles of showmanship were perpetually in mind at Cinesound. In 1937 Doyle stated to an audience attending a preview of a New Cinesound film, that the policy of his company 'was to make showmanship pictures and not take expensive journeys along the sidetrack of arty endeavour'.

Again, before the release of Thoroughbred in 1936, the trade paper, Everyones, wrote in praise of the production:

Had you sat in on any of the many sequence conferences you would have realised how thoroughly the showmanship angle has been analysed!

To illustrate the calculations behind the film's appeal, Everyones drew on a statement by Ken Hall:

'Thoroughbred' is in no sense an endeavour at artistic or highbrow achievement. It has been made to appeal to the great multitude of ordinary everyday folk - that section upon which we all depend for our progress...

In none of its feature productions could Cinesound afford to depart from its appeal to 'the great mass of ordinary everyday folk', even if it had so wished. To produce 'art' films for a sectional group was not only dangerous for the company's finances, but was to Hall and his team, a denial of the very function of film as entertainment. To them a feature film was an entity quite detached from themselves, something which they created but which had a completely separate life: a film was ideally calculated and constructed only to make money and relax 'the average man' after his day at the office or factory. The entertainment bore no intentional relation to the private preoccupations of Hall and his team, and wherever personal elements can be detected, they were incidental and probably unconscious.

Many of the standards of showmanship were continually changing, to follow, or perhaps set, public tastes. Although he insisted that showmanship depended largely on experience gained from years of trial and error, Hall approached most

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1 Everyones, 3.2.37, p.3.
2 Everyones, 25.3.36, p.9.
of his films with a simple formula in mind as a minimum security for investment. According to his formula, three elements could be relied upon to create public interest in a film: a good title, a good climax, and a good publicity agent. The title was not only needed to suggest the content or mood of a film, but also had to provide an easily remembered label so that people could talk about the film with ease. A strong climax was important because it was this which the audience remembered most clearly when they left the theatre and which they would talk about to their friends.

Beyond these basic principles, showmanship depended on the individual's ability, first to judge his audience and then to cater to them. The showman could be guided only by his observation of trends in the popular entertainments - theatre, radio and films - and had to learn from his own experience. A simple philosophy evolved at Cinesound: to compete effectively with overseas films, one had to learn to work according to their standards. Hall therefore kept in close contact with new developments and styles by regularly attending trade previews of new films in Sydney, assiduously following the commercial fate of his own films, and spending most of his time in the company of distributors, publicists, exhibitors and other film producers. As a result, many Cinesound films can be seen to have evolved from a collection of elements already tested and proven popular on the stage or in British and Hollywood films. A character, for example, would be cast and written to imitate a Hollywood star, such as the deliberate use of Deanna Durbin as a model for a character in Mr Chedworth Steps Out (1939). Other films would find their initial inspiration in a successful Hollywood film or the work of a particular stage performer. In this way, Hall's decision to film Orphan of the Wilderness (1936), the story of a bush kangaroo, was strengthened greatly by the success of the American film, Sequoia and its story of a girl's friendship with a fawn; and Strike Me Lucky (1934) was designed specifically to exploit the popularity of Roy Rene on the Australian stage. Cinesound also learned from their own work: most of the seventeen features readily fell into categories of entertainment types which proved popular.
once and were ventured again. There emerged the series of Dad and Dave comedies for which Cinesound was best known in Australia, and a series of light comedy-dramas featuring Cecil Kellaway. To a large extent, therefore, the work at Cinesound was 'inbred', drawing heavily on the precedents of its own success and that of others.

Cinesound's resources were dependent on the theatre and overseas films, not only for much of their material but also for many of their techniques. Most of the Cinesound staff, from the script-writer Frank Harvey, to the studio's 'special effects' expert, J. Alan Kenyon, had been trained in the Australian and English theatre. They brought elements of theatrical writing, acting and presentation to their work at Cinesound. This theatrical bias was filtered through Ken Hall's own concept of what films ideally should be like, based on his experience as a publicist with First National and Union Theatres. By watching hundreds of features from Hollywood and England, Hall gained an instinctive knowledge of how films should be directed. His films at Cinesound show a style of directing which from the start adopted the 'phraseology' of varied camera angles and movements, which Hollywood had taken decades to evolve.

Comparison with other Australian producers in the 1930s shows immediately how developed and mature was Hall's approach to direction. Many contemporary films from the Efftee studios in Melbourne relied heavily on stage shows for their material and made no attempt to disguise the source: the films emerged as photographed plays with a few close-ups inserted arbitrarily to bridge gaps caused by acting mistakes and reel changes in the camera. A similar approach was taken by film-makers such as Dick Harwood, Rupert Kathner and Beaumont Smith.

At Cinesound the spirit of teamwork among the studio staff members was reinforced by a feeling of pride in the quality of the finished film, partly because the studio was so obviously superior to its local competitors, and partly because the films so closely resembled the style of Hollywood products. Beaumont Smith, for example, might be privately
disparaged because he took no professional pride in the photographic quality of his work and would shoot his films regardless of changes in the weather. Or Harry Southwell might be considered a failure because his films looked like stage plays. More positively, Cinesound rarely lost an opportunity to publicise any approval given its work by overseas critics. To be accepted without apology or excuse by the public at home and abroad was justifiably one of Cinesound's major goals as an entertainer. Audiences had grown accustomed to Hollywood films and had learnt their 'language'; Cinesound had no alternative, and probably never considered one, but to adopt Hollywood's style of film-making: instinctively Hall saw it as the only way of making films which could appeal to audiences and support continuous production at the studio.

The Cinesound films thus represent an extended application of a particular approach to film-making. Both content and technique were guided by principles of showmanship, which held films to be a money-making entertainment before anything else. Through the seventeen features a steady progression can be seen in the efficiency of the entertainment. Simultaneously with improved technical skills, confidence grew in the exploitation of audience susceptibilities. The increasing maturity is reflected in many ways, not the least of which is the actual choice of material for each film. The first three productions, On Our Selection (1932), The Squatter's Daughter (1933), and The Silence of Dean Maitland (1934) had all appeared earlier as novels, plays or silent films. After 1934, however, most of the films were drawn from 'original' screen-plays; although much of the material imitated Hollywood, its organisation was evolved by the Cinesound writers in response to their principles of showmanship rather than any pre-arranged pattern of a novel or play.

The role played by the Cinesound features in the company's situation in the 1930s must be considered in terms

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3 Interview with Ken Hall, recorded by the writer, 9.6.69.
of calculated appeals to particular audiences. On the calculations of the showman depended the continuation of feature production, and the studio learnt that the only sure guide to safe calculations lay in close observation of the films and the theatre around them. Cinesound found security by following in the footsteps of others, and although substantial elements of 'novelty' and experiment appeared in some films, they were always firmly subjected to the demands of showmanship.

B) The Vaudeville Comedies

Cinesound's debt to theatre emerges most clearly in the company's use of vaudeville as the basic inspiration for a group of four comedies. Each comedy was designed specifically to exploit both the popularity and the talents of a particular vaudeville performer: Roy Rene in Strike Me Lucky (1934), George Wallace in Let George Do It (1938) and Gone to the Dogs (1939), and Will Mahoney in Come Up Smiling (1939). Although the first of the films, Strike Me Lucky, was the closest Cinesound came to commercial failure, Hall and his team soon developed a style of screen farce which was far superior to anything similar attempted by their Australian contemporaries.

The strength of the theatrical influence is immediately apparent in the characters played by Rene, Wallace and Mahoney in each film: with very few changes the characters are the same as those of the vaudeville stage. Rene wore a genuine beard instead of a painted one, but his caricature of 'Mo', the Jewish tramp, was substantially the same as it had been on the stage: the 'blue' jokes, spluttering voice and sober touches of pathos were retained with only a half-hearted attempt to tone down the humour for the rigorous Australian censors.

Similarly Wallace, in both of his films, performed the stunts which were expected from him on the stage: his loose-limbed tap-dancing, his own peculiar falls on to his left ear, and comic songs. He even wore the same tartan shirt without which he said he would have been booed from
the stage. His screen character was the one which had brought him popularity in vaudeville: George, the 'little man', comically flirtatious with girls of his own class, excessively shy with others, so disaster-prone that he turns any routine job into chaos, and yet capable, like 'Mo', of moments of sadness and quiet reflection.

Will Mahoney, like Wallace, was an acrobatic dancer and comic singer, and took the role of a disaster-prone 'little man' on both stage and screen. Wallace's language and accent typed him as Australian, but Mahoney was American and with the different nationality seemed to go a greater neatness of appearance (a bowler hat was one of his trademarks) and a greater resilience in times of adversity. Mahoney's character was vulnerable but always busy and self-absorbed, even absent-minded: when moments of sadness arose, they were short-lived and his wide-eyed day-dreaming would soon restore his optimism.

The direct transfer of stage characters and stage routines to the screen could vary in its effectiveness. Wallace had acted in three earlier feature films and several short sketches for Efftee in Melbourne, and his vaudeville performance had been gradually adapted by trial and error, to suit the techniques of cinema. At Cinesound in 1938, the grotesquely heavy make-up which he had worn in the Efftee films was discarded, along with his asides to the camera and prolonged comic fumblings which delayed the development of the narrative. Mahoney, too, was experienced in film acting and had appeared in several American films before coming to Australia in 1938. Rene, however, found difficulty in transferring his stage performance to the screen. Far more than Wallace he was dependant on verbal comedy, which he frequently improvised in response to the mood of a particular audience. As his

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4 The Sun (Sydney), 14.7.38.
5 The features were His Royal Highness (1932), Harmony Row (1933), and A Ticket in Tatts (1934), and the shorts included Oh, What a Night (c.1933).

23. Will Mahoney in *Come Up Smiling*
writer, Vic Roberts, commented: 'His art consists in
smelling out the feeling of an audience, of entering into
some human relationship with it ... Just as a comedian
works better with a foil or a stooge so Mo works better
with an audience'. It was here that Rene struck difficulty
with film work: 'I found it too hard trying to be funny to
no one ... You don't know how you are going. And in the
studio no one is allowed to laugh at you, and believe me
you certainly get no reaction from a camera'. The result
was so obviously a failure, that the trade press ventured
a rare criticism of Cinesound, and predicted that Strike
Me Lucky would 'leave a wake of disappointment and
disillusionment. For except on a few occasions, Mo is not
funny; and between the genuine laughs lie lengthy gaps of
tedium'. Although Rene's contract with Cinesound covered
the possibility of further films, none followed, and Rene
returned to work on the stage and in radio until his death
in 1954.

The plots of the two George Wallace features followed
a formula which closely resembled the story used by his
writers in one of the Efftee films, A Ticket in Tatts (1934).
In both the Efftee and Cinesound films George is given a
simple labourer's job: a grocer's assistant, a stage hand,
or a cleaner at the zoo. Quite innocently and accidentally
he creates chaos in the job and is fired. In A Ticket in
Tatts, he is left alone to mind the store for a few minutes
and manages to spill flour over one customer, knock out
another with falling tins of fruit, and he gradually
demolishes any semblance of order in the store's displays.
He then becomes involved in a simple wish-fulfilment
device which lies at the centre of each of the three plots:

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7 Rene, op.cit., p.137. Rene met the same difficulties in
radio. Many of his radio broadcasts were made to live
audiences in the studio, but in his memoirs (pp.146-47)
he describes a recording session where a fixed script by
A.B.C. writers completely stifled his ability to respond
to an audience.
8 Everyones, 21.11.34, p.16.
in *A Ticket in Tatts* he discovers that his whistle can make a race horse run faster than any jockey can ride it; in *Let George Do It* he learns that he has inherited a fortune, provided that he can present himself at an appointed time to sign a document; and in *Gone to the Dogs* he accidentally discovers a potion that has the power to accelerate the speed of greyhounds. In each film this device is complicated by an equally simple set of stereotyped gangsters who have no motivation beyond innate greed for greater wealth, and in each situation they are foiled, usually accidentally, by George and his friends. In *Gone to the Dogs*, for example, the gangsters discover the power George's potion on a greyhound named 'Black Beauty' and try to kidnap the dog to disguise her as one of their own. George stumbles on to the plans of the gang and makes a frantic dash to the race-course to reveal the conspiracy, and catches the gang red-handed.

The simplicity of the Wallace comedies suggests the confidence that Hall had in building a story around a single personality, allowing Wallace the maximum freedom to introduce vaudeville sketches and character embellishments. His *Efftee* films were often weakened by static set-pieces of comic routines that continued for a disproportionate time in the context of the narrative, and which bore little relation to the development of the story. In *A Ticket in Tatts*, for example, George disguises himself as a waiter in order to eavesdrop on two diners, and in the course of the evening joins the restaurant's entertainers in four items of their floorshow, an 'interlude' which completely halts the plot for more than ten minutes at a late stage in its development. More than anything the floorshow interlude resembles padding simply to bring the film up to feature length. In contrast, the *Cinesound* films attempted to tie the vaudeville routines to the plot and to allow them to arise credibly from situations inherent in the narrative. In *Gone to the Dogs*, a vaudeville sketch in which George meddles with chemicals to make a potion, is the starting point of the chain of incidents which form the narrative. Where the incidents could not be integrated they were tailored to a manageable
time-length and placed where they least interrupted the flow of the film.\(^9\)

Hall's confidence in the scripting and timing of comedy took some time to develop and the studio's lack of experience early in the 1930s is reflected in Strike Me Lucky. Far from following a simple narrative formula, Rene's film is 'an amazing hotch-potch of slapstick, pun, caricature, farce, ballet and burlesque, put over regardless of rhyme, reason or continuity'.\(^{10}\) The basic situation is blatantly sentimental and centres on Mo's friendship with a little girl whom he finds dancing in the streets. Although she claims to be an orphan, the girl is in fact the runaway daughter of wealthy parents who are offering a handsome reward for her return. Before the film ends the story introduces a middle-aged gangster’s moll who calls herself June East in imitation of Mae West; a band of ruthless gangsters who attempt to kidnap the runaway girl; a search for a lost gold reef; a savage tribe of cannibals; an eccentric gold prospector who believes himself to be Robinson Crusoe; a celebration at which ballet dancers perform Tchaikovsky's 'Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy'; and a romance between two young members of high society. The convoluting plot was one aspect of the film which received criticism in most reviews when the film was released,\(^{11}\) and counted against its effectiveness as entertainment.

In an attempt to retain as much as possible of the quality of Rene's vaudeville performance, Hall had signed

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\(^9\) An example of Hall's awareness of the importance of smooth continuity of narrative arose in the filming of Let George Do It. Much expense and man-power was spent in the rehearsal and filming of a water ballet in a private Darling Point swimming pool. The scene was to appear at the end of the film as part of the celebrations following George's acceptance of his inherited fortune. In the finished film, however, the scene proved an anti-climactic and was almost entirely removed.


\(^{11}\) For example, 'The story, which doesn't know where to stop ...' (Everyone, 21.11.34, p.16); 'The incidents are but slightly connected, far-fetched, and often coarse'. (Monthly Film Bulletin, January 1936, p.9).
24. The closing scene of Strike Me Lucky showing the stress on grotesque caricature. The self-consciously Jewish humour associated with Roy Rene is apparent in this 'still': note especially the false noses and make-up on the children.
Vic Roberts, who wrote for Rene on the stage, to collaborate with Cinesound's George Parker on the script. The practice of using stage gag-writers was soon abandoned when the results of Strike Me Lucky were seen, and later, in Come Up Smiling, Will Mahoney's contribution was restricted to collaboration on the songs; the story was written by Ken Hall himself (under the pseudonym of John Addison Chandler), and the script was prepared by the film's director, William Freshman, and his wife, Lydia Hayward, both of whom had worked for many years, not in vaudeville, but in the more staid areas of the British film industry. The script of Come Up Smiling is accordingly the least vaudevillian of this group of films, and stands in strong contrast to Strike Me Lucky: Mahoney's comedy routines are worked into a context that is much closer to the 'straight' Cinesound productions than the scripts of either the Wallace or the Rene films. Unlike the other vaudeville comedies, the story is far from being simply a framework for improvised sketches. Barney O'Hara (played by Will Mahoney) is befriended by a teenage girl, Pat, who is a soprano singer of great promise. Pat suffers from a throat disease which threatens to ruin her voice unless she can have an operation costing £300. Barney tries to earn the money and without realising what he has done, challenges the Killer, a side-show boxer who offers £500 to anyone who can beat him in the ring. Much of the film is then devoted to Barney's training, and the tricks which his friends devise to demoralise the Killer. The tightly developed plot makes the film much less reliant on the central vaudeville performance than occurred in either the Rene or Wallace comedies. At the same time brief interludes in the film give Mahoney ample opportunity to perform his vaudeville routines, including a tap-dancing sequence on the roof of a speeding car (the sequence uses back projection so that no danger existed) and an impression of Al Jolson.

Thus, after the unwieldy complications of Strike Me Lucky, Cinesound managed to adapt vaudeville into two contrasting styles of comedy. In both Let George Do It
25. The farcical boxing match between Will Mahoney and Alec Kellaway (as 'The Killer') which forms the climax of Come up Smiling. The scene was one of several comic 'set-pieces' which gave Mahoney the opportunity to display his vaudevillian style.
and Gone to the Dogs the plots were secondary to Wallace's routines and mainly served as a simple framework to unify the episodes of farce. In Come Up Smiling the plot was far more substantial in dramatic content, and Mahoney served the dual role of participant in the drama and of clown, with his vaudeville acts appearing primarily as interludes to the main action. In this way, Cinesound found two solutions to the problem of how best to exploit the popularity of vaudeville artists, either allowing them the maximum freedom within a sketchy and flexible plot, or giving them a central role in a tightly-knit dramatic narrative. Both devices, when compared with Strike Me Lucky, reflect the increasing sophistication of Hall's methods of showmanship during the 1930s.

Parallel with these developments in the control of content, Hall and the Cinesound crew displayed progress in their ability to exploit available technical resources to the full in support of script and vaudeville performers. Hall's greater experience in film-making gave him advantages over Efftee's attempts to film similar vaudeville material. Not only were Hall's films often faster and more coherent, but they gained greatly from his skilful 'phrasing' which a film exhibitor like Frank Thring of Efftee never had the opportunity to learn. Hall directed the vaudeville set-pieces closely, exerting discipline on the camera and the editor if not always on the performer; close-ups and long-shots, the intercutting of action and reaction, and subjective and objective camera movements, would all be used to give variety to the presentation of an act. In this way Hall succeeded where Thring failed, in exploiting vaudeville comedy in his films, rather than merely reproducing it.

Hall used the resources of cinema in other ways to give strength to the comedies. Technical flourishes were common, as in all of Hall's work, and in Gone to the Dogs a technical 'trick' (speeded-up action) was the very basis of the plot. Let George Do It, as the most polished of the vaudeville comedies, includes some of the most effective moments of camera and editing bravura. The film
opens with a montage of clock pendulums, using diagonal 'wipes' which follow the line of the pendulum swing, before cutting to George's own alarm clock ringing to set off an elaborate 'waking up machine'. The effect has no functional place in the narrative, but its precision and rhythm make it a pleasure which must have surprised many members of the audience who expected nothing as imaginative from a George Wallace comedy. More substantially, the film concludes with a long chase on Sydney Harbour, with George and his friend, Letty, in an uncontrolled speedboat, being pursued by armed gangsters in another boat. The scene is dependent on Cinesound's back-projection equipment: the image of Sydney Harbour traffic speeding past at breakneck pace was projected behind George and Letty as they grimaced in a model of the boat in the Cinesound studio. The skill with which the faked action is intercut with live stunt work makes the scene a remarkable comic set-piece, neatly integrating Wallace's fumbling comic style into a sequence that for all its technical complexity is fast and smoothly-flowing.

As with most Cinesound films, the content of the vaudeville comedies was evolved from within the closed world of the entertainment industry: not only did the stage contribute much of the material used in the films, but ideas drawn from Hollywood comedies are also evident. The final shot of Gone to the Dogs, for example, is similar to the traditional cartoon fade-out, with George being pursued by a wasp down a winding country road which stretches to the horizon. Gone to the Dogs also introduces, in embryo, an Australian Laurel and Hardy team in George Wallace and the giant comedian, John Dobbie. The attempt to emulate Laurel and Hardy was quite conscious on Hall's part: not only the physical appearance of the two comedians, but also much of their slapstick clowning suggests the style of the American team.¹²

¹² Hall tells an anecdote which arises from the similarity between the two comedy teams. Gone to the Dogs had been previewed in the United States, but the film was not bought for release. Instead, shortly afterwards, a Hollywood company produced a Laurel and Hardy film which featured
Within this context of 'inbred' entertainment, occasional topical elements relating to the Australian environment in the 1930s were entirely incidental. Topical humour was directed primarily at the popular target of Adolf Hitler. As early as 1934, satire of Nazism appeared in Strike Me Lucky, which was first planned under the working title of Swastikas for Luck: a film as conscious as this of Jewish sentiments would have been well aware of the anti-Semitic overtones of the swastika symbol. Later, in Let George Do It, a newspaper photograph of George captures a delightful parody of Nazi propaganda: George's usually kindly face takes on the expression and hair-style of Hitler at his most severe. Most of the humour in these comedies, however, tended to be universal in its application and bore little relation to a specific place or time. This lack of a specific setting clearly had roots in the commercial calculations behind the film, with the intention of making the film immediately acceptable to all audiences, at home and abroad.

Each Cinesound film was produced with a particular audience in mind, and the vaudeville comedies were aimed above all at the patrons of 'down-town' theatres such as the Capitol in Sydney where all four films were released. The audiences there tended to seek light, undemanding entertainment, in contrast to the more sophisticated productions which usually screened in theatres such as the State or Lyceum. As one critic noted, Hall, in the vaudeville films, had 'a short way with highbrows. He eliminates them altogether from his calculations, and concentrates fairly and squarely on the plebs'. Although the audience tended to be less discriminating than the patrons of dramas such as The Silence of Dean Maitland or The Broken Melody, the vaudeville comedies were taken no less seriously by the

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one of the routines from the Cinesound film, in which George confuses John Dobbie (in a gorilla suit) with a real gorilla. (Interview with Ken G. Hall, by the writer, 15.2.69).
13 Sydney Morning Herald, 1.1.40, p.3.
Cinesound staff: Strike Me Lucky was made for an estimated £9,000, and the others for approximately £20,000 each, budgets which were consistent with the amounts spent on the company's other films at the same time.14

Cinesound's expenditure on the vaudeville films was, with one exception, fully justified by public response. The two George Wallace features especially sustained their popularity for many years and were frequently revived in both full and short versions. Come Up Smiling was slower to establish its popularity; after a quiet premiere in Hobart, a conference was called at Cinesound in which it was decided to change the title to the more memorable Ants in his Pants, in an attempt to boost public interest in the film for its release in other states.15 The title change seemed to have the desired effect, since the film attracted vigorous business in Sydney and Melbourne. In their popular appeal, both Come Up Smiling and the George Wallace comedies benefited considerably from their attraction to children, and they often appeared on the programme of Saturday matinees; as one critic wrote, there is nothing in Come Up Smiling 'that a boy of twelve could fail to appreciate. In fact, the children in Friday's audience at the Capitol Theatre yelled loudly with enjoyment at the more risible moments in the story'.16

The one exception to the record of popularity was Strike Me Lucky which failed commercially at its opening in Sydney. The fate of the film may be attributed to a variety of factors: certainly the 'word of mouth' publicity17 and the unenthusiastic reviews had a substantial effect, but the film's prospects were, in Hall's opinion, prejudiced from the start.18 Rene's humour was widely known to be 'as

14 See Appendix III.
15 Interview with Ken Hall, recorded by the writer, 9.6.69.
16 Sydney Morning Herald, 1.1.40, p.3.
17 See above, p.75-76.
18 Hall interview, 15.2.69.
"blue" as anyone dared for those times,\textsuperscript{19} and accordingly the film could not rely on a family audience, unlike other Cinesound features. More than ever this failure taught Hall the need to cater for the family audience if he wished his films to make a profit in Australia. Although the 'blue' humour was toned down in the film, it was still in sufficiently dubious taste to earn the film a censorship rating of 'For Adults Only'. The rating was not legally binding but it meant that each advertisement for the film carried a warning to parents that they should not bring their children and that Rene's comedy would live up to its reputation. The film was further prejudiced by the refusal of the Films Advisory Committee in New South Wales to accept the film for registration as a quota production.\textsuperscript{20} Although Cinesound's sister companies within Greater Union afforded some protection, the lack of a quota certificate was no encouragement to the hundreds of independent exhibitors already made wary of the film's bad name in the trade. These factors combined to prevent Strike Me Lucky, alone of all the Cinesound features, from making a clear profit, although it did eventually manage to break even. Under Rydge a failure such as this would probably have threatened the continuation of feature production; under a more adventurous showman like Doyle, however, the company cut its losses by cancelling the remainder of its contract with Rene and fell back to safer ground with another Dad and Dave comedy, Grandad Rudd.

The later comedies, with George Wallace and Will Mahoney, showed that after this initial false start, vaudeville could be adapted effectively to make commercial productions which would exploit the box-office value of a comedian's performance and at the same time satisfy the audience with work which lived up to the technical and narrative standards of Hollywood and British comedies. Unlike other Australian producers of vaudeville comedies, Cinesound attempted to compete directly with the overseas product: the cost was greater

\textsuperscript{19}P. Ryan in the \textit{Australian}, 17.2.70, p.10.
\textsuperscript{20}See above, p.33.
than the simple reproduction of stage routines in some of the Efftee films, but the returns at the box-office more than justified the effort.

C) The Action Movies

Five Cinesound films form a group in which dramatic outdoor action plays a much more important role than the development of character or theme. The films are also linked by an overt debt to Hollywood, not only in the details of Ken Hall's direction, but in the narrative structure of each film. The action movies can be seen, to some extent, as exercises in Hollywood genres: The Squatter's Daughter (1933) evolves its plot in 'the best American western film fashion'; and in reviewing Cinesound's racing film, Thoroughbred (1936), one critic noted that the story seemed 'to be based entirely on the theme of Frank Capra's "Broadway Bill".' It has already been mentioned how Orphan of the Wilderness (1936) was affected by the Hollywood film, Sequoia, and the pattern continues with Tall Timbers (1937) in which the story resembles a slightly earlier Hollywood success, Trail of the Lonesome Pine. Lovers and Luggers (1937) was, in turn, one of 'many films that have introduced a battle of life and death many fathoms deep in pearl-fishing waters'.

Not only the broad plot outlines but many details in these films were derivative. The portrayal of the gangsters in Thoroughbred owes much to Scarface and its successors: the gangsters talk about putting someone 'on ice', and one has a sinister habit of cracking nuts with his fingers, having the same effect as George Raft's coin-tossing in

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21 From a review in the Sydney Mail, 4.10.33, p.16.
22 Smith's Weekly, 16.5.36.
23 See above, p.88.
24 From a review in Film Digest, no.6, p.5.
25 From a review in Today's Cinema, 17.3.38, p.9.
Scarface. Lovers and Luggers, with its imported Hollywood star, Lloyd Hughes, is the most fully realised Hollywood imitation, and displays many classic characteristics of the deep-sea diving genre, especially in comparison with a routine Hollywood B-feature, City Beneath the Sea, which although made many years later (1954), may be taken as a run-of-the-mill sample of the genre. Both films are set on an exotic island (Jamaica in the American film, Thursday Island in Cinesound’s); and the heroes of both films are deep-sea divers with smug, self-confident manners, a gift for witty repartee, and both risk the 'bends' to save the life of a friend whose air-hose is trapped in a rock fissure. Further, both films feature a seedy waterfront cafe complete with a torch-singer and a brawl in which the hero becomes involved; both include a villainous sea captain named Mendoza; and the climax in both films involves a fight between two rival boat crews while the hero is diving below, his life dependent on the outcome of the surface struggle.

With a format already made familiar to audiences in countless Hollywood productions, the Cinesound films at once became acceptable to the public. At the same time, individuality was preserved with details of characterisation, setting and action, and here a pervasive influence of music-hall melodrama becomes apparent. Melodrama in the Cinesound films was often more exaggerated than that introduced into similar Hollywood productions, and its emphatic style can be attributed directly to the background of the writers at Cinesound. Frank Harvey, the author of two of the action films, had gained from his work as an actor and playwright great proficiency in stage techniques. 26 In Tall Timbers he appears in the role of a surly villain, very prone to falling into melodramatic poses to express his emotions: arms raised and back arched to represent fear, eyebrows twitching for the more menacing moments, and so on. His

26 See above, p.51.
plot for the film also carries devices which were better suited to a period piece such as East Lynne: the last-minute revelation that the hero is the long-lost son of a timber baron; or the heroine's disguise in cloak and hood to discover the truth about her philandering fiancé.  

The first Cinesound action film, The Squatter's Daughter, was particularly indebted to the stage. Its nominal source was a play written by Bert Bailey and Edmund Duggan, which had been performed since the 1910s, filmed in 1912, and later published as a novel in 1922. Cinesound retained little but the title of the play and turned the emphasis from bushranging to the rivalry between neighbouring sheep stations. Both the script and acting are imbued with melodramatic devices. The highly complex plot includes elements that have been seen 'on thousands of stages. The imperilled estate; the ineffectual villains; the persecuted heroine; the mysterious hero, who shows up the villains for the half-wits they are, and marries the girl - all are as familiar to pre-war theatre-goers as girls that wouldn't drink and cars that wouldn't go'.  

The story also features the age-old device of babes swapped in their cradles, here treated seriously, unlike its tone in, say, H.M.S. Pinafore.

Australian vaudeville was, in all of the films, the direct source of comic relief. In The Squatter's Daughter the comedy is provided by a trio of shearers who arrive at the station in a dilapidated, temperamental car; one is a Scot who later dresses in a kilt and serenades his sweetheart with the bagpipes until a snake, charmed by the music,

27 The melodramatic devices were discussed at length by the A.B.C. radio film critic, who commented on the scene of reunion between the father and his long-lost son:

Once upon a time you could get away with that scene in every third act, and the pit fairly yelled with joy, but the world is a different place now.

(From a transcript of the review in Everyones, 29.9.37, p.10.)

28 From a review in the Bulletin, 4.10.33, p.18.
26. Frank Harvey as the villain in Tall Timbers.

27. Vaudeville comic relief in Tall Timbers (from l. to r., Letty Craydon, Joe Valli, George Lloyd).
interrupts the scene. The stage origins are obvious in the grotesque caricatures, not only of the Scottish shearer, but of his chosen love, an over-weight matron named Miss Ramsbottom. Comic sequences appear throughout the film, with little relevance to either the plot or the mood of the rest of the film. Yet despite their origins in another medium and their arbitrary role in the film, the boisterous vigour and sheer skill of the cast (mostly vaudeville artists) make the scenes in *The Squatter's Daughter* some of the best comedy ever filmed by Cinesound. Comic relief in later films was again rarely integrated into the main narrative, but tended to be more subdued to avoid disruption of the film's mood.

Within this framework of Hollywood and the stage, Cinesound's action movies introduced lavish spectacle and bizarre action as the highlight of the narrative with an obvious determination to give the films distinction. According to Hall's basic formula of showmanship, a strong climax was essential to a film's commercial appeal, and in these films every opportunity was taken to provide large-scale, sweeping excitement that audiences would remember and talk about, from a bushfire in *The Squatter's Daughter* and a timber drive in *Tall Timbers* to the Melbourne Cup race at the climax of *Thoroughbred*.

Perhaps's Cinesound's most ambitious attempt to create spectacle inside the studio was the opening sequence of the animal adventure film, *Orphan of the Wilderness*. Under the direction of J. Alan Kenyon, a bush setting, 180 feet by 70 feet, was built in the Bondi studio: 200 gums, fern trees, shrubs and bullrushes were re-planted around an artificial waterfall and bush pool. A score of animals, mostly kangaroos, but also an emu, koalas, a snake and a bullfrog

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29 Cf. A. Buckley, 'The Film in Australia - The Sound Period', in the Sydney Cinema Journal, no.3, Winter 1967, p.5: 'the sequence with the three shearers arriving in a clapped-out Austin tourer, crashing through the property owner's prize roses, and the encounter with Dorothy Dunckley, is the funniest scene in any Australian film'. 


were moved inside. Problems of filming the animals were manifold: most were sensitive to prolonged exposure to the studio lights, and the kangaroos, after settling in, were difficult to prompt into action. The result, however, formed an introductory sequence which is among Hall's best work. The Sydney Morning Herald's usually reserved critic found the opening pastorale 'extraordinarily beautiful ... The tender, lyrical images flow across the screen, graced by exquisite photography and pleasant music, in a way which recalls the soothing beauty of the silent screen'.

The confident enthusiasm which drove the Cinesound team to increasingly extravagant tests of its own strength, in films such as Orphan of the Wilderness, seems to have affected the entire character of the action genre. There emerges in these films a spirit of bravado and rough vitality which distinguishes them from the more gentle or sentimental of the studio's films, and which gives them added effectiveness as entertainment.

The spirit of bravado and virility emerges in many ways in the films, from the danger and almost absurd extravagance of the spectacle, to the characterisation of the hero-figure. In Lovers and Luggers, a virility motif is central to the film's narrative. The hero, Daubenny Carshott, is anxious to learn 'how it feels to be a man again' and deserts his career as a concert pianist for pearl-diving on Thursday Island. There he is engaged in a series of

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30 Sunday Sun and Guardian (Sydney), 2.8.36.
31 Interview with Ken Hall, by the writer, 11.2.69.
32 Sydney Morning Herald, 21.12.36, p.5. The similarity to the techniques of silent film was not intentional: Hall had initially intended using a commentary explaining the action during this sequence, but the finished sequence so impressed him that an introductory title was added and the commentary dropped in favour of a musical score composed of themes from popular classics, such as Dvorak's 'New World Symphony' and Tchaikovsky's 'Pathetique Symphony'.
practical jokes which demonstrate his newly-gained manliness: one night he joins a crowd of about twenty late-night revellers, intent on guying the villain, Mendoza. Later Daubenny's jib-sail is stolen by his friend, Captain Quidley, and Daubenny retaliates by stealing Quidley's lugger and hiding it in a bay on the other side of the island. Manliness seems to be Quidley's main criterion for judging his friends and each time Daubenny wins his admiration, he approves his deeds with the cry, 'Daub's a doer, is Daub'. The portrayal of Daubenny's two loves is also affected by the screenplay's emphasis on boisterous vitality. When Daubenny is a 'lounge lizard' in London, his lover is a high society 'vamp' who ruthlessly manipulates her men and cares only for luxury and self-satisfaction. She is firmly damned in the course of the film, and is strongly contrasted with the girl whom Daubenny meets on the island. The daughter of a sea captain, she is much better suited to a spirited man of action: she is healthy and virginal, practical enough to sail a lugger, and is full of unaffected, ingenuous charm.

The hero of Tall Timbers is even more strongly realised as a virile man of action. From the opening sequence in which he rescues the heroine from the surf, he is established as infallibly resourceful, and cocky in his self-assurance. In one scene, when he angrily harangues the lumberjacks to stay on the job, he is photographed in an image of epic strength: with an arm angrily raised, he stands feet astride on a log, silhouetted against the sky, resembling, more than anything, the revolutionary sculpture of dynamic Chinese or Russian workers. The woman he finally marries is again a fitting match: she is an expert horsewoman, capable of great ingenuity in outwitting a philandering suitor, and full of natural charm.  

33 The character is played by Shirley Ann Richards, who also played the heroine in Lovers and Luggers. The similarity of the two characters is one reflection of the deliberate 'image' which Cinesound was attempting to create for their new 'star'.

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28. The hero (Frank Leighton) at the logging camp in Tall Timbers.

29. The hero and heroine (Shirley Ann Richards) from Tall Timbers.
Elements of respect for virility are scattered throughout the action films, not only in the character of the heroes, but also in many of the attitudes behind the films themselves. The boisterous slapstick of the vaudeville comic relief, for example, is consistent with the equally boisterous action of the chase and brawl which end *Orphan of the Wilderness*. Practical and charmingly unaffected women appear in each film: in *The Squatter's Daughter* the heroine is manageress of a sheep station; in *Orphan of the Wilderness* she is a bare-back rider in a circus; and in *Thoroughbred*, although more demurely feminine, she is yet again an expert in horse-training and farm management.

Images suggestive of energy and strength also recur, though the emphasis on narrative allows time for few flourishes of imagery. The scenes of horse-riding in *The Squatter's Daughter* are particularly vivid and capture a feeling of robust earthiness. *Orphan of the Wilderness* has probably the strongest of these images: the heroine, finally goaded to fury by the villain's callous treatment of the kangaroo, turns on him with a whip, and is framed by a circle of fire through which the kangaroo had been forced to jump. Within the comparatively staid context of a Cinesound narrative the effect is surprisingly evocative of great passion.

The treatment of animals in the films also suggests a mood of rough aggression in keeping with the emphasis on virility. Implied cruelty to animals prompted the British censors to delay and cut two films: *Thoroughbred* and *Orphan of the Wilderness*. In *Thoroughbred* the scene which caused offence was a stable fire in which horses were led through the flames to safety. To the British censors it appeared that the horses had in fact been exposed to fire, but in filming the sequence Hall had used the back-projection equipment and staged the scene in the studio, with the fire on the screen and the horses moving in front of the image.

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34 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18.7.36.
Apart from a few burning posts in the close foreground, the horses were never near the flames. The illusion of horses trapped by fire is nevertheless vivid and, to the censors, presumably seemed undesirable for public exhibition.

The entire plot of Orphan of the Wilderness centres on the maltreatment of a bush kangaroo and the film suffered many cuts in England before it was released. The plot follows the adventures of Chut, a bush kangaroo whose mother is killed by hunters. He eventually finds himself in a circus where he is trained to 'box' as part of a circus act. His drunken owner neglects him, and one day, driven berserk by thirst, Chut attacks his trainer and escapes to the bush. There he is pursued by circus men on horseback and is finally trapped on a river bank where the men try to shoot him. Throughout the production of the film care was taken to avoid physical hardship for the animals involved. The 'killing' of Chut's mother was staged with the use of a blank cartridge and a trip wire to bring the kangaroo down; later she was given an injection by a veterinarian, and a wound was painted on her flank. But as with Thoroughbred, the British censors objected to the implication of violence in the film and would only accept it after substantial cuts had been made.

The vigorous roughness of the action, as reflected in the story of Chut's suffering, is consistent with the impatient mocking of pretensions, whether political or social, which also appears in these films. In Tall Timbers an agitator, complete with soap-box, tries to create unrest among the labourers at the timber mill. The figure is clearly intended as a Communist or trade unionist troublemaker, and Hall's treatment of him is severe: he is depicted as the stooge of a rival timber baron with ulterior motives in his pleading, and he is violently removed by the hero who

35 Hall interview, 11.2.69.
36 Ibid. The filming of Orphan of the Wilderness is also discussed in a letter from Ken Hall to the writer, 5.7.71.
is righteously infuriated by the sabotage. More substantially, a theme woven into the action of *Thoroughbred* criticises the concept of aristocracy and quietly satirises the manners of the country gentry. The theme arises from a contrast between the heroine's family, the Dawsons, and their neighbours, the British aristocrat, Sir Russell Peel and his son Bill. While the film argues in favour of pure breeding in horses, it is firmly set against 'thoroughbred people'. The most lively and likeable characters are the 'battlers' in the Dawson household; and the aristocratic behaviour of the Peels becomes the source of much humour, with one character, for example, drinking a tiny drop of brandy from an absurdly large brandy balloon. The theme implies criticism of both the pretentious manners of the aristocracy as well as any claims they may have to supremacy based on breeding, and parallels with the racial policies of European fascists at that time are too obvious to have been unintentional on Hall's part.

Although *Thoroughbred* implies a criticism of any theory that gives supremacy to one race over another, *Lovers and Luggers* carries a strain of comedy which arises directly from racial differences. The comedy directed towards the Chinese on Thursday Island, can be seen as one aspect of the coarse, unthinking behaviour of men of action and it resembles schoolboy clowning dependent on someone else's discomfort. Daubenny Carshott teases his friend Quidley by asking 'Ever kill a Chinaman?', to which Quidley replies, much taken aback, 'How did you know?' Again, in the same film, a drunken Scotsman, McTavish, sells his worthless toupee to a bald-headed Chinese drinker in a bar, the joke depending very much on the protestations of the Chinese that he does not want the toupee.

A variety of sources can be suggested for the appearance in these films of an emphasis on virility and bravado. In part it may be seen as a direct response by Hall and his team to location filming: work outdoors usually inspired a feeling of excitement and enthusiasm in the production.
crew, particularly when the work involved fast action and a degree of novelty and danger. Again it may be seen as the exhibitionism of a young and immature industry trying to prove itself in the face of grim opposition from Hollywood and England. Simultaneously, there may have been a feeling of headiness gained from the studio's public position of supremacy in the local production field.

Again the theme of virility in all its varied aspects, may be seen as the expression of attitudes arising from a response to the Australian environment. Certainly in a journal such as the Bulletin, many aspects of the theme were held to be typically Australian, and elements such as anti-Chinese humour and criticism of aristocratic pretensions were standard Bulletin material. In this context, the theme may be linked with the vigorous nationalistic appeals which appear in The Squatter's Daughter. Emotions inspired by the Australian outback are roused at the outset when Elgar's 'Land of Hope and Glory' is played over magnificent sweeping scenes of a sheep muster. A message from the Prime Minister, Mr. Lyons, introduces the film, accompanied by a fanfare which gives an emotional charge to the Prime Minister's praise of Cinesound's portrayal of Australian resources. Several scenes during the film express explicit patriotic fervour: one is virtually an advertisement for Australian merino wool, and another pleads for the human spirit that will help 'to build our nation to the greatness our fathers dreamed of'. As in the first Cinesound production, On Our Selection, made one year earlier, the nationalistic sentiments were described by Hall as 'a straight play for the known emotional response of the Australian people', and their vigorous energy makes a direct appeal to an optimistic pride in the nation, and a plea for action and manliness in the face of the Depression.

37 Letter from Ken Hall to the writer, 5.7.71.
In contrast to The Squatter's Daughter, the later action films were led by commercial considerations to suppress any explicit response to the Australian setting, and the films made deliberate efforts to reduce specific Australian elements to a minimum. Just as Cinesound was to progressively mute the Australian elements in the 'Dad and Dave' series, so in Tall Timbers, for example, the Australian setting is so effectively generalised that one critic noted that 'the only defiantly Australian element is that of the gum trees'. After the commercial failure overseas of explicitly Australian films like On Our Selection and The Squatter's Daughter, Cinesound compromised by giving their productions a setting which would have, as nearly as possible, a universal application. At the same time commercial motives existed in the home markets, and by 1935 strong 'Australianisms' were becoming the source of embarrassment to some audiences. Some critics saw it as a sign of maturity that Hall was gradually removing overt Australian elements from his films in favour of a more cosmopolitan approach. Smith's Weekly, for example, began a review of Tall Timbers with the comment: 'It is gratifying to notice how each new Cinesound film is a little less carefully nationalistic than the previous one'. The popular attitude that 'Australianisms' were uncouth and immature seemed to be inextricably confused with the attitude that a properly professional film was one which bore the sophistication of narrative and technique that Hollywood had established. As Cinesound films progressively absorbed more and more of Hollywood's methods, the films met with wider appreciation from critics, and the simultaneous reduction of Australian elements seems to have been equated by some critics with this greater sophistication of method.

38 Smith's Weekly, 2.10.37. The attitude of this review contrasts strongly with views expressed about the Australian elements in On Our Selection and The Squatter's Daughter. There it was 'the clarity of the Australian atmosphere' which gave a much-praised distinction to the films, for example in the Argus, 23.10.33, p.5.
Cinesound's approach to the Australian context differed markedly from that of some contemporary Australian producers, such as Charles Chauvel who attempted to merge Hollywood methods with staunchly Australian subjects. His films from the 1930s, such as *Heritage* (1935), a story of the colonisation of New South Wales, and *Uncivilised* (1936), about a white man living with an Aboriginal tribe, employed many blatant Hollywood devices, and Australian elements were clearly included in an attempt to provide novelty for both urban Australians and overseas audiences. Accordingly, the Australian background in Chauvel's films tended to be highly fanciful: in *Uncivilised*, the 'wild white man' sings to himself in a strong tenor voice as he roams about his jungle domain, and the Aboriginals wear an inordinate amount of ornaments and paint. A different approach again was taken by Efftee in Melbourne, where the studio's distinct style was decidedly un-American, with films that emerged as photographed stage plays, and Australian content that was as pronounced as Chauvel's. In 1935, when Hall was producing films based on overseas standards, Efftee advertised for new screenplays, and prescribed the desired material as: 'stories with Australian background showing the Australians as a strong, virile race, full of individuality and pluck'.

During the 1930s Cinesound's narrative methods showed a marked development: after the first exploratory attempts to make distinctive Australian films, the studio gradually submerged its Australian content in favour of cosmopolitan stories with universal settings. In this way, responses to Australian life were continually subjected to Hall's developing sense of showmanship. Commercial security was found in a formula which may have been unconsciously or instinctively evolved but which contrasted with the approach taken by other Australian film-makers. Unlike Chauvel and Efftee, Hall attempted to satisfy audiences at home and overseas with an increasingly efficient imitation of Hollywood.

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methods, accompanied by an automatic muting of purely local elements. The development is reflected not only in this group of action movies but also in the 'Dad and Dave' series which will be discussed separately later in this chapter.

D) Two Experiments

All Cinesound films were to some extent experimental in their calculations to appeal to the public, but two films failed to fit into categories and stood as isolated exercises in particular styles of film production. The Silence of Dean Maitland (1934), the third Cinesound feature, may best be seen as a stage in the company's development towards maturity, when it was feeling its way towards commercially successful formulae. A strong element of experiment emerged again in 1938 when the company released The Broken Melody. This musical drama, with opera as its highlight, was the thirteenth production and came at a time when Cinesound's supremacy in the local field was unchallenged. The company's productions were becoming increasingly elaborate, using more and more sophisticated techniques, and still retaining a record of commercial success. The Broken Melody reflects Cinesound's position of relative security and Hall's willingness, in that position, to experiment with areas of film-making beyond farce and outdoor melodrama, in an attempt to give variety to the studio's repertoire.

The main element of experiment in The Silence of Dean Maitland lay in its deliberate attempt to capture the English market. Both On Our Selection (1932) and The Squatter's Daughter (1933) had won immense popularity in Australia, but in England had shown disappointing results. Both had been intensely Australian films with scenes of nationalistic sentiment and settings and characters that were, superficially at least, peculiar to Australia. In the third Cinesound production, Stuart Doyle took the initiative himself to try a different tack: he turned to a production which could compete directly with a British feature, and which eschewed
a specific Australian background in favour of something more cosmopolitan. Doyle was reported in the daily press as promising 'that Australia is about to make an attack on the English market with its pictures ... The new picture will be mounted and cast in a way that will assure it a West End London release'. The Silence of Dean Maitland finally took on the appearance of a British production, with British players in two leading roles, a story set in towns with English names like Belminster and Glenville, and with scenic backgrounds carefully selected to resemble an idealised English setting. The village of Glenville (in fact the New South Wales country town of Camden) is first seen nestling amongst gently rolling hills, complete with a church spire and nearby copse of trees; and the final shot in the film shows an old castle standing on the brow of a hill. The subject, moreover, was a once-popular English novel, published about 1888, and which was known in both England and Australia as a stage melodrama. No specific reference was made to Australia, and although the film's comedians had broad accents, they avoided any peculiarly Australian slang. After the assertive nationalism of On Our Selection

40 Reported in the Newcastle Sun, 14.7.33. The words are the newspaper's, not Doyle's.

41 M. Gray, The Silence of Dean Maitland (London, c.1888). The film's plot follows the troubled life of Cyril Maitland, a young parson in the fishing village of Glenville. Although he is engaged to be married, he is seduced by a bored village girl. When she becomes pregnant, her father confronts the parson and is accidentally killed in the ensuing fight. Blame for the death falls on Maitland's best friend, Henry Everard, who is sentenced to prison for twenty years. At the trial Maitland tries to reveal the truth but suffers a heart attack, and after recovering his health finds it too easy to remain silent and continue his comfortable life of increasing prosperity and rising status. Twenty years later Maitland is a Dean, busily engaged in charitable works and bearing the burden of a blind son and a guilty conscience. On the eve of Maitland's appointment as Bishop, Everard is released from prison, embittered and bent on revenge. He tracks down the Dean and Everard's appearance is enough to fill Maitland with renewed remorse. The next day in church, the Dean delivers his last sermon and publicly confesses his sins. The emotion of the confession proves too much for him and he collapses in the pulpit with a fatal heart attack.
and The Squatter's Daughter, the new film meant a break with custom.

The experiment eventually fulfilled Doyle's hopes and earned handsome profits for the company in both England and Australia. Critical reactions, however, varied. One writer astutely observed that the film's success probably owed more to its strong emotional content than to its contrived British appearance:

The truth is that England will accept good stories and good productions, whether their scenes are laid in Manitoba, Singapore, Johannesburg, or Perth. Australian films have failed in London for the simple reason that, up until now, their dramatic material has fallen below the requisite standard. In contrast, an Australian critic, Leslie Rees, writing in the British paper, The Era, found the hoary melodrama far from satisfactory as entertainment and accused Cinesound of 'a Colonial type of mentality'. The film was 'an uncertain compromise, blending snippets of Australian voice and beach scenery with English rural churchspires and names', and was pervaded by 'timidity and rawness'. Rees saw that although Cinesound showed great originality in solving technical problems, the company still lacked the 'courage of conviction' to choose and handle original subjects without duplicating past successes and 'filching' from overseas films.

Compromise was apparent at once in the attempt to update the melodrama to a modern setting. The latest fashions

42 See above, p.67.
43 Unidentified cutting, D. McConville, Press Cutting Book, p.91 (held by the Commonwealth Film Unit). It is relevant here to note that an advertisement for the film in the English trade paper, Today's Cinema, 30.10.34, pp. 16-17, does not mention the film's country of origin. It seems that either the country was irrelevant to the film's box-office value, or Australian films in the past had created a bad name in the trade.
44 The review is quoted in Everyone, 28.11.34, p.25.
in clothes are worn and designed by one character, but the final result had 'neither the antiquarian interest of a period play, nor any real point of contact with the contemporary outlook'. Credibility was not helped by the script's concentration on the mechanics of the complex plot, rather than on motivation: with a leading character who denies responsibility for both the pregnancy of his lover and the death of her father, and then allows his best friend to take the punishment for his own indiscretions, motivation was obviously of importance if the audience was to find the situation credible and sympathetic. Its omission was a serious flaw.

Greater strength was given to the film by the scenic backgrounds and the performers. To 'open up' the play, Hall staged several dialogue scenes on cliff-top locations, with sweeping ocean views behind the actors. As well as being picturesque, the turbulence of the sea sometimes served to intensify the more passionate scenes and was used directly as a symbol in the crucial scene of the young curate's seduction. But more than anything the film is dependent on the performance of John Longden. This English actor had had extensive screen experience, including three features for Alfred Hitchcock. Cinesound had searched for some time to find an Australian actor to play the main role of the Dean, but never with satisfactory results until Longden arrived in Sydney with his co-star Charlotte Francis in a touring English stage company. His performance as the hypocritical Dean failed to create a credible or coherent character, but he managed to give individual scenes an emotional charge. This is particularly evident in the climactic confession from the pulpit where the rhetoric of the dialogue and Longden's slightly exaggerated torment are fully consistent with the context of a hell-fire sermon. To follow this passionate scene, Hall introduced a quiet death-bed sequence, and closed the film with a 'happy'

45 From a review in the Sydney Morning Herald, 28.5.34.
46 See above, p.47.
ending showing the double wedding of four minor characters. Under pressure from critics and exhibitors following a trade preview, the anti-climactic scene of the wedding was removed and the film ended with the full cathartic effect of the sermon and the death-bed scene.

With a tragic story of human weakness as its central theme, *The Silence of Dean Maitland* was publicised above all as a prestige production, although care was taken to remind the public of sensational elements in the film, so that no-one would be frightened away by the prospect of grim soul-searching. The standing of the film was greatly enhanced by the presence of an experienced actor from England, and much was made of the honour which Longden bestowed on the young industry by agreeing to appear in the Cinesound film. Moreover, the film's English bias was a great aid to the dignity which the publicity sought to achieve: instead of the crudity of the local scene the film, it was claimed, had captured the integrity of the best British drama. 47

Accordingly, when the film ran into censorship difficulties, the controversy was publicised by Cinesound as a symbol of the maturity and honesty of the drama. Australian films could not be exported without a permit from the Customs Department which administered all film censorship, and before a permit could be granted to *The Silence of Dean Maitland*, the censors required the cutting of three scenes. The first two were minor, and the cuts were agreed to by Cinesound. One was a shot in which Alma Lee accidentally exposes a breast while changing from her bathing costume on the beach. The other was a shot of a tattoo of 'Eve' on a sailor's arm. The most substantial cut requested was the scene of the clergyman's seduction by Alma. Cinesound publicly opposed the demand for this cut, stating that the scene was

47 A routine advertisement carried the copy: 'The World's Greatest Studios would have been proud to have made "The Silence of Dean Maitland", but it remained for Australia's Own Cinesound Studio to create this Masterpiece of Entertainment ...' This, and similar advertisements from unidentified newspapers, appear in the Cinesound Scrapbooks, held by the Film Division, National Library of Australia.
vital to the film's development and was tastefully conceived. On appeal to the Federal Appeal Censor, the scene was allowed to remain intact, but the publicity which the controversy had earned for Cinesound made it a very profitable incident.48

The Silence of Dean Maitland retains several of the characteristics of Cinesound's other work, especially rough comic relief and occasional ideas borrowed from Hollywood (with the scarcely appropriate use of music in the style of George Gershwin during a montage to introduce the English city, Belminster). At the same time, the film stands alone in the Cinesound repertoire as the sole attempt to produce directly for the English market. After two decisively Australian films and this strongly English production, most Cinesound films were to take on an unspecific, generalised setting with relevance to both markets. The film's place in the development of Cinesound's style was also marked by a new attitude which soon appeared: later films which were based on literary works were much more liberally adapted to achieve greater internal consistency.

A more critical approach to source material was fully apparent in 1938 in The Broken Melody: although it was based on a novel by the prolific Australian writer, F. J. Thwaites, it was so completely re-written to suit the resources of cinema, that it may be considered an original work.49 The film was an ambitious amalgam of styles and

48 Charles Chauvel, throughout his career, made no secret of the fact that he deliberately sought censorship trouble because of the free publicity which any controversy brought. Hall denies deliberately seeking trouble, but recalls that when he first heard of the censorship difficulties he was extremely pleased, and described it as a 'godsend'. (Interview with Ken Hall, by the writer, 15.2.69).

49 F.J. Thwaites, The Broken Melody (Sydney 1930). The film's plot begins with a night-club brawl on regatta day, after which John Ainsworth is 'sent down' from University and disowned by his wealthy father. Unemployed and penniless, Ainsworth drifts about Sydney until he meets a genial pickpocket, Joe the Dip, who gives him shelter in a cliff-face dwelling on the foreshores of Sydney Harbour. One night Ainsworth prevents a girl,
themes, which, perhaps deliberately, tested the range of the studio's abilities. To break away from the rapidly developing routines of action movies and vaudeville comedies, Hall turned to a story with a 'realistic' background in the economic depression and which included an almost tragic love story, and the performance of opera and classical music. In addition, the film bore the stamp of Cinesound's usual comic relief and naive melodramatic touches, with a death-bed reunion and a chance meeting in a busy street.

The greatest element of experiment lay in the use of an opera performance as the film's climax. The music, written for the film by Alfred Hill, was defensively described by the publicists as 'not music for the few, but music for the masses, for you and me'. Its strong melodies and vigorous orchestral arrangements had an

49 (contd)
Ann Brady, from committing suicide because she is also unemployed and alone. She joins Ainsworth and Joe in their home and she and Ainsworth fall in love. Inspired by her, Ainsworth, who is a musician at heart, finds his violin and plays it in the streets for money. From there he quickly progresses to a cabaret and to the patronage of Jules, a French entrepreneur. Jules arranges for Ainsworth to travel to England, and fearing that she is standing in the way of his success, Ann runs away from him. In Europe Ainsworth wins fame as a conductor and composer and joins a fiery opera singer, Henriette, in a touring performance of his own opera, The Broken Melody. Eventually the company comes to perform in Sydney and Ann secretly wins the position of understudy to Henriette. On opening night, Henriette is appalled by the standard of the orchestra and supporting singers and refuses to sing; her place is taken by Ann, and the opera is an enormous success. Ann and John Ainsworth are re-united and he is forgiven by his father when it is revealed that Ainsworth was the mysterious stranger who had earlier saved the family's farm from financial ruin during a drought.

50 Hall wrote in a letter to the writer, 5,7,71, that at this time (1938), Cinesound was 'badly in need of something different' and was attracted to Thwaites' novel, not only for its unusual theme, but because it was 'a runaway best seller'.

51 Quoted from a radio advertisement, preserved on a 15" recording held by the Film Division, National Library of Australia.
immediacy which sustained a high pitch of emotion for seven minutes, which in screen time is a substantial feat, even today. Probably the use of classical music as an integral part of the drama accounts for an apparent nervousness on the part of the distributors who unduly delayed the release of the film for six months after its first previews. The delay gave opportunity to stimulate public interest in the film, to accustom people to the idea behind the film, and to choose the most favourable time for its release.

Other aspects of the film were as competent, and as unremarkable, as other Cinesound productions of the same period. Technically the Cinesound team achieved convincing impressions, through rapid montages and elaborate set designs, of a European background which much of the story required. Less convincing was the background of depression poverty in Australia, a curious mixture of 'realism' softened by a naive and sentimental view of human relationships. With none of the customary attempts to avoid embarrassment by disguising the locale, the film shows tramps sleeping in the Sydney Domain and living in caves on the Sydney foreshore. The documentary fidelity of the setting is undermined, however, by the staging of much of the action in a cave which is obviously a studio construction, with starlight and the magical night-light of Sydney at hand to symbolise the characters' dreams. The film concentrates on one particular tramp, a pickpocket named Joe the Dip, but it is never shown that his poverty is particularly

52 In its original form the film did apparently cause some embarrassment, and the version finally released to the public contains an awkward and noticeable cut in the following exchange, removing the word 'Salvation':

'JOHN: [who is trying to persuade Joe the Dip to retire from his life of crime]

And after you'd done your month you'd be free - I mean, free inside.

(Tapping his chest)

'JOE:

You don't belong to the Salvation Army do you?

'JOHN: No - the unemployed army.'

Script, photocopy of typescript, held by the Film Division, National Library of Australia.
painful and it tends rather to be the source of sentimentality and comedy. When Joe is moved by the love of his friends to atone for his life of petty crime, he gets drunk and in a farcical scene tries to persuade a policeman to arrest him. Again, when the violinist, John Ainsworth, plays beside the bay in the moonlight, he is joined by Joe and other tramps who listen sad-eyed to the music, obviously dreaming of better times. Yet, for all the 'corny' overtones and the half-realised setting, Hall shows firm control in moulding the depression sequences into lively entertainment: both the comedy and the sentimentality are effective enough to make the nature of the setting seem irrelevant, and far from providing the historian with a tramp's view of the depression, the episode stands primarily as a mildly diverting novelty.

Weakness emerges as soon as Hall departs from comedy or sentimental drama. Cinesound's competence in melodrama and vaudeville was, by 1938, unquestioned, but in The Broken Melody Hall's experiments with different areas of human experience seemed to lead him out of his depth. In the love story of John Ainsworth, the 'vagabond violinist', and the unemployed singer, Ann Brady, Hall had a situation which owed less to the background of the economic depression than to a style of 'realist' film-making which found its strongest form several years later in British films like The Stars Look Down (1939) and Love on the Dole (1941). The lovers resemble the ill-fated working-class couples of these films, finding solace in each other despite their desperate economic situation. John first meets Ann beneath the Sydney Harbour Bridge, where, on a cold night, lit only by a street lamp, he saves her from suicide. The scene is grim and desolate, and Ann's plain facial features seem at once to be appropriate; more conventional 'film star' glamour would have been a barrier to credibility. A sombre mood is suggested again in the austere room which John and Ann rent in a boarding house. Hall, however, managed to achieve only the visual appearance of a realist drama, and inadequacies in the script betrayed his intentions. The relentless repartee of the dialogue and the contrived coincidences of the
30. Lloyd Hughes plays for Diana DuCane, Alec Kellaway (standing centre) and other Sydney outcasts in *The Broken Melody*. (Note the set - a cave on the Sydney foreshore - built in Cinesound's Bondi studio).

31. Lloyd Hughes saves Diana DuCane from suicide on the Sydney Harbour Bridge in *The Broken Melody*. (Note the rear-projected background).
plot are completely at odds with the situation of two people at the end of their physical resources. The scenes emerge finally as arbitrary attempts to introduce 'high drama' and they lack both conviction and a meaningful place in the generally lighter tone of the rest of the film.

In over-reaching themselves in some scenes of The Broken Melody, Cinesound finally produced a film which tended to be more elaborate technically than its emotional content could justify. As an entertainment, however, it was saved by Hall's care to ensure that the climax was solid and memorable. The British trade press, after a preview, recommended 'judicious cutting' to improve the 'confected story' but insisted on the preservation of the operatic finale. 'Whatever else is cut out of the picture, this should be retained in its entirety; it is one of the most promising things that have come out of Australia in the film line so far'. The experiment of a climax with extended use of classical music won attention from most critics, in Australia and overseas, and its role in the financial success of the film seems to have been crucial, confirming Hall's belief that many films could be 'made' by a strong climax.

With The Silence of Dean Maitland and The Broken Melody, Cinesound probably came closest to the 'arty endeavour' which Doyle and Hall so readily maligned for its non-commercial bias. Yet, while the presence of John Longden in one film and the realist images and the opera in the other suggest potential material for an 'art' film, Hall's sense of showmanship transformed the films into light entertainment. As Hall wrote about the The Broken Melody: 'If I had not kept it away from any suggestion of "artiness", if I had not maintained an overall essential lightness, the film would have assuredly gone down the drain'. Instead of sustaining moods and persevering

53 Today's Cinema, 29.3.38, p.15.
54 Hall, in a letter to the writer, 5.7.71.
with characterisation, the films slip into a key which carries immediate impact but which undermines the potential strength of the subject. To introduce farcical comic relief, and to concentrate on plot mechanics was one way of maintaining box-office security while at the same time allowing a gesture towards a more sophisticated style of production.

E) The Cecil Kellaway Films

The two films which Cinesound made with Cecil Kellaway can be seen as a synthesis of the theatrical influences which are so marked in the vaudeville farces, and the emulation of Hollywood which appears in the action melodramas. The dominant feature of *It Isn't Done* (1937) and *Mr Chedworth Steps Out* (1939) lies in the characterisation of the central figure which was designed by Hall and his writers especially to suit the talents and personality of Cecil Kellaway. The dependence of these two films on Kellaway sets them apart from other Cinesound productions, since Kellaway was the only Australian actor whom Cinesound attempted to use as the focal point of a serious comedy or drama. The studio had 'stars' such as Frank Leighton and Shirley Ann Richards, but these usually appeared in films constructed around action or spectacle, and not the creation and development of a particular character. Only in the vaudeville comedies and the 'Dad and Dave' films were individual performers allowed to dominate the entertainment, but here the range was limited, and they were unsuited to more subtle forms of comedy or drama.

Since his arrival in Australia from South Africa in 1918, Kellaway had established himself as an adaptable character actor and comedian in stage roles which ranged from vaudeville slapstick to musical comedy. His first film role had been as Dad in *The Hayseeds* (1932) where he had played a slow-witted country yokel, far more uncouth than any of

55 See above, pp.47-48.
56 Produced by Beaumont Smith who leased Cinesound's Melbourne studio for the film.
Bert Bailey's portrayals of Dad Rudd in Cinesound's 'Dad and Dave' films. His two films for Cinesound exploited his gift for 'rogueish benevolence', and both of his Cinesound characters were middle-aged men with mild, genial manners and a propensity for the wily manipulation of other people to achieve happy ends. In It Isn't Done he played Hubert Blaydon, an Australian sheep farmer who inherits an English title and estates. Kellaway's characterisation was at the centre of the film, providing the key to the theme of contrast between the Australian democratic spirit and the exclusive English aristocracy. In Mr Chedworth Steps Out his role was more complex, and showed the progress of an underdog (represented as a down-trodden clerk) in his rise to a position of financial security, from which he can stand up against the people who had formerly exploited and persecuted him.

The original idea for It Isn't Done was Kellaway's own, and was developed into a screenplay by Ken Hall and Frank Harvey. The basic theme was stated in a speech at the end of the film when Blaydon returns home to Australia after trying in vain to find happiness among the English aristocracy:

It's all a matter of soil ... They tried to grow the English oak in Australia but somehow it never thrived. They tried to grow our blue gums in England with the same result. It's just a matter of soil. I know where mine is, and I'm going back to it.58

Kellaway conceived of the character of Hubert Blaydon as 'symbolic of the democratic carefree spirit of a sunny land' and 'typical of so many of our country men'.59 The

58 Script, photocopy of typescript original (held by the Film Division, National Library of Australia), p.105. The title of the script is Blueblood, which was dropped during production in favour of the present title.
59 From an interview with Kellaway in the Sydney Morning Herald, 2.3.37.
character is remote from Kellaway's portrait of a bucolic cocky farmer in *The Hayseeds*; instead the farmer is played as a genial Everyman, wise and intelligent, homely, and completely free from pretensions. His humble philosophy of life is best illustrated in a sequence when he and his family are socially snubbed by the aristocratic Lord and Lady Denvee. With admirable dignity Blaydon withdraws from the Denvee's company and comforts his distraught daughter:

> It all depends on the way you look at it. I used to think the other fellow's paddock was greener than my own until I had a closer look. That's the secret of life Pat ... never look over the other fellow's fence, and if you feel you must look at something have a look at yourself in the glass and have a good laugh.60

Kellaway's characterisation is compromised to some extent in its consistency and strength by elements of farce, presumably written into the script as safeguards against monotony in a film dominated by such a quiet and modest character. As one critic noted, Blaydon as played by Kellaway, 'seems so reasonable and natural in demeanour that one scarcely expects the gawkiness of thought the dialogue pins upon him'.61 He has a rather unconvincing propensity for malapropisms: when he drops an 'unexpurgated' edition on his foot he calls it an 'unexpected' edition; and he confuses the slogan of an ancestor, 'I die that England may live', with the slogan of a Melbourne laundry 'I dye to live'. Only in one scene when Blaydon becomes drunk do the crude jokes seem compatible with his character. The extra dimension which these crudities bring to the mellow character of Blaydon are so much at odds with the general tone of Kellaway's performance that one gains an impression of an actor struggling to transcend an uncertain script.

Some contemporary critics noted the film for its portraits of Australians and their relations with the

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60 Script, p.71.
61 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8.3.37, p.4.
English. The restraint of Kellaway's performance as a farmer and his avoidance of 'Hayseed' characteristics were seen as signs of a new maturity, but at the same time the characterisation of Englishmen was seen as naive and based on a 'stay-at-home Australian's idea of what the English are like'. Maturity was observed in not only the Australian's view of himself, but also in Australian attitudes towards England. The Sydney Morning Herald found it 'significant in the development of a national consciousness' that the film should stress 'the social antithesis between Mother Country and dominion'. The film's expression of the consciousness may be naive and 'a shade long-winded', but 'it has its source in firm and valuable ideas'. On examination, however, the film's ideas are not as clear-cut as the Sydney Morning Herald suggests.

Two contrasting statements are made in the course of the film about English-Australian relations. The first occurs when Blaydon asks his butler, Jarms, to join him in a drink and offers a toast to England. The scene comes at a time when Blaydon has surrendered his title and is preparing to return to Australia. The dialogue runs:

BLAYDON:
A toast of Jarms. To the land of my forefathers, my motherland. A land I shall always love but sometimes find hard to understand - to the motherland - England...

JARMS
To the fairest child of the motherland - to Australia ... Gawd's country.

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62 The film was discussed in these terms by the Sydney Morning Herald, 8.3.37, p.4; Daily Telegraph (Sydney), 24.1.37; and Smith's Weekly, 18.3.37.
63 'Mr. Kellaway's Australians [referring to the characters in his original story] are the best we have yet seen on the screen. They dare to show a little culture and education...' Smith's Weekly, 18.3.37.
64 Sydney Morning Herald, 8.3.37, p.4.
65 Ibid.
66 Script, p.102.
The implication of the dialogue, despite its satirical exaggerations, is that a difference does exist between the two countries, and that Australia has developed a character of her own. The difference is stressed in many scenes which show the Blaydon's discomfort in English aristocratic society. Equal discomfort is experienced earlier in the film by the English lawyer, Potter, who moves out of his element to Australia in search of the Blaydon family: Potter tries in vain to retain his composure in the face of the local slang, the sweltering heat, and the laconic understatement of the country folk he meets. Kellaway's own original theme of the inability of the Australian gum tree to transplant to a new climate states a similar idea.

At the same time the film stresses with equal force the compatibility of the two nations. An early working title of the film was *Something in Common* and that theme is reflected in the character of Blaydon's daughter, Patricia. Unlike her father, Patricia fits only too easily into the aristocracy and is happy to stay behind in England when her parents return to Australia. Again, a verbal theme repeated in the film is that the aristocratic Denvee has 'nothing in common' with the Blaydons, but at the end of the film, the converse is proved. At the London Cenotaph, both Denvee and Blaydon, unknown to each other, lay wreaths for their sons lost in the First World War. Oddly enough both sons were lost on the same day and in the same battle, emphasising the link which exists between the two families and the two nations. Seeing each other at the Cenotaph, Denvee and Blaydon come to understand that their misunderstandings were irrelevant and that something in common did indeed exist between them. The link is symbolised finally when they share an umbrella as they walk away from the memorial.

By recognising both the differences between Australia and her mother country, as well as their common bonds,

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67 Mentioned in *The Age*, 10.2.37.
It Isn't Done has a theme which is complex and potentially more rewarding than that of any other Cinesound feature. However Hall at no time allows the theme to dominate the film. Just as simple jokes leavened the characterisation of Hubert Blaydon, so the scenes of British-Australian confrontation or mutual appreciation are exploited above all for their humour, pathos and 'human interest', and rarely, if ever, rise to a level of general significance. With the 'tear-jerking theme of Elgar's 'Land of Hope and Glory' in the background a scene such as the Cenotaph reunion is calculated first and foremost to move an audience with sentiment rather than to comment with any deliberate force on British or Australian attitudes. The emphasis, as in other Cinesound films, remains firmly on entertainment with the strongest possible immediate appeal. A key to the nature of the film as entertainment was given in the trade paper, Everyone's, at the time of the film's release:

From the shooting of the first foot of 'It Isn't Done' to its premiere, this Australian picture has been guided by [Stuart Doyle's] showmanship ability. Every scene and every sequence was fashioned to appeal to mass audiences...

... The psychology behind the whole scheme of manufacture and presentation of 'It Isn't Done' is showmanship to the nth degree.68

In this light the choice of the Motherland as the setting can be seen as having roots in the calculations of the showmen, rather than in sociological or psychological factors. The English aristocracy was then, and still is, forty years later, a class easily caricatured, and was 'fair game' for the satirist and comedian. Clear-cut contrasts in a comedy of manners was the factor of prime importance and accounted again for a similar theme in Dad and Dave Come to Town (1938), where the contrasts were depicted between Australians and a basically American society. The location of the contrast seems to have been a secondary consideration: to explore the relations between

68 Everyone's, 3.3.37, p.4.
Australia and England was clearly less important to Cinesound than the presence of strong opportunities for comedy.

Similar opportunities were created by the introduction of minor Australian characters who behave according to particular 'types'. The film introduces the Dudley family who slavishly follow English fashions and travel to England each year for 'the London season'; and the action comments wryly on the group instincts of Australians in London. Such detail is not necessarily of comic value, but is calculated to amuse an Australian audience with an element of self-satire, and a recognition of their own foibles enlarged on the screen.

Thus, for all its apparent significance as a reflection of Australia's developing 'national consciousness', It Isn't Done can be seen on examination to be composed of traditional devices of comedy and sentiment. The devices vary from broad comic patter to more sophisticated exploitation of the susceptibilities of Australians, but throughout much of the film the assurance and practised skills of the filmmakers are able to unite the various elements and make the film work efficiently as an entertainment. Its failure to realise the full potential of the thematic material is largely irrelevant, since the film's intentions and achievement clearly lay elsewhere.

The effectiveness of the comedy won the film wide circulation in Australia and overseas, and Cecil Kellaway was soon offered a contract to act for the Hollywood company of R.K.O.-Radio. After fulfilling his obligations with a musical comedy company in Melbourne, Kellaway departed for Hollywood and made the first of his many appearances as a supporting character actor in Everybody's Doing It (1938), in which he played a breakfast food king.

In October 1938, at Hall's request, Kellaway interrupted his contract with R.K.O. and returned to Australia to appear in Cinesound's Mr Chedworth Steps Out. Kellaway now had the added lustre of Hollywood endorsement, and the film
owed not only its inspiration to his acting, but depended on his name for much of its commercial appeal both at home and overseas.

In Mr Chedworth Steps Out much of the comedy arises again from the recognition of characters behaving true to their Australian origin, and the Chedworths keep china kookaburras on their mantelpiece. But, except for such incidental details, the film could have been set anywhere. There are no broad Australian 'types', and the characters are either of indefinite nationality, like Mr and Mrs Chedworth with their unremarkable English accents, or are 'counterfeits of American types'. In addition to the usual collection of Cinesound gangsters, the characterisation of Susie Chedworth, the youngest daughter of the family, is clearly inspired by a Hollywood model: the role was played by Jean Hatton, who was publicised widely as 'Australia's Deanna Durbin'. She bore not only a physical resemblance to the Hollywood star, with her round, cheerful face and 'flute-like' singing voice, but the character of Susie also resembled the sensitive, innocent teenager played by Deanna Durbin in such films as Three Smart Girls (1936) and One Hundred Men and a Girl (1937). Although recognisably derived from a Hollywood model, Susie remains consistent with the indeterminate location of the film: her accent, like that of her parents, is unremarkable, and her debt to Deanna Durbin is not so much a comment on the internal nature of the film as it is an illustration of the synthetic nature of Cinesound's work in composing a film of elements proven popular in other films.

The unspecific setting of Mr Chedworth Steps Out was, it seems, deliberate. It helped to obscure any gross signs

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69 'Selling Angles' listed in a review in The Film Weekly, 13.4.39, p.33, recommended that she be introduced to the public as 'Australia's Deanna Durbin'. She had won a contest to find the Australian girl most like the American star, conducted to publicise a new Deanna Durbin feature, and the label remained with her in publicity for her two Cinesound films, Mr Chedworth Steps Out and Come Up Smiling (also 1939).

70 Mentioned in a review in the Sydney Morning Herald, 10.4.39, p.5.
32. Jean Hatton ('Australia's Deanna Durbin') sings in a radio contest in *Mr Chedworth Steps Out*. (The orchestra conductor is Hamilton Webber, composer of many scores for Cinesound films).
of the film's Australian origins and so make it more acceptable to those audiences at home and overseas who had no reason to respect most Australian film productions. The generalised setting was in addition relevant to the theme, as some of the publicity for the film suggested:

Here's the story of your family and mine! The drama, the fun, yes, and the thrills, too, that take place behind the front door of Mr. and Mrs. Average Man!71

The film represents another of Cinesound's conscious portrayals of an Everyman, but with results quite different from the Everyman portrayed by Kellaway in It Isn't Done. There Kellaway's manner had given his character general application, but it is Mr Chedworth's external and economic circumstances which give him an appearance of normality. The film takes some pains to establish Chedworth as a typical representative of the white-collar worker. The opening image is an expanse of identical suburban houses, and instructions in the script stress the 'geometrical sameness' of the houses. From this general view, the camera selects one particular house for examination, and captures its average appearance: it is a semi-detached house with a 'small amount of garden in front ... with [a] mosaic tile path' leading to the porch. The furniture is 'utilitarian' and the family's collection of crockery is 'mixed'.72

As the film begins, the family is bustling through breakfast and preparing for work and school, like thousands of other families on the same morning. The youngest son is cheeky, ebullient and very much a schoolboy; the two daughters are washing the dishes; Mrs Chedworth directs the proceedings with her hair in curlers; and her husband enters struggling with his tie and carrying his coat over his arm. Much of the conversation centres on mundane matters such as pocket

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71 From a newspaper advertisement for the film's Melbourne season. Unidentified cutting, Cinesound Scrapbooks (held by the Film Division, National Library of Australia).

72 Script, photocopy of typescript original (held by the Film Division, National Library of Australia), p.1.
money and the need for Mr Chedworth to hurry because he is late. The scene carefully establishes a naturalistic approach to the casual, ordinary details of everyday life.

The lack of glamour is intensified by the character of Mrs Chedworth who soon emerges as a grotesque harridan, a broad comic caricature of a nagging, ill-tempered housewife never satisfied with her lot. Her husband is the target of her perpetual complaint that he has not been promoted at the same rapid pace as their neighbour, Mr Deacon. One of her most vicious attacks takes place at a family meal where she is joined by the weak-willed eldest son, Arthur, in haranguing her husband:

MRS. CHED: [sic]
George, Fred needs a new pair of boots ... And Susie wants clothes badly. Just sitting there saying 'yes' won't get them. Mrs Deacon was here this afternoon - she had a new black silk - made me feel like a rag bag ...

[ARTHUR:]
Enterprise - that's what you want ... I'm not going to be a twopenny ha'penny clerk all MY life.

MRS. CHED:
That's what your father said when I married him. Look at Bill Deacon. He's manager now.73

Mrs Chedworth's nagging combines with her shrill voice and ungainly appearance to provide strong motivation for George Chedworth's attempts to escape her domination later in the film.

As played by Kellaway, George Chedworth emerges as a Dickensian victim of circumstances, a pathetic down-trodden clerk, nagged by his wife, exploited by his family, and ignored by his employers. His children treat him as 'more or less a nonentity about the place'74 and his son Arthur talks respectfully to him only when he needs to borrow money. Financially, Chedworth is again a victim: when reminded to pay the rent he murmurs that he has 'bought this house about three times already', and to pay Arthur's debts he is forced to draw on his meagre savings of £28/17/3, which he pathetically

73 Script, pp.18-19.
74 Script, p.4.
33. Cecil Kellaway (right) as the clerk who is sacked by his employer (Harvey Adams) in *Mr Chedworth Steps Out*. 
calls his 'private store' in case of sickness in the family. He has worked for his employers, Mason and Welch, for 23 years and at the office he seems to represent dust and cobwebs: he sits in his grey, shabby suit behind a ledger, thoroughly absorbed in his work, and abstractedly wearing his glasses on the end of his nose. His employers have no respect for his dogged service, and when competition forces them to reduce overhead costs, Chedworth is the first to be dismissed, because of, and not despite his long service.

Welch comments:

Old clerks are very nice to read about in Dickens' novels - but they've no place in modern business. Men, like machines, outlive their usefulness.75

Greater depth in the character of Chedworth emerges gradually, he is certainly a victim, but his own weakness is a factor in his condition. Chedworth does nothing to resist the pressures placed upon him by his family or employers. He mumbles sadly to himself whenever he is maligned, and fails to make a coherent defensive statement. The manner in which his family treat him suggests that he has never tried to remonstrate with them and resist his wife's domination. In the office he virtually invites exploitation: when ordered in to see his employers he can only stand 'irresolute with [a] faint ingratiating smile'.76

Ingratiation is seen again in the preparations he makes before entering the office: he places an envelope in his breast pocket to resemble a folded handkerchief, as though he is practised at deliberately humbling himself. Only when he loses his job with Mason and Welch does he finally stand up for himself, although maintaining silence about his loss of employment:

MRS. CHED:
A fat lot YOU think of the children. You're just content to go on as you are.

CHED:
(With a burst)

75 Script, pp.9-10.
76 Script, p.11.
I'm not - I'm not - I've just GOT to keep on - to keep on till I drop - to keep pace with you - and the Deacons - and all the others you keep bringing up at me - I daren't miss a chance - and what's it for? So I can come home to this - to be nagged at - and - and - looked down on. All my life - I've worked for you and the children - never had a holiday - nothing but just slog, slog, slog - all the time.  

Despite this outburst, Chedworth clearly has 'the mentality of the underdog', and Kellaway captures the character with an exactly detailed performance which arouses considerable sympathy for Chedworth and his plight.

The main theme of the film follows the development of Chedworth's character after he unexpectedly finds wealth in a counterfeiter's secret horde. With the money to give him confidence, he sets out to indulge himself on a holiday away from his family, and to enjoy a life of his own choice. In these scenes Chedworth becomes a character much closer to Cecil Kellaway's usual manner of genial good-humour with a light touch of wickedness. The scene of Chedworth's holiday finds him enjoying the luxury of the fashionable Lapstone Hotel in the Blue Mountains, with the air of a child let loose from school: he noisily sucks on the straw of a drink and looks about him guiltily when the noise attracts attention, and later he becomes cheerfully tipsy. His manner of breaking free from his bonds is gentle, harmless and, as played by Kellaway, highly amusing. Chedworth is a little less gentle at home, and when his wife thoughtlessly allows him to stain a floor before she announces that she has bought carpets, he is driven to remonstrate and, as the script notes, 'for the first time in his life loses his block in front of his wife'. Generally however Chedworth adjusts well to his new freedom: although he now can bring himself to speak against his wife,

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77 Script, p.19.
78 The phrase is used in a review in the Sydney Morning Herald, 10.4.39, p.5.
79 Script, p.56.
and to buy a partnership in the company of Mason and Welch, he is far from spiteful towards his former antagonists. Ultimately Chedworth comes to resemble Hubert Blaydon, having an equal dignity and endearing modesty. The original Chedworth living in mundane suburbia had few of these qualities, and it is to Kellaway's credit that the changes in the character are evolved with credibility.

Chedworth's sudden discovery of wealth introduces more than simply a transformation in his life style. Much of the comedy develops into a parody of the 'nouveau riche' which is surprisingly bitter for a Cinesound film. The parody centres on Mrs Chedworth who uses the family's new wealth to fulfil her social ambitions. She arranges for the family to move into a new house and decorates it on time payment when the available cash has been exhausted. Both Mrs Chedworth's new standards in clothes and make-up, and the interior decorations of the house are in appalling taste. The script notes that Mrs Chedworth is perpetually 'over-dressed', wearing far too much cheap jewellery and a hair style that 'is to be seen to be believed'. 80 The new bedroom is pink, and makes George Chedworth 'feel like Madame du Barry'. 81 The grotesque details of the setting and costumes are paralleled by an equally grotesque snobbishness cultivated by Mrs Chedworth. Curtains are left open so that neighbours may look in at a glamorous dinner party, and she unsubtly draws the attention of her guests to her efforts with fawning statements like: 'Don't look too closely at the table, Mr. Carford. You know what family dinners are'. In creating the character of Mrs Chedworth both Hall and the actress Rita Pauncefort are ruthless in their detail, from her raucous voice to her grossly exaggerated make-up. The extreme of the portrait contrasts strongly with the gentle humour of Cecil Kellaway,

80 Script, p.72.
81 Script, p.60.
34. Cecil Kellaway, bemused by his new home and the behaviour of his wife (Rita Pauncefort) in Mr Chedworth Steps Out.
and provides an effective foil for both his suffering and his rebellion.

Although the central conflict of the film had considerable strength, particularly with the excellence of its performances, Ken Hall chose to 'play safe' by introducing into the film a network of sub-plots to provide variety of mood and action and to extend the film's appeal to the public. Although their purpose is plain some of the narrative devices are perhaps too contrived to retain credibility: it seems too great a coincidence that the employers of Chedworth's son should turn out to be the gang responsible for the counterfeit money which Chedworth finds, or again it seems too desperate a contrivance that Chedworth should be kidnapped and brutally tortured by the gang. But although the film gradually shifts away from gentle comedy into the realm of melodrama, Kellaway's sympathetic characterisation remains firmly at the centre of the film and gives it a unity which is sometimes lacking in the script.

In both *It Isn't Done* and *Mr Chedworth Steps Out*, the subtlety and intelligence of Cecil Kellaway's acting allowed Hall to go beyond his normal range of farce and melodrama, and to draw on themes of some substance. But as in all of his work, Hall could not afford to stray far from his basic concept of feature production, and both films are oriented unmistakably to appeal to the widest possible audience. Although they may have failed to do full justice to their themes, they did provide Kellaway with an opportunity to display his ability as an actor, and they did fulfil their purpose as entertainment by becoming two of Cinesound's more popular films.

F) *Dad and Dave*

The four *Dad and Dave* films span the entire period of Cinesound's feature production and include the company's first and last features: *On Our Selection* (1932), *Grandad Rudd* (1935), *Dad and Dave Come to Town* (1938), and *Dad Rudd, M.P.* (1940). Through these films can be seen the main elements
of Cinesound's development during the 1930s, and the changes are accentuated by the links which exist between the films' characters. The films are not so much sequels as what the trade terms 'spin-offs': loosely similar characters appear in each one, but the contexts differ substantially, so that the films owe less to each other than to particular settings and ideas which Hall chose to exploit at different times during the 1930s.

The films are linked chiefly by four characters: Dad, Mum, Dave and Joe. They are drawn originally from Steele Rudd's On Our Selection stories and their sequels, published by the Bulletin from 1899 onwards, and popularised in an exaggerated form on the stage in plays by Bert Bailey: Dad, the uncouth, irascible 'cocky' farmer who, despite his frequent complaints, loves the bush and is proud of his hard pioneering life; Dave and Joe, his slow-witted, backward sons; and Mum, the hard-working and humble provider of comfort and strength for them all. From the time of their first appearance in the Bulletin, the names of Dad and Dave became synonymous with archetypal small farmers, distinct from the respected pioneering bushmen or the powerful pastoralists. They were partly figures of fun but also capable of homely wisdom and a degree of noble self-sacrifice. The caricature found extraordinary popularity in Australia, whether it appeared in the original Steele Rudd stories, radio serials, stage plays or films. The Bulletin and Smith's Weekly drew cartoons of them and serialised the stories; plays and films imitated them, usually as comic figures, with other back-block families like the Hayseeds; and Dad and Dave anecdotes abounded in ordinary conversation.

The four films owe little to the original Steele Rudd stories for their inspiration and content. The first two were based directly on Bert Bailey's plays and the others were almost completely 'original' in their content. Ken Hall had read many of the Rudd stories, but did not refer to them in the writing of the screenplays, and neither Steele Rudd (the pseudonym of A.H. Davis) nor anyone else with experience
of selection farming was consulted to verify or elaborate details of the setting. Rather than pursuing documentary realism or a faithful adaptation of a literary work, Hall and his colleagues strove to adapt the selection comedy to meet current fashions in popular entertainment.

In On Our Selection, character names, broad character traits, and several narrative incidents bear similarity to the stories by Steele Rudd, but the main forces behind the film are, as in many Cinesound films, conventions of stage melodrama and vaudeville. Both the Steele Rudd stories and a silent film of them made by Raymond Longford in 1920 are distinguished by detailed authenticity of setting, and they frequently capture the feeling of a monotonous and hard pioneering life. These qualities are missing from Cinesound's selection: life on the farm is never observed for its own sake, and is always directly the butt of a joke or the prop for a slapstick routine. The ramshackle wooden humpy where Dave and his wife live is seen only as the comic outcome of Dad's parsimony and serves as a prop for a scene in which a Bull rampages through the house and brings it to the ground.

Rather than use the action to comment on a particular way of life, On Our Selection attempts to unify the episodes with a network of sub-plots, most of which are stand-bys of melodramatic theatre, with contrivances that are quite alien to the cynical, wry humour of Steele Rudd. One of the main unifying narrative threads follows the rivalry between Dad and his neighbour, Carey. The idea is present in Steele Rudd, but never with as much prominence as in the Cinesound film. The whole welfare of the farm, in fact, is threatened by Carey who is depicted as a black-bearded, black-hearted tyrant. Drought has impoverished the farm and Dad cannot repay his debts to Carey; a court order is brought against

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82 Interview with Ken Hall, by the writer, 15.2.69. Hall recalls that the first time he personally spent much time in the country was during the production of On Our Selection in the area around Penrith in New South Wales.
Dad and Carey comes to seize the cattle, but at the last moment, the drought breaks with a roll of thunder. In keeping with the superficial melodrama of the stage play, poverty is stated as a fact but its effect on the farm is never illustrated to the extent of Steele Rudd's story 'When the Wolf Was at the Door' in which the Rudds appear as helpless victims of a hostile environment.

Other incidents in the film have a bias towards crude hillbilly or 'cocky' humour, far broader than any of the humour in Steele Rudd's stories. Dave's marriage to Lilly White and Sarah's romance with her 'soprano sweetheart', Billy Bearup, become straight slapstick with none of the pathos that is inherent in the quietly deflating humour of Steele Rudd. Similarly, few of the book's complex values are attached to the scene in which Cranky Jack peels into a mirror, swears that he sees his father and runs amok with an axe. The scene is little more than a slapstick interlude, and says nothing of the harshness of life for the pioneering farmer. Other scenes are taken directly from vaudeville farce, particularly the adventures of Lilly White's mother, a traditional music-hall mother-in-law, who refuses to bow to Dad's hitherto unchallenged will.

In general, therefore, the first of Cinesound's Dad and Dave films, through the medium of the stage, transformed the original stories into a combination of well-tried melodrama and vaudeville. The result found a particularly responsive audience when it was released in 1932, and the film broke enough box-office records to become the second most popular film ever released in Australia to that time. Ken Hall, as a showman, was sensitive to the mood of his audience, and in the context of the Depression, believed that escapist entertainment filled part of the audience's needs:

No attempt is being made to produce a sophisticated drama ... Experience has shown us that to-day the public wants bright, broad comedy for their most satisfying entertainment, and we are endeavouring to put just that into 'On Our Selection'.

83 The most popular was Cecil B. DeMille's silent production of The Ten Commandments (1923) (Smith's Weekly, 20.12.34).
84 Quoted in Everyone's, 2.9.31, p.25.
This reaction against 'sophistication', as exemplified in the vigorous unsubtlety of the film had obvious roots in the economic Depression. Audiences may have points of identification in the story of Dad's struggle against drought, creditors and other hardships on the farm, however nominal and hackneyed the suffering was in the script. The idea of poverty-stricken rustics laughing in the face of adversity was intensified in its appeal by a happy ending which showed Dad's rise to prosperity after the, perhaps symbolic, breaking of the drought.

This appeal to audiences feeling the pinch of the Depression was furthered by patriotic sentiments which pervaded the film. Items of 'Australiana' such as one character's larger-than-life fly-veil, and the opening scenes of bush landscapes, were reported to have drawn applause from audiences. In addition to presenting characteristic Australian settings and discernable outback types, the film begins with a rousing march behind the credits, and continues to include several speeches which call directly to a pioneering spirit, needed to tap the potential greatness of the nation. The message has a clear relevance to the Depression context. When Carey comes to impound his cattle, Dad Rudd refuses to give way to despair:

For years I've faced and fought the fires, the floods and the droughts of this country. I came here and cut a hole in the bush when I hadn't enough money to buy a billy-can with, or a shirt to put on me back. I worked hard and honest, living on dry bread, harrowing me bit of wheat in with the brambles. But I never lost heart for one single moment. The cattle had perished and died before me very eyes, but ... me spirit was never broken.

Several tableaux during the film are imbued with a feeling of pride in the land. One, of cattle crossing a river, is striking in its compositional simplicity and grandeur: it was reproduced in many newspapers and magazines, and was used later to open another self-consciously Australian film, Rats of Tobruk, made by Charles Chauvel in

1943. *On Our Selection* concludes with another tableau which found its way into the press: at dawn Dad and Mum walk to the top of the hill and, resting on an old fence-post, Dad surveys his domain and exclaims:

Sun's up, Mum. It's shining on a great country. I hope that those who come after us will strive to keep it as the pioneers have struggled and fought and worked to make it: free, tolerant, broad.

Much of the publicity also made a strong call to national pride. A self-congratulatory trailer carried cards reading:

Australia's first great National screen effort... as enduring as Australia itself because its roots dig deep down into the very fibres of our National existence... national sentiment to warm your hearts...

Vigorous characterisations by the film's cast also contributed greatly to its qualities as an entertainment. The figure dominating the film is Dad Rudd, played by Bert Bailey as an archetypal 'cocky' farmer. Although he was a character actor with a prolific repertoire on the stage, Bailey had been popularly associated with the role of Dad Rudd since the first performance of his play of *On Our Selection* in April 1912. In the film, his portrayal of Dad was simpler and broader than was allowed in the later 'spin-offs' where a higher level of sophistication was sought. His performance, nevertheless, had the confidence and ease that came from years of refinement on the stage: Dad's hot temper, his crude manners, and his sentimentality were united to form a strong and consistent caricature of a small back-block farmer.

Dave, like Dad, was popularly associated with the actor who had first created the role on the stage. Fred MacDonald had played the role ever since the original stage production in 1912 and rarely took a different role in the cinema. Dave remained throughout the four Cinesound films a drawling country yokel, his character set by his awkward rolling gait, his battered slouch hat and his ill-fitting clothes.

The Rudd family tree proved mutable in the Cinesound films, and tended to serve the immediate interests of the
scripwriters rather than any concept of consistency or fidelity to source material. This applies particularly to the women in the family. Although the character of Mum is constant, each film in the series introduces new female characters, varying in their names and their relationship to the family. In On Our Selection two daughters belong to the Rudd family: Sarah, gangling and graceless, the source of much broad comedy; and Kate, sophisticated, intelligent and articulate. Kate's role is important in the structure of the film as an entertainment; she forms a standard of conventional behaviour against which the eccentricities of the others can be set. She is, in essence, the 'straight man' of the comedy. In later films, female sophistication is introduced again for similar reasons. In Grandad Rudd there is Dad's grand-daughter, Betty; and in both of the other films, there is a daughter, Ann. Despite the changes in name, the character is similar in each film to the original Kate, and is designed to balance the comedy and to provide a point of identification for the audience.

Despite the tempering element of Kate, the first Dad and Dave feature met criticism from many individuals concerned either with Australia's image abroad or with fidelity to the original stories. Creswell O'Reilly, the Commonwealth Film Censor, attacked the film as one which 'could be considered prejudicial to the interest and reputation of Australia', for its caricature of Australian pioneers as simpletons and yokels. A similar criticism was made even while the film was in production. In 1931, Raymond Longford wrote in Smith's Weekly:

I have little doubt the talkie now on the slips will be a faithful reproduction of the old melodramatic tripe that was originally served up as the Steele Rudd story [on the stage]. This I declined with thanks, when I made my picture, preferring the starkly true Australian characters of the book to the puppets of the play, with all its old trappings of mortgages, flinty-hearted money-lenders, black-moustached heavies in polo suits, and the various other borrowed stage productions.

86 Quoted in the Film Weekly, 14.4.38, p.3.
Such critics were usually put down firmly. The Sydney Morning Herald's film critic saw the film as being far from detrimental to Australia and considered it particularly suited to circulation through Europe. In 1938, when later Dad and Dave films brought similar criticisms into the New South Wales Parliament, the Premier stated that the films were 'too ridiculous to be regarded as a serious presentation of life in Australia'. Film Weekly, as always quick to defend the trade against any attack, retorted to the comments of the Chief Film Censor that Dad and Dave could do no more harm to Australia's image abroad than the Westerns had done for America. Hall himself scoffed at the criticisms, crediting audiences with more intelligence than to take the caricatures literally, although he recalled meeting rural characters who resembled the Rudds in their parochial attitudes and their slow-wittedness.

Despite Hall's scepticism, the criticisms made of the selection characters proved to have a profound effect on the next Dad and Dave film, Grandad Rudd, released in 1935. To defeat the critics and to give new life to the subject, many of the hoary elements of melodrama were removed, along with the crudest hillbilly characters and comedy. The setting was also advanced to a prosperous contemporary wheat farm, involving a change in location from the Penrith area to the richer Camden district, where the two later Dad and Dave films were also shot.

Again the script was episodic, unified by a maze of sub-plots. Although most of the episodes avoided the worst excesses of melodrama, some still seemed contrived and unconvincing: the Dad and Dave films still had not found their most effective format. The romantic sub-plot,

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88 Sydney Morning Herald, 15.8.32, p.4.
89 Reported in Film Weekly, 14.4.38, p.3.
90 Ibid.
91 Hall interview, 15.2.69.
involving Dad's grand-daughter, Betty, follows her engagement to Henry Cook and Dad's attempts to convince her that Cook is unworthy of her. Dad finally succeeds by revealing during the wedding ceremony that Cook has a criminal record for drug-peddling.

As in the first selection film, the setting is little more than a system of comic props for the action, and the film is not concerned with the authenticity of its background. The farmyard is the prop for a scene in which a tractor, driven by Joe, runs out of control through fences and haystacks, terrifying the fowls and livestock. The setting is made even more nominal by the removal of the self-consciously Australian elements which had appeared in On Our Selection: the location is an ideal pastoral scene that could almost be located anywhere. The music, always a sure guide to the intended mood of a Cinesound film, is a lyrical pastoral melody, with no hint of the strong feelings or rough hillbilly farce suggested by the vigorous score of the first Dad and Dave film. The pressures which brought forth the patriotic fervour of the earlier film seem to have been remote enough by 1935 for Dad Rudd to mock the earlier nationalistic sentiments. Dad's rhetorical speech, in the first film, about pioneering hardships, is clearly in mind when he comments on the way motor vehicles have superseded the horse and coach:

No, they was men in my younger days. Men who could ride all day and all night, through fire and flood - moonlight, starlight, any old blooming light.

With the updating of the setting, not only did the selection sentiments become anachronistic, but many of the original selection characters also disappeared or had their hillbilly characteristics greatly muted. Billy Bearup, Sarah, Lilly White's mother, and Cranky Jack are gone, and as one critic noted:

grotesque characterisation is severely avoided. Even Dave, traditionally an individual to be guyed at, giggled at and treated as a slice of human error, is quite a sensible type. He provides laughs with his 'By, cripes!' and he
lacks the shadings of sophistication, but Dave at heart is a hard-working parent possessing any amount of individualism and well able to put sound logic into his innumerable arguments with 'the old man'.

The change of tone is illustrated again in the characters of Joe and Mum. In *On Our Selection* Ossie Wenban had neatly captured the character of Joe Rudd as scrawny, whining, slow-witted, and stuttering; in the new film he is replaced by a well-fed character, played by William McGowan, who reduces Joe's mannerisms from grotesque caricature to innocuous clowning. Mum's character is also greatly modified by a change in casting. Alfreda Bevan, who had made Mum strong, homely and matriarchal, is transformed into a quaint little lady who passes her time knitting and who seems to have little to contribute to life on the farm.

Grandad Rudd himself suffers most severely from the changes. He is no longer the hardened 'cocky' but a grumpy, miserly country gentleman. Not only does he mock his own pioneering experiences, but he has no sympathy for struggling small farmers such as he had once been. The modification of the character was largely a negative act by the scriptwriters and was at the expense of Dad's more endearing qualities of pride in his farm, family and nation, and his unexpected bursts of good humour.

Grandad Rudd is a rare case in which sterility resulted from Ken Hall's attempt to follow public tastes and make safe, commercial entertainment. In feeling their way towards a new expression of the Dad and Dave tradition, the Cinesound team lost control of the film and its modest commercial success must be attributed less to their work than to the popularity of Dad and Dave in the new radio series and in the constant revivals of *On Our Selection*, both as a play and as a film.

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92 *Everyones*, 6.2.35, p.11.
93 The radio series of Dad and Dave began soon after the release of Grandad Rudd; it was broadcast on four nights a week on station 2UW in Sydney and continued until 1955.
Two stills from Grandad Rudd:

35. (above): Dad and Dave (Bert Bailey and Fred MacDonald) in their new prosperous setting.

36. (below): Mum (Peggy Yeoman) and her grand-daughter Betty (Elaine Hamill).
Both of the later Dad and Dave films, *Dad and Dave Come to Town* and *Dad Rudd, M.P.*, were constructed more tightly than the previous films, and used a single, strong plot to unite them. *Dad and Dave Come to Town* transferred the family to a modern urban setting, since, according to Hall, the rural setting had been exhausted by the radio series and by the two earlier films, and a change was necessary to give new life to the series. The idea for the new film was simple in concept: to confront the Rudd family, in all their rustic naivety, with the most sophisticated circle of city society. The situation was the traditional 'fish out of water' theme that is the starting point for hundreds of stage and film comedies, including Cinesound's own production, *It Isn't Done* (1937), in which an Australian family enters the English aristocracy.

*Dad and Dave Come to Town* begins deceptively in the rough knockabout style of the earlier films: Dave wreaks havoc on the placid life of the farm with his 'patents', including an automatic gate which accidentally closes on Dad's buggy when it is half-way through. The main plot develops early in the film, however, when the Rudds receive a telegram which informs them that a relation has died, bequeathing to them a luxurious mansion in the city and 'a dress and fashion emporium' named Cecille's. The presence of the daughter, Ann Rudd, aids the development of the story and helps to bridge the gap between the Rudds and their new environment: according to the script she had worked before in a dress shop and knows how to help the family run the new business and settle into city life.

Elements of selection humour are retained in the film despite the new context, but by this time the original humour is stereotyped and reduced to several of the more popular essentials, such as the clothing and mannerisms of Dave and Joe. These elements have antecedents in the earlier Dad and Dave comedies, but on their own do not constitute anything like the original spirit of the selection humour. They were

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94 Interview with Ken Hall, by the writer, 11.2.69.
37 and 38. Two stills from Dad and Dave Come to Town in which Dad (Bert Bailey) and Dave (Fred MacDonald) have difficulty in adjusting to sophisticated city life.
retained primarily, it seems, to give the film nominal links with the Dad and Dave tradition which was still popular enough to warrant exploitation. The values of the comedy however were substantially altered.

As an indication of the changed values Dad and Dave Come to Town has a scene in which Dad, deeply depressed by the grim financial situation of the dress shop, is comforted and given new spirit by Mum. This image of Mum as the provider of spiritual strength for the family is one forcibly present in the Dad and Dave tradition from the original stories onwards. A similar scene occurred in On Our Selection and provided the film with one of its more moving moments. In Dad and Dave Come to Town, however, the scene appears to have been introduced arbitrarily simply because of its place in the tradition: Dad's feelings of depression are scarcely justified by the situation and accordingly the scene lacks motivation and has the appearance of formula.

In bringing the Rudd family into the modern world Ken Hall attempted to make the city as fashionable as possible, so that the film could have direct appeal to the interests and fantasies of the audience. Although the city is un-named, it could have been taken direct from a Hollywood movie of the same period, and the American bias of the location is a reflection of Cinesound's attempt in this and other films to replace parochial elements with details of universal application.

Two characters in the film have recognisable and natural American accents but their presence in the city is assumed without strain. Not only their accents but also

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95 Although the town is un-named, its streets are recognisable as Sydney's. In the earlier films, the closest city was always identified as Brisbane, but in Dad and Dave Come to Town, where the town is actually seen for the first time, Hall's declared reason for leaving the city anonymous was to avoid partisan rivalry between Sydney and Melbourne (Hall interview, 11.2.69). A more probable reason was Hall's instinctive feeling that in such a fanciful film, the naming of the city, with all its associations for an audience, would destroy the aura of fantasy.
their mannerisms are standard fare in Hollywood movies. One, played by Leila Steppe, is a 'dumb blonde' who is too weak to resist the attentions of one of the film's villains, and becomes something of a 'gangster's moll', pouting, selfish and spoilt. She does, however, have a golden heart, and when pushed too hard by the villain, changes sides and comes to the rescue of the Rudds. The second American character is the 'juvenile lead', Jim Bradley, played by Billy Rayes, who, with Leila Steppe, was touring Australia in a variety show for the Tivoli circuit when he was placed under contract by Cinesound for the Dad and Dave film. As played by Rayes, Jim Bradley is a distinctive Hollywood 'type': he is brash, fast-talking and self-assured, and the character has innumerable parallels in the young newspaper reporters of Hollywood movies at that time.

Especially with these two characters, Cinesound can be seen to have moved progressively further away from the original Dad and Dave tradition and have moulded a few outward forms of the tradition into the context of a modern sophisticated comedy. The tendency which this film reveals of transforming Dad and Dave into a modern idiom is even more noticeable in the next film, Dad Rudd, M.P.

More than any of the preceding Dad and Dave films, Dad Rudd, M.P. is a universal comedy in a universal setting. Moments of slapstick are dominated, not by the hillbilly clowning of the earlier films, but by characters who would find a place in any comedy, local or overseas. Dad Rudd himself is very remote from the 'cocky' farmer of On Our Selection and emerges as an idealised Everyman, fighting against injustice to protect his fellow men. Dad has grown away from the hillbilly clothes and manners which were the butt of so many jokes even in Dad and Dave Come to Town, and has become a respected figure, wise and homely, and, in the main, gentle and considerate. The new character signals a mood of gravity which pervades much of the film in direct response to the international politics of 1939.

The major plot is an elementary allegory on the international situation, with wealthy powers using their
39. Mum (Connie Martyn) and Dad (Bert Bailey) in *Dad and Dave Come to Town*.

40. The brash 'romantic lead' (Billy Rayes) with Dad in *Dad and Dave Come to Town*. 
influence to bully and oppress innocent but weaker citizens. The local parliamentarian, Henry Webster, is using his connections in government circles to alter the plans of a new dam in the district. Originally the dam was to rise as high as 200 feet, so that part of the properties belonging to Webster and the Rudds would be submerged. While Dad Rudd is prepared to make a sacrifice to help the small farmers who would benefit from the dam, Webster is not as charitable and wants the dam kept below the level of his property, even though the lower level would make the whole project worthless. To fight against Webster in the cause of the small farmer, Dad Rudd stands against him in the local election and finally succeeds in taking the case to the nation's parliament.

The setting of the film avoids reference to any particular political scene, state or federal, and, as in Dad and Dave Come to Town, is played in a universal context. The political fight between Webster and Rudd is depicted with no attempt to give credibility within the setting of Australian democracy. In a particularly dirty phase of the fight, Webster books all of the halls in the district so that Dad cannot find a venue for a public meeting. The Rudd campaign team retaliates by bringing from the city a busload of beautiful mannequins who invade one of Webster's meetings and lure the audience away to an outdoor meeting where Dad addresses them. The implied comment on Australian politics may seem cynical, but it was certainly unconscious on Hall's part. The main function of the political feud was clearly to amuse the audience with the ingenuity and determination of the rivals.

Instructions in the script contain further evidence of a deliberate attempt to extend the political aspect of the film to the widest possible context. The script, for example, introduces the final sequence with the following description of the location:

AN IDEALIZED PARLIAMENT HOUSE (MODEL)
(It belongs to no one State - rather to them all)\textsuperscript{96}

\textsuperscript{96} Script, photocopy of typescript original (held by the Film Division, National Library of Australia), p.91.
A comparison with the collection of Steele Rudd stories published in 1908 under the title of Dad in Politics, shows how far Cinesound was removed from Steele Rudd, even though Dad Rudd, M.P., like the other Dad and Dave films, still bore a general acknowledgement in the credits to the work of Steele Rudd. A striking contrast exists between the book's view of politics and that of the film. Steele Rudd takes much delight in a burlesque of parliamentarians as disreputable, lazy, and corrupt. One member, from Fillemupagen, is perpetually drunk; another provokes fist fights in the House; and the most important issues are discussed by ignorant and arrogant men. In the midst of this Dickensian scene comes Dad Rudd, speaking home truths and over-riding the red tape which inhibits free discussion. In the Cinesound film, neither Dad nor parliament bears any similarities to the image of the book. Dad speaks many home truths, but he is mature and sober, and the equal of the other members in the House. The villainy of Webster is never implied as a criticism of politicians in general, but is seen only as a personal fault. Far from being disrespectful towards Parliament, the film suggests no shortcomings in the government: it adopts a most reverent attitude, ending with an image of the Union Jack, and giving full endorsement to Dad's maiden speech in which he defends the rights of the 'little man'. This attitude in turn suggests a particular response to the gravity of the political situation in 1939, since other Cinesound films indicate that Hall was not necessarily a strong supporter of bureaucratic authority: Orphan of the Wilderness (1936), for example, has a brilliantly absurd attempt at a legal enquiry into the kangaroo's attack on a farm-hand.

The difference in attitude between the film and Steele Rudd's stories arises from many possible sources. The film was made with financial assistance from the N.S.W. government, and Hall may have felt it advisable to refrain from political satire. A more likely factor was the context in which the film was made. War was declared while the film was still in
production, and a humorous finale showing Dad speaking in parliament was replaced by a serious speech, full of gravity appropriate to the times. The speech is a grand piece of rhetoric which makes a plea to Australians to 'let the blood of true nationalism run fast in your veins' and make secure the nation's heritage of freedom. The message is supported by both the background music and the imagery. In the space of a few minutes, the musical score moves through recognisable passages from Handel's 'Largo', 'Advance Australia Fair' and finally 'Land of Hope and Glory', with images of Dad's earnest, pleading face, an inspiring bush landscape, and a final superimposition of the Union Jack as the film comes to an end. The cumulative effect of the verbal, visual and musical rhetoric is powerful indeed and makes a direct and intense appeal to the emotions.

In addition to the vigour of the film's topical commentary, the film is strengthened by a new vitality which emerges in those elements of the Dad and Dave tradition which had survived the progressive modifications of the series. The vitality is especially apparent in the character of Mum who is revealed to be one of the key powers behind her husband's political success. One crucial scene shows Dad's fighting spirit being roused by Mum who knowingly works on his feelings by recalling his pioneering past. The scene has antecedents in On Our Selection and Dad and Dave Come to Town, but is presented here with greater feeling than in the earlier films, partly because of the tighter structure of the film, and partly because of the matriarchal stature and dignity of Connie Martyn in the role of Mum.

Dad Rudd, M.P. represents the most fully rounded production in the Dad and Dave series: a dramatically satisfying level is struck between the film's elements of topical comment, nationalistic sentiment, and relics of the Dad and Dave tradition. The tradition has been stereotyped, and serves partly as a key to nostalgia and pride. The pioneering life is no longer a present reality as in On Our Selection (albeit in a highly superficial and arbitrary form) but is something recalled nostalgically in moments of reflection.
Through the development of the Dad and Dave series can be traced the evolution of a comedy genre, which, if Cinesound had continued in production, gave every indication of paralleling the American Andy Hardy series. There, light comedies of small-town life were the vehicle both for characters who resembled idealised average Americans, and for homilies about topics of general, non-partisan concern, such as freedom of speech and love for one's neighbour. The Andy Hardy series had begun in 1937 and its popularity in Australia and overseas may well have inspired Hall to use them as a model for the final Dad and Dave feature. At the same time, the modulation of the Dad and Dave tradition throughout the four Cinesound features reflects a logical and gradual progression, and one should not underestimate Hall's ability to learn from his mistakes and to calculate and create entertainment in response to his audience.

G) Industrial Films and Newsreels

Superficially, 'industrial films' and newsreels offered little scope for film-makers concerned primarily with 'entertainment for the masses'. During the 1930s and 1940s, however, Cinesound managed to arouse considerable public interest in both its weekly newsreel, the Cinesound Review, and in the many short industrial films sponsored by private or government bodies for the purpose of instruction or public relations. Under the guidance of Ken Hall, the Cinesound Review in particular was established as a vehicle for family entertainment, its tone set by Hall's clear-sighted appreciation of the interests of the mass cinema-going public.

Short films were initially produced by Cinesound in an attempt to provide a supporting programme for each Cinesound feature, since a 'unit programme' of films from the same source returned a higher income from distributors. Frank Thring in Melbourne worked on the same principle and each of his Efftee productions was usually designed to balance another to form a unit programme. To balance the
natic nationalistic sentiments of *The Squatter's Daughter* (1933), Cinesound produced a musical item, *Advance Australia Fair*, in which the State Theatre Orchestra was filmed in a performance of 'Australia's national anthem [sic] in comparison to those of other countries'. This short was first screened with *The Squatter's Daughter* at the Civic Theatre in Sydney and accompanied the film throughout its release in Australia and New Zealand.

Cinesound's most ambitious project for a unit programme involved the production of 'a musical travelogue review' under the title of *Cinesound Varieties*, to provide light relief on programmes with *The Silence of Dean Maitland* (1934). The film was intended as the 'pilot' for a series of photographed variety shows, but public reactions prompted Hall to abandon the idea. Lasting 49 minutes, *Cinesound Varieties* was a collection of items united by a 'nautical' theme: on a set representing a pirate's galleon, the comedian Fred Bluett appeared in a comedy sketch as a buccaneer; Frank Hurley presented a filmed tour of Sydney Harbour; and items were included by local dancers, singers and musicians. Although it gave audiences an opportunity to see many popular performers in their 'talkie' debut, the film was met with a cool reception: the budget of £2,500 was too low for imperfections in presentation to be removed, and the production was unduly rushed because of the need to complete it in time for the premiere of *The Silence of Dean Maitland*. Although in some capital cities and in country and suburban areas the unit programme was widely screened, *Cinesound Varieties* was ultimately dropped from the programme when *The Silence of Dean Maitland* was screened at the State Theatre in Sydney.

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97 *Everyones*, 18.10.33, p.30.
98 *Orphan of the Wilderness* (1936) was also intended as a short film to form a unit programme with *Thoroughbred* (1936), but Hall persuaded Doyle to let *Thoroughbred* screen alone so that more time could be spent on *Orphan of the Wilderness* to build it up to feature-length. (Letter from Ken Hall to the writer, 5.7.71).
100 *Everyones*, 6.6.34, p.31.
because of the attempts to draw the maximum of prestige from the feature during its season there.\(^\text{101}\)

Despite the intermittent production of short films to supply programmes for Cinesound's feature releases, such production was not established on a regular basis until 1935, with the formation of an 'Industrial Films Department' based at the Bondi studio. In order to give as much distinction as possible to a potentially dull field, Hall and his publicists attempted to associate all of the industrial films with one particular personality, that of Frank Hurley. The new department became known as 'The Frank Hurley Unit' and he was given considerable personal publicity as the 'Camera Wizard of the Southern Hemisphere'.\(^\text{102}\)

Hurley was already widely known to the public for his film and photographic records of the First World War and exploration in Antarctica and New Guinea, and he had produced a number of short documentaries for Cinesound earlier in the 1930s before the formation of his separate 'department'. *Fire Guardians* (1932) and *Lassetter's Gold* (1933) were two of his documentaries given theatrical release by British Empire Films, and both were warmly appreciated by critics. *Lassetter's Gold*, a record of an expedition into central Australia in search of the gold reef which Lasseter claimed to have discovered some thirty years before, was described by one critic as 'a heart-gripping story' which 'lifts the veil of mystery' from life in the centre of the continent.\(^\text{103}\)

With only limited supervision by Hall, the creation of the industrial films department allowed Hurley to continue with a series of documentaries sponsored by various organisations. Hurley was successful early in 1935 in his tender

\(^\text{101}\) Interview with Ken Hall, by the writer, 15.2.69.

\(^\text{102}\) Much of the information about the Department is based on a publicity brochure, 'The Frank Hurley Unit of Cinesound Productions Ltd., Industrial Films Dept.' (photocopy held by the Film Division, National Library of Australia).

\(^\text{103}\) *Everyones*, 18.1.33, p.31.
for the production of an educational film for the State Electricity Commission of Victoria, and in 1936 he made Treasures of Katoomba for the Municipal Council of Katoomba, to publicise the tourist attractions of the Blue Mountains area. Hurley's approach in such films is typified by the simple narrative thread and light touch of humour in Treasures of Katoomba. There, two characters named Jack and Jill enter a treasure hunt being conducted at Katoomba with a prize of £500. As the hunt progresses, the young couple find more than the immediate rewards of money in the scenic treasures of nature offered by the Blue Mountains themselves.

Hurley's most popular short by far was A Nation is Built (1938) produced by his Cinesound unit for the New South Wales Government on the occasion of the State's 150th anniversary celebrations. The fifty minute film surveyed the history of New South Wales with some simple (if rather stilted) re-enacted scenes of life in the early years of the colony. From there the film described the present resources of the State, with a great deal of visual and aural rhetoric, stressing the majesty of the scenery and the prosperity of the country. Audience reactions were enthusiastic and during the film's premiere season in Sydney the trade press noted that audiences were applauding the film at every session.104 Because of the popularity of the film and its 'prestige value', a copy was presented by the New South Wales Government to the King, and commercial distribution in the United Kingdom followed. British release drew further positive reactions to the film, to the advantage of the Australian tourist trade; as one British critic wrote: 'A sense of vastness and of youthful vigour permeate the film and makes one feel that any visitor to Australia is to be envied'.105

The personality of Hurley and the emotional appeal of his work gave a distinction to Cinesound's industrial

104 Film Weekly, 17.2.38, pp.18-19.
films which was unusual in Australia at that time. Similar films were produced by companies such as Movietone in Sydney and Herschell's in Melbourne, but few if any of these companies attempted to build their work around the personality of an individual artist or to calculate films so directly to arouse the emotions of the cinema audience. Industrials made by other companies tended to avoid pretensions to entertain­ment and remained firmly within the bounds of descriptive cinema, which, regardless of technical expertise, failed to attract public and critical response on the scale accorded to Cinesound.

A similar bias towards entertainment was a marked characteristic of Cinesound's weekly newsreel from its inception in 1932 to the time of Hall's resignation from Cinesound in 1956. Ken Hall maintained a far closer supervision over the newsreel than he attempted over Hurley's work; under his direction, the Cinesound Review became a 'news magazine', designed both to entertain and to inform the family audience. Theatrical news could not compete with the 'instant' news of radio and the press, but it offered an immediacy of impact which Hall exploited to the full with emotional music scores and, above all, a distinctive, almost vaudevillian, element of comedy. Puns and facetious, irreverent gibes abounded in most issues. An item on a river clogged with hyacinths drew the comment: 'This film was taken when the river was low, but of course its grown hyacinth'; the headline, 'Baby Born with 4 Foot Neck' introduced a sequence about giraffes; and a wrestling match produced a parody of Shakespeare:

\begin{verbatim}
Methinks he doth protest too much
And methinks he is in Dutch
Cos his opponent with a zing
Plops him right back in the ring
Head over heels - but not in love
It's all due to Marconi's shove... 106
\end{verbatim}

In addition to the humour of the commentary, visual comedy was often introduced to otherwise routine items, a

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106 This verse was used in the commentary of Cinesound Review, no.1229 (issued in mid-1955).
process known in the trade as 'codding': short staged incidents would be filmed in the studio, often with comedians such as Stan Tolhurst, and these would be cut into the footage taken by the newsreel cameramen in the field. An item on a baby show was enlivened by a brief shot of Tolhurst having difficulty with a wet baby, and similar jokes, although unsubtle and 'corny', would be played with enough pace and vigour to win the attention of most audiences.107

The Cinesound Review also had its more serious side. Hall's experience as a newspaper reporter led him to introduce an 'editorial policy' into the newsreel with items on suburban poverty, cruelty to koalas, or official apathy towards bush-fire risks. Although the newsreel only took a stand on 'non-political' issues, the presence of a policy helped to give the reel strength and distinction.

Just as Hurley's personality had been deliberately associated with industrial films, so the Cinesound Review came to be associated with the commentator, Charles Lawrence, a popular figure from radio and community singing shows who had a disarming gift for the straight-faced delivery of the corniest material. With lines written by professional journalists such as Tom Gurr, each reel was produced with an air of spontaneity and good humour which quickly made it a popular item on cinema programmes, appearing at its peak in about 1,500 theatres in Australia and New Zealand.108

The Cinesound Review was by no means restricted to circulation in Australia and New Zealand. By the mid-1930s, individual items were being sold to Pathé in the United States and England, and to Ufa in Germany for inclusion in newsreels produced by these companies. Hall, however, never reciprocated by showing items from other newsreels in his own, and stories by Australian photographers were used exclusively by the Cinesound Review until standards slackened after Hall's resignation.109

Under Hall's guidance, the Cinesound Review served not only as a means of keeping the staff actively employed between feature productions, but it achieved a style of presentation that greatly boosted the studio's public image. Because the

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107 Interview with Stan Tolhurst, recorded by the writer, 17.7.70.
108 Letter from Ken Hall to the writer, 17.10.70.
109 Ibid.
newsreel was seen by film-goers each night of the week, its inventiveness and sense of humour were constant reminders to the audience that Cinesound could be relied upon for undemanding and vigorous entertainment.

While Hall aimed in all of Cinesound's work - from feature films to documentaries and newsreels - to synthesise a wide range of elements into a form that satisfied his principles of showmanship, an articulate minority of the cinema-going public found little to admire in his work: the greater his concessions to the mass audience, the stronger their criticism.

The film trade, as represented by journals such as Everyones and Film Weekly, shared with Hall the attitude that 'The purpose of pictures is entertainment', and that the best entertainment is that which received the most support from the public and which made the most money. 'Unless the picture is a draw, it will remain a failure - in the entire purpose that must ever be behind the making of it'.\textsuperscript{110} Film critics tended to stand apart from this viewpoint. While the trade handled films for what Hall termed 'the great mass of ordinary, everyday people', the film critic tended 'to assume a sophisticated spectator'.\textsuperscript{111}

In the 1930s most Australian newspapers had film 'critics' on their staff, but with few exceptions, these writers were indirect spokesmen for the film trade, and seldom set themselves against a film which had won a large public following. The major exception was the anonymous critic of the Sydney Morning Herald, who in the 1930s was usually Sidney Tomholt, a highly articulate spokesman for the 'sophisticated' film-goer. The few critics of Tomholt's ability were far from popular with the trade, and were frequently attacked by the trade press. Tomholt's unfavourable comments on the enormous commercial success of Show Boat, were the subject of an editorial by Film Weekly which termed his review 'merely impudent abuse' and asked 'Why do proprietors of papers permit it?'.\textsuperscript{112}

\textsuperscript{110} Film Weekly, 10.1.35, p.3.
\textsuperscript{112} Film Weekly, 25.6.36, p.3.
Many critics since the 1930s have followed the attitudes taken by Tomholt, in newspapers and periodicals, and in journals published by film societies and other cultural groups. In their terms the Cinesound films have been glaringly deficient in artistic merit. One writer condemned Hall for lacking what he termed a 'personal style or unique vision ... Nothing is detectable through his formless visual structures and his lugubrious images except a certain literary sentimentality'. Elements of the films which contributed to their popular appeal - the standard of 'professionalism' derived from Hollywood, broad characterisation, variety in one film ranging from slapstick to tear-jerking romance - were not necessarily valued very highly in this critical context and preference instead was given to films with a direct response to the Australian environment, deeper characterisation, sustained moods, and more sensitive and coherent expression of emotions and ideas.

Both contrasting viewpoints have been argued at length by their various supporters, but the very existence of the contrast serves to pin-point the achievement of Ken Hall at Cinesound. The particular problem facing Hall was the need to make 'pictures which hit the special class in Australia and the good programme class overseas at a very low cost'. To compete directly with Hollywood and England, Hall was forced to adopt the idiom of his competitors, but beyond that, his films needed certain elements to bring them into the 'special class'. Hall found an answer by featuring lavish spectacle or exploiting the talents of a particular performer such as Cecil Kellaway or George Wallace. With each film Hall succeeded in reaching the 'special' category in the Australian trade, and his films earned as much money as 'specials' imported from the major

114 Ken Hall in Film Weekly, 10.12.36, p.9.
115 A category reserved by the trade for films which were strong enough to serve as the main item in a 'block' offered to exhibitors by film exchanges.
Hollywood studios. Overseas, after initial failure, most of the films had enough novelty to overcome the lack of known 'stars' and to win modest, and sometimes extensive, circulation.

Thus, in the survival of Cinesound the actual qualities of the films themselves were key factors. Hall's skills as a business manager were perhaps not conducive to the production of 'great art', but he undeniably had the vision necessary to construct commercially successful entertainment. In his own words:

Masterpieces don't make money. Only commercial films make money at the box offices ... all of my films were strictly commercial and only one ... of the 17 films I made for Cinesound didn't make money and that broke even.116

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116 Ken Hall in an interview in the film Forgotten Cinema by A. Buckley, and quoted in [M. Thornhill], 'The Australian Cinema?', Current Affairs Bulletin, 18.12.67, vol.41, no.2, p.26. In his annotations to a draft of this chapter in July 1971, Hall added the qualification to his statement that 'Masterpieces as a rule don't make money', and made the following marginal note: 'Is the ugly word money perhaps used too frequently? Certainly we who made these "commercial successes" did not see much of it'.

When the Second World War began, Cinesound was at the height of its achievement: the company had established new standards for the commercial success of Australian films on both the local and overseas markets, and had no competitors with an equal record of continuous production. Dad Rudd, M.P., filmed in the first months of 1940, seemed certain to repeat the success of the previous 'Dad and Dave' comedies. While the studio staff continued to work on loan to Chauvel for 40,000 Horsemen, the company waited to assess the impact of war on their operations and their markets, before embarking on plans for a new film of their own.

The chain of continuous feature production was broken in June 1940 when Norman Rydge announced the closure of feature production at Cinesound for the duration of the war. Instead of suspecting Rydge's motives for disbanding feature production, Cinesound's staff seemed to accept, initially at least, the viewpoint implicit in his directive, that feature production was not appropriate to wartime conditions: 'after all there was a war to be fought and won ... and you can't think of going on making pictures'.

While active production of features was seen as an expensive luxury or indulgence that could be foregone, albeit reluctantly, in wartime, projects for feature films were abundant, and an element of frustration became apparent among film-makers at Cinesound. By the middle years of the war, Hall was being sought by at least two companies to direct features for them, but none of these projects were to reach fruition during the war. One project, for a biography of Charles Kingsford Smith went into production

1 Film Weekly, 27.6.40, p.4.
2 Hall, in an interview with the writer, recorded in Sydney, 9 June 1969.
after the war was over, but another, a narrative feature on the war in New Guinea, titled *The Red Duster*, was abandoned altogether, despite the advanced stage of preparation for it, including the arrangement of extensive army co-operation. Both the frustration caused by the war's effect on Cinesound's feature activities and a sense of optimism prompted by the abundance of projects, were expressed by Hall in 1944 in a letter to a member of *The Red Duster* syndicate: 'It's an extraordinary thing that after nearly five years in the doldrums we find ourselves overwhelmed with opportunity'.

Although none of Hall's projects reached fruition during the war, his studio maintained its ability to handle feature production through its involvement in the production of government propaganda: both the technical standards and public relations which played such important parts in Cinesound's success in the 1930s continued to be indispensable assets during the war. What had been essential to entertain audiences in the 1930s, became equally important in the formation and development of public attitudes during the war.

Cinesound's contribution to the war effort of the Commonwealth helped to stabilise the company's finances, since profits were built into government contracts. But the work of Hall and his staff revealed a far greater commitment to their work than can be explained by profit motives or the drive for economic security. To understand fully Cinesound's role in the war effort and the attitudes of the staff, it is necessary to consider the context in which the studio worked. In this light, relations between the government and producers such as Cinesound emerge as one facet of an elaborate and far-reaching system of

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3 Letter to Frederick Daniell, 9 May 1944, in the Daniell Papers, item 183/1. The delay and then abandonment of *The Red Duster* was probably prompted by the syndicate's caution in awaiting the outcome of proposals for Australian production being raised by the British Ealing Studios during 1943 and 1944.
co-operation between the government and all branches of the Australian film industry.

With the exception of local feature film production, 'business as usual' was seen as the minimum contribution of the industry to the nation's morale: the industry provided 'healthy relaxation' from the pressures of war, and also, in the words of the Hollywood producer, Cecil B. DeMille, it '[held] high and ever visible the values that everyone is fighting for'. These aims were achieved both by the showing of entertainment from the Allied countries, including Russia, and by the special exploitation of films with a positive war theme, ranging from Mrs Miniver to Hitler, Beast of Berlin.

The normal business of exhibitors and distributors was supplemented in a prodigious variety of methods that suggested in turn a variety of motives for the industry's support of the government. Not only was a good volume of propaganda handled by the industry, but an extensive programme of 'gimmicks' was devised to assist the government with recruiting drives and official fund-raising projects such as Austerity Loans and Penny-a-Plane campaigns. Aid was also arranged for charitable organisations such as the Red Cross. In addition the industry helped to keep the public informed on the needs of security, economy and safety: information was circulated about air-raid precautions or about methods of making savings in line with the government's economic restraints.

Since distributors did not deal directly with the public, their potential contribution was restricted, but within their limitations, film exchanges took steps to encourage exhibitors in their support for the war effort. To begin with, propaganda films from government sources were distributed free of charge, so that exhibitors could

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4 Norman Rydge, reported in Film Weekly, 7.9.39, p.4.
5 Film Weekly, 2.7.42, p.14.
screen them without cost. These films, along with certain commercial features of propaganda value such as Confessions of a Nazi Spy (1939), were made available on a spot-booking basis, an arrangement which prejudiced the financial interests of the distributor, but which made the films available to exhibitors with none of the usual obligations to take a 'block' of a dozen or more programmes. Distribution exchanges also introduced a number of mobile cinema units to bring entertainment to troops stationed in remote camps in Australia and New Guinea. These units, and camps with their own projectors, received films free of charge, and by March 1941, the Motion Picture Distributors' Association of Australia estimated that over three million troops had attended free screenings of entertainment programmes in Australia and her territories. 6

Direct contact with the public made it easier for exhibitors to see practical results from their efforts in circulating propaganda. War loan agencies were often located in theatre foyers to reach audiences immediately after their exposure to appeals for contributions, and the results were rewarding. 7 Gimmicks devised by exhibitors to attract public participation in government drives found equally strong responses. One country exhibitor, for example, offered free tickets to people who brought scrap rubber to his theatre, and collected a pile of seven tons in one day for a South Australian scrap rubber drive. 8 On a national scale, the Hoyts theatre chain arranged previews

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6 Film Weekly, 10.4.41, p.5. Film was supplied free of charge on agreement that no admission charges would be made. The procedure differed from contemporary American practices where normal rental charges were made by distributors in supplying film to military camps. (Film Weekly, 22.5.41, p.4.).

7 After a successful trial period in Western Australian theatres, the sale of war bonds in theatres was extended throughout the nation at the request of the Prime Minister, Mr Curtin. This service fulfilled a need, since it gave people a chance to buy bonds outside of working hours. (Film Weekly, 12.11.42, p.1.).

8 Film Weekly, 6.8.42, p.1.
of coming attractions in aid of war bond campaigns, and on
the first day of one such appeal raised over £36,000.9
Similar stories of exhibitors' achievements were catalogued
regularly in the trade press, with every encouragement for
theatre managers to vie 'for the honour of having their
ingenuity and successes publicly recognised'.

In the intensity of the industry's campaigns a variety
of motives can be discerned. It cannot be doubted that many
activities of the industry were rooted in genuine concern for
the progress of the war and for the welfare of Australia. At
the same time, economic threats to the industry were such that
it equally cannot be doubted that the industry was forced into
a defensive position soon after war was declared. Government
economic restraints posed the greatest threats. In the first
year of the war, the Cabinet placed the first of a series of
limits on the export of capital earnings from local distribu-
tors to their American central offices. The action caused
alarm to both distributors and exhibitors who feared that
supplies of film from America would suffer and that a film
'famine' would result. In time it became apparent that American
companies were prepared to allow capital to accumulate in
Australia: films were supplied on much the same scale as
before the war, and distributors began to seek legitimate
means of converting the capital into exportable assets or
of investing the money in theatres.10

9 Film Weekly, 18.3.43, p.3.
10 For details of the restrictions see S.J. Butlin, War
Economy, 1939-1942 (Canberra, 1955), pp.119, 131-32,
428n. Restrictions of dollar remittances were announced
in Film Weekly, 30.11.39, p.4, along with protests from
the Motion Picture Distributors' Association. In May
1941, further restrictions were announced after agree-
ment between the government and the M.P.D.A. The estimated
saving for the following year was £1,140,000. (Film Weekly,
29.4.41, p.3). The supply of American film did decline
during the war, as the following figures indicate, but
the decline may be attributed to a fall in American
production:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>July 1938 - June 1939</th>
<th>441 films released in Australia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>372</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The industry's habitual fear of arbitrary decisions by an uninformed government was reflected again late in 1939 with the introduction of new tariff regulations, intended to restrict certain expendable imports. The restricted items included raw film stock and the industry reacted at once with defensive indignation: protests came from distributors who needed raw stock to make duplicate prints of films for theatrical release, and from producers who depended on ready supplies of stock for their very livelihood. Ken Hall was not alone when he rushed into print and claimed that the new regulations signalled a 'deathknell' for Australian production. A deputation to the Minister of Trade and Customs quickly followed and within weeks raw stock was exempted from the restrictive tariffs.\footnote{The import regulations were reported in \textit{Film Weekly}, 7.12.39, p.5, accompanied by protests from industry representatives including Hall. Shortages of raw stock remained subject to periodic crises during the war years, primarily because of the difficulty of obtaining regular supplies from America. In June 1943, for example, a world shortage of stock forced the Department of Imports Procurement to issue an edict restricting the number of prints that distributors could make of each film for commercial release. (\textit{Film Weekly}, 17.6.43, p.1.). The shortage at this time was also felt by the production branch of the industry. In August, Hall wrote to Frederick Daniell in reply to a request for footage: 'Really, Fred, the position is desperately serious when we can't meet your very modest request for 600'. We stopped all work except the News Reel early last week'. (Daniell Papers, item 183/1).}

As the government adjusted its economy to the conditions of war, the film industry remained alert to protect its own interests. A cluster of problems, many of minor importance, drew emphatic responses from the trade press throughout the war period; whether states were attempting to economise on power by introducing daylight saving or whether the Commonwealth was proposing new entertainment taxes, the industry felt its profits threatened.

Against this economic background it is possible to interpret much of the industry's enthusiastic self-congratulation on its war effort as an attempt to justify its existence
to a government which knew little about the industry's needs. In this context may be seen a motive for Norman Rydge's decision to stand for the Commonwealth Parliament in September 1940 to represent the industry and protect its interests. Although he failed to win the seat of Parramatta, his gesture helped to publicise the positive role played by the industry in the war. Elsewhere some organisations formed by exhibitors were quite explicit about their aims. In 1940, for example, a committee was formed in Victoria to serve two purposes: to co-ordinate and strengthen the industry's efforts to raise money for war charities, and simultaneously to protect exhibitors 'from excessive requests for the use of their theatres by local Red Cross and other organisations'.

Although ostensibly united in a demonstrative commitment to the war effort, the film industry could not entirely sink its internal differences. Attempts were made early in the war to introduce a committee system to co-ordinate the industry's work and direct its relations with the government, but it met with only partial success. The central co-ordinating body, appointed in July 1940, was the National Films Council, consisting of four trade leaders - Norman Rydge, N.B. Freeman, Ernest Turnbull and Charles E. Munro. The main function of the Council was to advise the government on all matters relating to films; policies subsequently determined by government departments on the Council's advice were implemented through specialised sub-committees representing the three main branches of the industry.

12 Film Weekly, 5.9.40, p.4. Rydge stood as one of three U.A.P. candidates but polled only 6,279 votes. F.A. Stewart, U.A.P., was returned with 22,760 votes. (Sydney Morning Herald, 23.9.40, p.11.).
13 Film Weekly, 11.4.40, p.4.
14 N.B. Freeman was Managing Director of M.G.M.; Ernest Turnbull, General Manager of Fox Films Corporation; and Charles E. Munro, the Managing Director of Hoyts Theatres Ltd. In 1942 Munro resigned from the Council, and the vacancy was never filled.
In practice the system was not as simple as it seemed on paper. Traditionally divided interests between distributors and exhibitors, together with rivalries between various company representatives, disrupted the working of the committees, and the government was soon dealing with alternative organisations and with individual companies. Although the sub-committees were transient, the National Films Council managed to survive until the end of the war and served as an effective spokesman for the industry in times of shortages and threatened economic restraints. Its working was, however, accompanied by rumours of arguments between the members, and formal allegations about the lack of impartiality in the Council’s statements.\footnote{Two examples may be cited. Although few details were given, rumoured dissatisfaction over membership of the National Films Council was reported in Film Weekly, 8.8.40, p.5. On 14 November 1940, Frederick Daniell wrote a letter to the Department of Information laying charges of favouritism against the National Films Council, following allegedly unjust criticism of his company by an unnamed member of the Council. (Daniell Papers, item 235/2).}

The partial failure of the committee system had little apparent effect on the industry's contribution to the war. Individual members of the industry continued to make personal contributions: the chief publicity officer of Twentieth Century-Fox, for example, was offered by his company to assist with publicity for films released by the Department of Information, and exhibitors often sat on official war loan committees to give advice on publicity. Through such efforts the industry was able to make positive and effective indications of its support for the government in the war, despite the overall lack of co-ordination between the industry's members.

Although their work for government departments was usually voluntary and offered little direct profit, distributors and exhibitors found that war conditions in Australia were conducive to a healthy turnover of business, and their profits rose rapidly. For Greater Union the war
provided enough stimulus for the organisation to clear the debts which it had borne throughout the 1930s. The company's overdraft of £400,000 which dated back to the early years of the Depression had been reduced to only £290,000 by 1940, despite the careful policies of Norman Rydge. During the next two years the overdraft was completely cleared and the company was able to announce record profits. The immediate stimulus of the war is strikingly evident in the combined trading results of the four operational companies in the Greater Union group (i.e., Greater Union Theatres, British Empire Films, Cinesound, and National Theatre Supply Co.):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year ended 31 December</th>
<th>1937</th>
<th>1938</th>
<th>1939</th>
<th>1940</th>
<th>1941</th>
<th>1942</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>£14,329.10.8 loss</td>
<td>£11,494.12.7 loss</td>
<td>£1,704.15.8 profit</td>
<td>£52,754.2.3 profit</td>
<td>£100,727.13.4 profit</td>
<td>£106,891.8.8 profit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The stimulus owed much to the government's wartime restrictions on luxuries which left few inexpensive means of self-indulgence other than the movies. In 1942, the influx of American servicemen with money to spend but little to spend it on, created an even greater market for exhibitors. Beyond these economic factors, the movies offered a great deal to attract audiences: relief and relaxation from pressures of war conditions; propaganda to rouse patriotic feelings and to provide an outlet for feelings of anger and frustration caused by the war; and a living news service far more vivid than any newspaper story, even if less immediate than radio broadcasts.

16 Film Weekly, 26.8.43, p.5.
17 Hall, in a letter to the writer, 25 June 1969 wrote:

'Rydge did not turn G.U. from near disaster to a bonanza.

'Hitler did!

'Both Union & Hoyts ... were in trouble right up to 1942 when the first of a million Americans began to arrive with nothing to do & really no where to spend their money.'

(Although the four operational companies within Greater Union were showing a trading profit as early as 1939, it was not until 1942, as Hall implies, that the overdraft of the whole organisation was cleared).
Attendance figures rose sharply under the stimulus of the war, and fell as sharply when peace conditions returned and the Americans went home. The following figures show the numbers of taxable admissions to Australian cinemas: Commonwealth entertainment tax was not operative until late in 1942, but the rapid decline after the war indicates the extent to which wartime attendances were artificially high:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Taxable Admissions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 1942-June 1943</td>
<td>101,772,874</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1943-June 1944</td>
<td>145,763,069</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; 1944- &quot; 1945</td>
<td>151,144,831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; 1945- &quot; 1946</td>
<td>142,970,672</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; 1946- &quot; 1947</td>
<td>136,889,246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; 1947- &quot; 1948</td>
<td>133,151,865</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 'business miracle' of Greater Union's recovery from debt to prosperity was attributed directly by the company to the increased turnover of business at the box-office; in the annual report for 1942, Norman Rydge wrote, 'There can be no doubt that wartime conditions have meant increased attendances for picture theatres', and concluded that his companies could 'look forward to the future with confidence'.

It was in this context of a prospering industry, committed to the war effort, but apprehensive about government restrictions, that Cinesound turned its resources to the production of government propaganda and to the provision of a news service that was seen by Cinesound as essential to its part in the war effort. Staff numbers had been reduced by the cessation of feature production and by enlistment in the forces. Those who remained were more than

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18 Figures obtained from the annual Reports of the Commissioner for Taxation, in Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers. The pattern of cinema attendances was paralleled by taxable attendances at race meetings, theatre, dancing and skating. Cinema was by far the most popular form of entertainment: in 1944-45, for example, the total of all taxable attendances was 181,451,393, of which 151,144,831 were cinema admissions.

19 Film Weekly, 26.8.43, p.27. Hall, in an annotation to a draft of this chapter in November 1971 wrote: 'Ernest Turnbull [associated with Hoyts Theatres and Managing Director of the Fox Film Corporation] in a public speech in the Trocadero said he and Norman Rydge should "put up a statue to Hitler".'
ever united under the personal direction of Hall, and together their achievements kept alive the professional standards attained during the 1930s. 20

Cinesound's schedule of propaganda films was contained within the programmes of various government departments. Films were made either under contract to departments or were compiled from film taken by official war correspondents in active zones for the Department of Information. Government production during the war was centralised under the control of the Department of Information, but partly by design, and partly because of an initial lack of specialised knowledge, the Department seemed willing to leave the details of its film programme to the discretion of the film-makers themselves. In May 1940, at a meeting of a provisional committee representing the film industry, the Department of Information expressed its plan 'to proceed almost immediately with the production of Propaganda Films'. The films were to be made by 'the existing established producers' on 'a very low cost basis'. The launching of the propaganda programme was clearly ad hoc, to meet the immediate needs of recruiting drives and appeals for finance, and the government had little apparent ability or even desire to specify particular methods of 'selling' its messages to the public. After this first meeting, Hall noted the lack of decision on the part of the government: 'The Government was not prepared to state exactly what type of Propaganda picture it required but rather prefers to wait on suggestions from the Industry'. 21

In July an attempt was made to establish film production on a more systematic basis, with the formation of the Production Panel of the National Films Council. The intention of the committee was to co-ordinate the efforts of producers and to advise the government on the suitability of proposals

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20 See Appendix II for the credits of wartime propaganda films; William Shepherd, Arthur Smith and Clive Cross are among those from the staff in the 1930s who remained with Cinesound during the war.

21 In a letter to Frederick Daniell, 8 May 1940 (Daniell Papers, item 572/1).
submitted by individual companies. The membership of the Panel gave it considerable authority within the industry: Ken Hall was joined by Harry Guiness, the General Manager of Movietone, and by Frederick Daniell, who had been involved in the National group of companies in the mid-1930s. The initial plan, evolved by the Panel in collaboration with the Department of Information, called for the immediate production of six films, with the work distributed on an equitable basis between producers according to their resources. The terms which the Panel offered to the Department were generous, considering that no production company was particularly stable or wealthy: the basis of the charge to the government, it was decided, 'should be the final Producer's cost ... of each film, plus 10% margin, the Government to provide all transportation, raw film stock, accommodation for operatives and/or executives, at normal public service rates'. The method of production made it necessary for producers to submit scripts to the Panel who would then advise the Department on their 'technical suitability'.

Inadequate direction from the government however hampered the Panel's plans: the earlier indecision of the government in specifying its propaganda needs persisted and the Panel found its working guidelines too nebulous to achieve satisfactory results. In November, within five months of the formation of the Panel, Hall wrote to the Department of Information expressing discontent on behalf of the other committee members: the Panel, he wrote, 'is not

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22 Minutes of a meeting of the Production Panel held at the Board Room of Greater Union Theatres on 31 July 1940, in Daniell Papers, item 235/2. This meeting approved a list of ten films for immediate preparation, but a few weeks later the number was reduced to a more manageable six:

- Keeping the Fleet at Sea ... Argosy Films (one of Daniell's companies)
- Northern Patrol .............. Fox Movietone
- 100,000 Cobbers .............. Cinesound
- It's the Navy .............. Herschells, Melbourne
- Giving Australia Wings ..... Commonwealth Laboratories
- Munitions ..................... Skylogues Ltd.
happy in the general atmosphere surrounding the production of Government films' and insisted that it was essential that we should have from the Government a statement of what it desires covered - what ideas, thoughts, or plans they want promulgated, what suggestions are to be conveyed to the general public.23

Such a policy statement was not, in Hall's knowledge, ever made, but the lack of official guidance did not remain a problem for long: the growth of the Department's knowledge about films and the accumulation of a small but experienced staff, gradually gave the Department greater authority in practical relations with the industry.24 Within a few months the Production Panel was virtually superseded by the Department's own Film Division; government officials dealt directly with producers, and any problems requiring industry co-ordination were directed through the National Films Council.25

Just as the Department of Information adjusted the methods of production according to its experience rather than to a pre-determined policy, so an empirical approach is evident in the content of the propaganda itself. Unlike the propaganda machinery of Nazi Germany or of post-war advertising agencies in the U.S.A., no scientific psychological or sociological calculations contributed to the propaganda, either to direct appeals to particular groups in society or

23 Letter to the Department of Information, 18 November 1940, in Daniell Papers, item 235/2.
24 The staff of five in the Department's Film Division was headed after 1942 by Jack S. Allan, a most able administrator who won the respect of most producers. (Hall interview, 9 June 1969).
25 Attempts were made later in the war to revive a committee system for film production, but both producers and the government clearly found it simpler to by-pass potential obstacles. On 3 March 1941, a meeting of film producers was called by the Department of Information to form a Production Advisory Committee to replace the Production Panel. No record is available to indicate that the committee ever met and possibly the meeting was intended primarily to discuss problems and inform producers of proposed Departmental activities.
to convey an 'image' or a philosophy of general value to the cause. Instead it was left to individual producers to design the content of the propaganda: each film was made with a specific purpose in response to a particular need, and little attempt was made to mould ideals or relate the propaganda to an overall plan. Only superficially did the propaganda contain a representation of a national philosophy. Most producers exploited popular myths about Australians to give their films an immediate nationalistic flavour. 100,000 Cobbers (1942), directed by Ken Hall at Cinesound, was a notable example in which national 'types' were carefully created in the leading characters. The script delineated the four central roles in a manner which could leave no doubt about Hall's intention to present a cross-section of Australian manhood:

'BILL: A touch [sic], square jawed man from the country, tall, big boned, intelligent, good humored, easy going, a typical Australian.

'PETER: A product of the idle rich - well educated, athletic and of a pleasing manner. He wears the old school tie.

'SCOTTY: A soldier of the last War.

'BLUEY: A touch [sic] labourer type, a blusterer. He wears a sweat rag'.

The traditional 'types' served, in the finished film, to provide readily recognisable characters with whom local audiences could identify, and to give a consequently stronger appeal for army recruitment.

Most of the films made for home consumption were distinguished by their specific aims and the overt propaganda which amounted to advertisements for war loans, recruiting drives, or economy measures. Only in the handful of films made for overseas release did an opportunity exist for producers to be more discursive and project a particular 'image' of Australia. The image was usually simple, naive,

26 Script of the film by John Lennon and Frank Coffey, submitted by Ken Hall to the Production Panel on 10 March 1941. Daniell Papers, item 235/1.
but strong in its presentation: *South-West Pacific* (1943), for example, was a 40 minute film made by Cinesound to explain Australia's war effort to the world; Australia was represented as the last bastion of democracy in south-east Asia, with a population cheerfully and fearlessly united in preserving their heritage. The rhetoric of the film is reflected in the music (variations on 'Waltzing Matilda' and themes by Elgar) and in the commentary with lines such as: 'we carved our heritage from the virgin bush'. The film ends with a highly emotional reference to the story of Eureka Stockade and a quotation from a speech by Peter Lalor, supported by a rendering of 'Advance Australia Fair'. 'We swear by the Southern Cross to stand truly by each other and fight to defend our rights and liberties'.

With all of these films, official supervision by the government was usually restricted to the role of approving or vetoing scripts and suggestions put forward by producers. The staff of the Film Division of the Department of Information was never large enough to provide its own writers, and usually producers were given only a broad outline of what was required in a film. In 1941, for example, the Department wrote to Frederick Daniell to commission a film on Australia's ship-building programme: Daniell was told briefly what could not be shown in the film for security reasons, and was given an article on ship-building on which to base his 'treatment' for a script. With guidelines such as this, individual producers had considerable opportunity to use their personal initiative to shape the content and style of the propaganda.

The degree of freedom allowed within government contracts was reflected strongly at Cinesound where the company's propaganda films were as much the personal work of Ken Hall as the company's features had been in the 1930s; the films produced during the war tended to show similarities in style, based primarily on the techniques learned by Hall in

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27 Daniell Papers, item 235/1.
feature production. The type of propaganda film favoured by both the government and producers was in fact a satisfying substitute for feature production and was known in the trade by the term 'featurette'. A routine example of these short narrative films was Cinesound's *Return Journey* (1942), a ten-minute war loan appeal with an underlying theme encouraging healthy attitudes to personal problems created by war. The message, that the irony of total war is 'the inequality of giving and the inequality of sacrifice', was stated directly in a title at the end of the film, and illustrated in the story of a padre's efforts to overcome the bitterness of a young war widow. By building narratives around such messages, featurettes gained obvious advantages over bald didactic statements. Wherever possible, propaganda was planned in this form, and, in contrast, straightforward documentaries, or 'industrials', were made primarily to instruct audiences, for example in air raid precautions, and were contracted to the smaller production companies, like Herschells in Melbourne, which lacked the resources to mount elaborate dramatic scenes and yet which were eligible to share in the government's film programme.

The quality of the featurettes was largely determined at Cinesound by the role in which Ken Hall saw himself during the war. More than most civilians, Hall was informed through his meetings with government officials about the state of the war in the Pacific and knew the importance of keeping the public informed of and alert to Australia's precarious position. Hall was conscious of a strong personal responsibility both to ward off public complacency and 'to lift the public morale as far as we could'. The message of his films consequently gained an urgency which today may seem emotionally crude; as Hall has said in retrospect:

> When you judge any film made during the war - particularly in the crucial stages of 1942-43 - it is as well to remember that everybody was under a big emotional strain at that time. It was no joke that war and the only one in my life-time

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28 Hall interview, 9 June 1969.
of wars that really HAD to be fought. A madman had to be stopped. I know I over-wrote many scenes and overstated many commentaries. But I, as a man with some imagination, was highly susceptible to what was happening around me. I had immediate and personal contact with men just back from the battle fronts, service men and cameramen, and what I took from them fired me to pull the stops out - sometimes admittedly too far. But the fact remains that these films, overstatement and all, went over extremely well in the theatres - and that's what they were meant to do.29

The last sentence suggests the prime criterion that Hall used to assess the quality of his propaganda: its effectiveness in arousing the emotions of an audience. The 'aesthetic' is not far removed from his approach to feature production where films were calculated first and foremost in terms of their potential appeal to audiences. In the propaganda featurettes Hall used simple and direct means to arouse the public: background music which drew heavily on Tchaikovsky, Elgar and massed choirs; acting which tended to be emphatic and broad; and direction which exploited dramatic conceits to intensify the message. In *The Road to Victory* (1940), a compilation of newsreels about the war in western Europe was peppered with enacted dramatic gestures: a hand on a throat to illustrate Hitler's strangling grasp on Europe, or an actor dressed as Hitler saluting beside images showing his progress in Europe. The result could be banal and strained, but sometimes the very simplicity of the gestures could give the film immediacy and strength. *100,000 Cobbers* is probably the strongest of the surviving Cinesound featurettes, with a simple story of four men from different walks of life discovering comradeship in Australia's 'democratic army'. The treatment of the story is forceful, with imagery of classic simplicity (flags being raised at dawn in the army camp), appealing performances by Grant Taylor and Shirley Ann Richards, and a message that arises credibly from the movement of the story. In this film particularly one can sense the effect which propaganda at its best may have had on its audiences: the emotional appeal of the action and characterisation could

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29 Annotation by Hall to a draft of this chapter, November 1971.
serve both as an incitement to positive action and as a consolation in times of chaos and uncertainty.  

The actual effect of the films on their public is difficult to document. Newspaper critics were free to criticise the films as they wished, but rarely mentioned short films unless they were of particularly high quality. The trade papers occasionally drew attention to featurettes which proved popular in newsreel theatres or which were singled out in testimonies of praise from public figures. But again the examples were rare and no publicity was given to the routine shorts or those which audiences disliked and which failed at the box-office. For contemporary evaluation one must rely on chance remarks. A comment by Ken Hall is perhaps helpful as a reflection of audience reactions to the emotional intensity of his featurettes: 'after a while the theatres asked for the right to look at the scripts ... because a few of them we made pretty tough ... you hit them pretty hard, and some of the theatres got a bit worried about the thought they might frighten the audiences away.' On government levels the films rarely received public criticism. In December 1940 an attack on the administration of the Department of Information by an opposition parliamentarian included a broad reference to the poor quality of Australia's film propaganda, but no details were given. A new minister was appointed to the Department soon afterwards,

30 J. Ellul, Propaganda, the Formation of Men's Attitudes (New York, 1965), pp.15, 61, discusses the theory of overt propaganda by a government agency, and stresses two essentials of official propaganda: the reassurance of one's own forces, and the need to unite people in an organisation. An important part of what Ellul sees as the formulae of traditional propaganda is the derogation of the opposition or enemy. 100,000 Cobbers makes virtually no mention of the enemy, and the threat of Nazism is merely assumed. Otherwise the film fulfils most of the requirements of the classic propaganda model as described by Ellul.

31 Hall interview, 9 June 1969.

32 The speaker was Mr Hutchinson (member for Deakin), in the House of Representatives on 13 December 1940: 'films exhibited by the department with the object of publicizing Australia's war effort can only be classed as not bad; they certainly cannot be called good ...' (Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, vol.165, p.1070). The speech was noted in the Daily Telegraph (Sydney), 14.12.40, p.4.
and the lack of subsequent criticism seems to point to more satisfactory results. As the war continued the film industry was frequently praised in glowing terms by the Department's officers. In September 1942, the Minister for War Organisation of Industry stated, for example, that he could 'scarcely conceive of any industry doing so much for so many people with so little manpower'.

If it is difficult to generalise about the effect of the wartime propaganda, it is possible to gain some idea of the potential of the featurettes from the few special cases which did receive publicity. 100,000 Cobbers was very much a prestige item: it was received with warm attention by critics, and the public also seemed enthusiastic since its release in most states was well-advertised and it was shown as a support to 'long-run' features. The emotional patriotism of South-West Pacific received a quite different response: within a few weeks of its release in Sydney it was withdrawn from public exhibition by the Department of Information following criticism of its content and a screening at Parliament House during which the film was heckled and several members walked out of the theatre.

The circulation of particular films can also be taken as a guide to their effectiveness. In mid-1942, one of the most spectacular propaganda campaigns followed an announcement by the Prime Minister of the introduction of clothes rationing. Two films were immediately commissioned as part of a campaign to curtail the panic buying of clothes. The films, Forgotten Men and Needles Win Wars, were made and released in record time. The trade proudly publicised the fact that Forgotten Men was produced, processed and distributed between 9.50 a.m. on Monday 25 May and the opening of theatres on the following Friday night. Altogether 200 prints were circulated around Australian theatres. The

33 Film Weekly Motion Picture Directory, 1942/43, p.7.
34 Sydney Morning Herald, 17.7.43, p.10, and Film Weekly, 8.7.43, p.7.
incident testified to the efficiency of the film industry in co-ordinating its work under pressure, and the effort seems to have made a positive contribution towards solving the government's problem. The Minister for War Organisation of Industry wrote to the National Film Council in appreciation of the drive and concluded:

It is generally agreed that the release of these films has had a beneficial effect on national morale at a time when a rather severe test had been placed upon it, and your ready co-operation has contributed substantially to the task of assisting the people to adapt themselves to changes in the normal way of living.35

The mobilisation of the film industry to accommodate the government's propaganda is perhaps the strongest indication of the commercial value and public acceptance of the propaganda featurette. During the war years, 86 featurettes were made in Australian studios, over twenty of them by Cinesound, and circulated in 9,000 prints, offering the government a vast audience, estimated at 3 million each week, for appeals, propaganda and education programmes.36 Free distribution of the featurettes was handled on rotation between the exchanges with a master chart used by all distributors to ensure the widest possible circulation. In 1942, in New South Wales alone, over 500 theatres were regularly receiving government films. In June 1942, a three-minute appeal by the Prime Minister for the Second Liberty Loan was given a dramatic context of newsreel clips at the Cinesound studios, was printed by Cinesound and another laboratory, Filmcraft, and circulated interstate on R.A.A.F. planes. In all, 365 prints were screening throughout Australia within nine days, and the achievement drew forth a string of compliments from the government.37

35 Film Weekly, 18.6.42, p.4.
36 Film Weekly, 7.6.45, p.6. See Appendix II for a select list of Cinesound's propaganda productions. Only sixteen titles have been identified in this appendix; however, from the Film Weekly Motion Picture Directory, 1943/44, p.5, it can be ascertained that at least six others were released during 1943 alone.
37 Film Weekly, 18.6.42, p.4.
Through lack of direction of the content of propaganda, government departments may have failed to take full advantage of the potential offered to them, but at the same time the production of government films provided a powerful outlet for the expression of private concern about the war by Ken Hall and his associates at other studios. Possibly because of the responsibility which the film industry so keenly felt, the government was prepared to let the initiative lie so frequently with individual producers. With their livelihood dependent on government contracts, the industry had every reason, beyond its own concern about the war, to break records in service of the government and to ensure as far as possible the effectiveness of its propaganda.

Featurettes were only part of Cinesound's output during the war. Equally important in the company's war effort was the weekly news magazine, the Cinesound Review: its wartime function as a mass news medium was supplemented by its use as an additional vehicle for propaganda and as a source of escapist entertainment. The provision of a filmed news service had obvious relevance to the work of the Department of Information, in the fulfilment of its function of communicating to the public official statements about the war. Yet the operation of such a news service was left to the discretion of private film companies even more than was the production of propaganda featurettes. The government lacked the staff and technical resources to produce newsreels itself, and it may have wished to make its work more subtle and persuasive by using private companies as middle-men between official bodies and the public; but to a large extent the government's willingness to allow private enterprise to dominate this field of communication must be explained by the expertise and the sense of commitment which companies such as Movietone and Cinesound brought to their newsreel work.

From the declaration of war, Cinesound and Movietone had sent their own newsreel cameramen into the field to cover the activities of the armed services within Australia. When Australians began to serve in Europe and the Middle East, the Department of Information entered the field for itself as the
department responsible for making a photographic record of the war. It quickly appointed a staff of official war photographers who were sent to join the Australian troops in active zones. After a security clearance, film taken by the government's photographic team was offered to newsreel companies for purchase. Since the department did not sell rights to the footage, Cinesound and Movietone were often in the position of buying the same scenes and had to rely on differences in commentary, editing and context to keep their reels distinct.38

The original government unit consisted of a movie cameraman, Damien Parer; a sound engineer from Cinesound, Alan Anderson; a still photographer, George Silk; and a writer, Ron Maslyn Williams. Captain Frank Hurley was placed in charge of the unit some months after it had been in operation;39 Hurley's fame as a photographer was however soon being challenged by the rising popularity of the young Damien Parer. Parer quickly became known by both critics and the public for his spectacular photography, often taken at great risk to his own life on the front line of battle. His work was enhanced by a keen eye for telling detail and by the winning frankness of his manner which emerged in his commentaries for wartime films, and in radio broadcasts about the war in New Guinea.40

38 Cameramen in the field sent detailed lists of the content of their reels back to Sydney with the film. These 'dope sheets' were then censored and re-written by the Department and made available to the newsreel companies.

39 Frank Legg, Once More on My Adventure (Sydney, 1966), pp. 181ff., discusses the resentment which Hurley's appointment created within the unit, since Hurley was much older than the others and insisted on 'old-fashioned' working procedures.

40 In October 1943, Parer's reputation had grown to such an extent that the American Paramount News service offered him three times the salary paid by the Department of Information. (Film Weekly, 23.9.43, p.1). Despite the protests of Australian film-makers who believed him to be too great an asset to lose to Hollywood, Parer worked for Paramount until he was killed in action on Peleliu Island in September 1944. A brief but sympathetic study of Parer's career is included with many of his photographs in Frank Legg, The Eyes of Damien Parer (Adelaide, 1963).
41. Ken Hall directing a short war film in the Cinesound studio. (Grant Taylor is the actor on the left).

42. Damien Parer (left) and Alan Anderson.
Although Parer had no direct connections with Cinesound, his work provided the raw material from which Cinesound created its news stories: his name was credited with photography on several of the newsreels, and his personality was exploited in commentaries and by introductions especially filmed at Cinesound in which Parer spoke directly to the camera about the war. Although Movietone had similar rights of access to the material which Parer shot for the Department of Information, it was only in the Cinesound Review that the personal popularity of Parer was integrated into the final form of the newsreel, in the same manner that the personalities of Frank Hurley and Charles Lawrence had given 'character' to the company's pre-war documentaries and newsreels.

As the war in the Pacific developed, Cinesound and Movietone became increasingly involved in the actual filming of the war for the Department. In July 1942, a number of the newsreel photographers employed by the two companies were accredited as official war correspondents, because of the shortage of sufficiently qualified cameramen in the services. They were supplied with uniforms, camouflaged trucks and official passes, and arrangements were made for the Department to call on them in emergencies to co-operate with the Department's own photographers. The arrangement affected seven members of Cinesound's staff in all states except Tasmania, and three of Movietone's cameramen. When assignments were notified by the Department, the photographer nearest the scene of action would be contacted or, if none were available, one would be flown from Sydney. The arrangement was seen as a recognition by the government of the contribution which the newsreel companies had already made to the filming of the war. As official correspondents, the staff of Cinesound and Movietone were given direct encouragement in their work: they now had easier access to story material, and with government vehicles, could afford to worry less about problems such as petrol rationing which had previously restricted their operations.

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41 Film Weekly, 2.7.42, p.5.
Once the newsreels had been produced, both Cinesound and Movietone encountered new problems in the distribution of the films which contained departmental footage. Traditionally the two companies were rivals in finding 'scoops' and getting news into theatres first. Their well-publicised competition persisted with the filming of the Melbourne Cup during the war, but with 'hot' news from war zones a brake was placed on the companies by the Department of Information. An agreement was made with the companies that film taken by official war correspondents could not be exploited commercially and consequently, throughout the war, both Cinesound Review and Movietone News appeared regularly on the same day each week, regardless of whether the reel had been ready for release earlier in the week.

A more substantial problem was created by the Department's insistence that official footage used in a newsreel should be made available to any exhibitor on request to either Cinesound or Movietone. Difficulties arose when requests were received from exhibitors who were not under normal contract to receive the newsreels. The solution suggested by the Department, that these exhibitors should receive the portion of the reel containing official footage at a proportionate fee, was satisfactory to neither the distributors nor the theatres. Complaints were raised in the trade press by independent exhibitors who claimed that they could not get access to even the relevant fragments of reels containing official footage, and the problem was repeatedly thrown back to the government, but with no apparent resolution. 42

Circulation of Cinesound Review was nevertheless extensive. In 1941 seventy percent of the theatres in Australia and New Zealand screened the reel, in a total of 980 'situations'. Copies were also regularly circulated through south-east Asia. In 1942, eleven prints were regularly sent to the British Department of Information in Singapore for distribution through the Malay States, the Netherlands East Indies, Indo-China,

42 Film Weekly, 17.4.41, p.5.
Burma and Unoccupied China. Later, at the request of the Department of Information, copies were prepared in at least four Asian languages for more intensive circulation and care was taken to adjust techniques of presentation for Asian audiences. Hall was surprised to find that his films moved too fast for some audiences, and on the advice of interpreters the cutting was slowed by making each shot longer. Excerpts from the Cinesound reel were circulated in America and England in the Pathe News reels for which Cinesound was the Australasian representative. A few special editions which won particular attention from the press, such as those featuring some of Parer's more spectacular work, were made available to the Department of Information for distribution throughout the world as Australian propaganda. Further overseas circulation was arranged between Cinesound and Movietone who agreed to pool their resources to prepare a weekly newsreel especially for Australian troops. The reel usually contained two items from each company's newsreel for the week and was distributed through the Department.

Wide circulation of the Cinesound Review was, to both the Department of Information and Cinesound, important to justify the role of the newsreel as propaganda. In January 1941, a circular letter was sent by the Department to all Australian exhibitors, requesting that more time be given to newsreels in normal programmes:

The Government keenly desires that the public should be kept informed of the activities and fortunes of the fighting forces in the various theatres of war ... It therefore naturally follows that this Department is keenly interested in anything which can be done to ensure that everybody is afforded the opportunity to view these pictures during normal programme hours.

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43 Memorandum from Hall to Frederick Daniell, 22.11.41. Daniell Papers, item 758.
44 Hall interview, 9 June 1969.
45 Film Weekly, 11.3.43, p.6.
46 Film Weekly, 17.4.41, p.5.
Echoing his attitude towards the propaganda featurette, Hall saw the newsreel not only as his responsibility to the nation, but also as his contribution to the health of the exhibition trade. The dual values were reflected in an article which Hall wrote for the trade press on 'The Vital Importance of Newsreels':

Hundreds of keen showmen are getting their full money's-worth from their newsreels, and the percentage of theatres which fail to realise their importance may not be extremely large; but the point is that there should not be any percentage at all.

The showmanship principles which had guided Cinesound Review during the 1930s were retained during the war, and Hall stressed that 'To-day the newsreel is planned and produced with ENTERTAINMENT VALUE always the dominating factor'.

Cinesound Review became a vehicle for propaganda as emotionally stressed as Cinesound's featurettes. A Parer reel, Bismarck Convoy Smashed (1943), for example, showed appalling scenes taken from a Lockheed Lightning during a bombing raid on a Japanese destroyer and later on the survivors in lifeboats. The images of destruction, unsteady and rough because of the conditions under which they were taken, create a strong effect on an audience, even today, and were intensified with fiery orchestral music and a commentary which encouraged audience identification with the bomber crew:

This is it, boys, give her the guns! Here we go! ... Remember Manila, Hongkong, Nanking and a few others Mr Nippon? You'd better duck! ... There's a boat, tiny speck, centre screen ... Missed! One tiny boat in a wide sea isn't so easy to hit ... Bullseye, and more Japs meet their ancestors...

Occasionally the sensationalism of some reels drew criticism from the public. An editorial in one Sydney newspaper criticised a Cinesound reel on the capture of Bardia in which Italian soldiers were referred to as 'mandolin players' and 'spaghetti eaters'. The article commented that this 'may be good fun, but it is very bad policy, and it is untrue ...

To underestimate the quality of the Italians as fighters is to

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47 Hall's emphasis. Film Weekly, 10.10.40, p.5.
detract from the magnificent achievement of our own men. As a result of the article, a vague promise was made by the Minister for Information to scrutinise even more thoroughly the commentaries submitted by the newsreel companies.

As this last incident suggests, the newsreels provided as much opportunity for personal inspiration as did the propaganda featurettes. To fulfill his responsibility to the public in keeping them informed about the war, Hall would sometimes sacrifice 'truth' in certain details in order to communicate what he saw as greater, general truths. News film could be elaborated in various ways. In the field, when the newsreel cameramen were filming actual engagements it was often impossible to film a coherent sequence while under fire. Extra scenes would either be taken by the cameramen after the engagement was over, or close-ups and other shots would be taken when the film arrived back in Australia and was being used by the newsreel studios. More frequently, the studios would use footage from other engagements to extend or lend extra interest to a scene that might have been inadequately covered by the photographer. Kokoda Front Line (1942), for example, was virtually a collage of the entire New Guinea campaign, with footage by Damien Parer taken both during and after engagements.

Another area in which personal creativity played an essential role was the preparation of commentaries. Dope sheets prepared by the cameramen in the field were often lost or attached to the wrong can in the laboratory, and consequently the newsreel writers often had very little concrete information on which to base their stories. Material from the Western Desert, for example, would arrive regularly as negative film with no information sheets at all, and the newsreels would be issued with ringing tributes to the allied forces and jokes at the expense of the enemy, with very little specific information beyond the identification of cities and nationality

48 Daily Telegraph (Sydney), 25.1.41, p.5.
49 Film Weekly, 30.1.41, p.5.
of troops. 50

From all of the elements that went into its making, the Cinesound Review during the war often attained a lasting quality of raw energy which came partly from the subject of front-line action and partly from the application of Hall's intense methods. Although Kokoda Front line was not the most striking of the wartime newsreels, it was singled out to receive an award from the American Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences as the best documentary achievement of 1942. As a representative example of the wartime Cinesound Review, the film was an appropriate choice: it offered a summary of the war in New Guinea and benefitted from the personal appearance of its photographer, Damien Parer. His sincere reading of Hall's commentary makes the film genuinely moving, both its message of praise for Australia's achievements in New Guinea, and its warning to the public to avoid complacency.

Newsreels were justifiably popular with audiences during these years. Theatrettes specialising in newsreels flourished, and special screenings of newsreels at larger theatres proved commercially profitable. In September 1939, the declaration of war gave immediate stimulus to newsreel theatrettes, and the trade press noted greatly improved business. 51 At the end of 1942, thirteen newsreel houses were operating in Australia, including six in the city of Sydney alone. Before the war newsreel theatrettes were generally regarded as novelties for shoppers and visitors wanting to fill in an hour between appointments, but during the war, patronage was far more consistent and enthusiastic, with an estimated audience of

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50 Hall interview, 9 June 1969. Hall recalled: 'More often than not there was no dope sheet. I was writing commentaries for those right through the war, personally, because there weren't many other people about to do it, and I liked to do it. And a lot of it I had to use my imagination. Sometimes the cameraman got back for a brief spell ... and could tell you a bit. But I had to rely on ... my imagination, what information I could get from the press and from other official sources'.

51 Film Weekly, 21.9.39, p.4.
60,000 people each week during 1942. Screenings of Australian newsreels abroad received considerable attention too from time to time. A newspaper cable from London reported that the release of Parer's Kokoda Front Line had created 'a minor sensation', while other footage by Parer, incorporated in a Movietone reel called A.I.F. Wounded Returning to Australia, was included in a list of the ten best newsreel stories of 1941 by the influential American paper, Variety.

As a reflection of Cinesound's efficiency in newsreel work during the war, an arrangement was made for the film section of the U.S. Signal Corps to be based at Cinesound while the unit was stationed in Australia. The experience with the Corps is remembered by Hall as evidence of his studio's skills and its ability to match Hollywood standards. The Signal Corps were required to produce a newsreel for American servicemen in the South-West Pacific area. The Corps' team of film technicians had been trained in Hollywood as specialists in techniques such as negative cutting, and had not worked before on newsreels. After thirteen weeks of work the first edition of their SWAPA News had still not appeared. Hall's crew, by contrast, were trained as 'all-rounders' and could work much faster. Consequently, when an American general requested Hall to help the Corps with the newsreel, the Cinesound crew was able to produce the first reel in less than a week, using the American's camera material, and continued to manage the reel for many months until the Americans gained enough experience to work alone.

The work of the studio during these years - whether helping the U.S. Signal Corps or producing its own films - demonstrated time and time again the ability of Cinesound's staff to work together under pressure with a confident approach to technical standards, and a sensitivity towards audience reactions. Applied to the production of propaganda and news-

52 Film Weekly Motion Picture Directory, 1942/43, p.3.
54 Hall interview, 9 June 1969.
reels to which Hall and his staff were committed as a vital contribution to the war, these human and technical resources gave Cinesound firm advantages over rival producers. But as with the work of distributors and exhibitors in serving the war effort, commercial rivalry between individual companies was far less important than the demonstration of support for the work of the government and the prosecution of the war.

While Cinesound's efficiency as a production unit was maintained during the war, the company's work on propaganda and newsreels strengthened the public image that Cinesound had developed during the 1930s. The Academy award, the assistance provided to the U.S. Signal Corps, and the lively, emotional vigour of the propaganda featurettes and the Cinesound Review, all contributed to the image of a company with professional integrity which met international standards, and yet committed to communication with the broad mass of the Australian public.

Despite these achievements of the war years, Cinesound as a feature production company was marking time: the end of the war should have cast Cinesound back to where it had been in 1939, but Hall and his staff soon found that conditions had changed. The studio was still reliant on Greater Union, but the parent company was no longer suffering from debt. The accelerating profits of Greater Union during the war made any contribution by Cinesound seem insignificant, and it was soon to emerge in the immediate post-war years that Cinesound would become dispensable in the manoeuvres of big business.
Chapter Six — The Decline

The Australian film industry emerged from the war with optimism for the future. Distributors and exhibitors were buoyant after the stimulus of wartime conditions on theatre takings, and among producers, not only Cinesound, but film-makers like Chauvel, Eric Porter and the McCreadie brothers were actively planning their new productions. In addition, a unit from the British company of Ealing Studios had arrived in Australia with ambitious plans for a series of productions, offering highly valued work to Australian actors and technicians. The industry seemed eager to expand into the international field, with growing financial involvement in overseas production and distribution organisations. It is from this height of expectation that Cinesound began its long period of decline, for as Greater Union's commitment to overseas companies grew so Cinesound's work became increasingly dispensable to the Greater Union executive.

The Cinesound staff had had no doubt that after the war the studio would return to feature production: this prospect, together with the pressure of propaganda and newsreel production during the war, had served to help the studio's standards at a level that could readily accommodate renewed feature activity. Soon after the war ended, shooting began as anticipated on Smithy, the last feature to be made by the Cinesound team. The film provided a striking climax to the company's work: it was a major commercial success at home and a modest one abroad, and it reflected the technical assurance gained from fifteen years of continuous production. Yet despite the honour which Smithy brought to Cinesound, it could do little to strengthen the position of the company within the Greater Union organisation.

Although it was made entirely by the Cinesound team, Smithy was not strictly a Cinesound production, being instead commissioned and financed by the American distribution
company of Columbia Pictures. Like other American distributors with Australian branches, Columbia had many thousands of dollars in theatre takings 'frozen' in Australia by the Commonwealth government's wartime restrictions on dollar remittances. Most companies allowed the capital to accumulate or invested it in theatre construction; but two, Columbia and Twentieth Century-Fox, sought investment in film production, since films could be exported and converted back to dollars by screening in American theatres.

The managing director of Columbia's Australian branch, N.G. Pery, a flamboyant film salesman, persuaded his head office to invest in a trial production and approached Cinesound in 1943 to plan the project. Since the film was intended to exploit both local and overseas audiences, Pery chose to produce a film which could be sold overseas as a novelty for its Australian qualities. Hall and Pery decided that the film should focus on a great Australian who was known abroad. Three figures were considered: Ned Kelly, Dame Nellie Melba and Sir Charles Kingsford Smith. Kelly was perhaps too obvious a choice: his exploits had frequently been the target of small and often suspect ventures seeking to make a film which could sell on the strength of its subject alone, and which would cost little and make a quick return. After a series of shoddy productions Kelly had gained a bad reputation among Australian film-goers.

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1 The following discussion of Smithy owes much to an interview with Ken Hall, by the writer, on 23.4.69.

2 In 1950 Twentieth Century-Fox sent an entire production unit to Australia to spend at least £750,000 on the film Kangaroo, directed by Lewis Milestone with a cast led by Maureen O'Hara, Peter Lawford and Richard Boone. Lewis Milestone comments at length on this production in C. Higham and J. Greenberg, The Celluloid Muse (London, 1969), pp.166ff. 'Frozen' revenue was used again by Fox in 1961 when a unit was sent to India to make Nine Hours to Rama (E. Barnouw and S. Krishnaswamy, Indian Film [New York, 1963], pp.245-49).
who had been duped once too often. 3 Nellie Melba was considered more seriously, but her story presented prohibitive technical problems. Apart from the high cost of reproducing opera houses and European settings in the Bondi studio, Melba's voice was retained only in poor recordings, and the hire of a singer of sufficient quality to simulate her voice was beyond the resources of the proposed production. Kingsford Smith presented fewer problems: his story was technically feasible since, with the aid of back projection, Smithy could fly across any sky. Furthermore, Smithy's life had enough varied action to fill more than one script with incident, and his death in action was inherently more romantic than Melba's decline into old age and sickness.

While Smithy's career was lively, its organisation into a screenplay presented difficulties of selection. Hall commissioned several writers to prepare treatments, among them Jesse Lasky Jnr, an American film-maker stationed at Cinesound with the U.S. Signal Corps; Josephine O'Neill, a Sydney film critic; and the young Australian playwrights, Alec Coppel and Max Afford, who finally shared credit for the screenplay with Hall himself. 4 Early drafts centred on the first flight across the Pacific and were climaxed by Smithy's rise to world fame, but Hall finally sought an 'epic' sweep by covering the major events in the whole of Smithy's life, and by carefully interweaving

3 Hall interview, 23.4.69. Ned Kelly had been the subject of feature films in 1910, 1917, 1920, 1923 and 1934. The 1934 version was banned in New South Wales for several years by the Chief Secretary who disapproved of the film's depiction of the police force. Although this version was not screened in Sydney until 1946 it has been taken around country centres in all states for many years, frequently creating antagonism because of its primitive techniques (Film Weekly, 8.7.48, p.23).

4 Hall is credited as scriptwriter under his pseudonym, John Chandler, although he uses his own name in the credits for 'story treatment' and direction. Presumably, if one man were credited with too much, the film might have lost the illusion of a lavish, large-scale production.
a theme which stressed his premonitions of an early death. Smithy's flights emerged in the film as heroic confrontations with destiny and culminated in an inevitable death in the service of his ideals. Visual images were devised to support these themes and elevate the action: on his last flight, for example, Smithy's plane is seen to fly through a fatal storm into a majestic sunlit sky, followed in time by a formation of modern aircraft, with a verbal epitaph stressing his role as a 'pathfinder'.

The script's portrait of Kingsford Smith as a national hero relied to some extent on current film conventions of masculinity. Smithy's behaviour in romantic interludes lies particularly within the tradition of Hollywood's lounge-suited heroes: when in his wife's satin-trimmed boudoir, for example, he appears immaculately groomed in a smoking jacket and cravat. Elsewhere, however, the image is more life-like, with authentic details to give credibility to the action. Smithy's old plane, the 'Southern Cross' was resurrected for the film: by arrangement with the R.A.A.F. and the Department of Civil Aviation, the plane was brought from Canberra, where it had been stored in crates, to Sydney. There it was re-assembled, renovated and flown for the cameras by one of its old pilots, Captain P.G. Taylor. Taylor was joined in the film by John Stannage, a former radio operator on the 'Southern Cross'. The proudest addition to the cast, however, was the former Prime Minister, William Morris Hughes, playing himself as a younger man when in 1919 he had prevented Smithy from competing for a £10,000 prize which the Australian government had offered for the first flight from England to Australia. 5

5 The use of public figures as actors could create difficulties, as Hall describes the shooting of the sequence with William Morris Hughes:

"[Alec] Coppel wrote a very good and amusing scene in which Billy had his original very old-fashioned hearing "Box" on the table at the interview ... When Smithy appeared to be gaining ground in his argument that as an ex-fighter pilot with no navigational experience he WAS fit to make the flight to Australia. There were
43. Ron Randell as Charles Kingsford Smith.

44. Ken Hall and William Morris Hughes during the filming of Smithy.
When finally released in August 1946, Smithy carried enormous prestige for Cinesound and the producer, N.G. Pery. The film had Hughes and the 'Southern Cross', a vigorous myth-making atmosphere, and lavish expenditure on visual spectacle and original orchestral music. It had cost £73,000, more than three times the budget of any previous Cinesound feature, and the publicity campaign to launch the film was proportionately greater. Much of the publicity centred on Ron Randell and Muriel Steinbeck (who played Smithy's wife) and elevated them to the status of 'stars'. Both had acted for several years in radio, theatre and wartime propaganda films, and had appeared together in another local feature film, A Son is Born, made shortly before

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railway maps weren't there? - Hughes switched off the hearing aid. This continued through the scene.

'When I took the script to him and he had read his scene Billy flatly refused to have anything to do with it. For the first time I learned that he was sensitive to his deafness - although cartoonists and the media generally had been having fun with it for years. "No, Hall no" said Billy. "Its like the story of the little boys throwing stones at a frog in a pool. Highly amusing for the boys - but no bloody fun for the frog!"

'By 1945 he was wearing an in-the-ear type aid but insisted that I shoot him so that it would not show. He also ad libbed like hell and we were hard pressed to prevent utter chaos. But we got a good scene.'

Annotation by Hall to a draft of this chapter, November 1971.

6 The score was written by both Alfred Hill and Henry Kripps, since there was not enough time for one man to do the work.

7 Publicity was in fact so exhaustivie that the film suffered from 'over-selling': although the film broke records in its run at the State Theatre, Sydney, the first few days saw many empty seats in the theatre, the public presumably believing that no seats would be available on the first weekend without long queuing. (Film Weekly, 4.7.46, p.1.)
Despite this earlier activity, it was only when Smithy projected them into the limelight that Randell was offered a Hollywood contract by Columbia and late in 1946 departed to begin his career in American and British films. Muriel Steinbeck chose to remain in Australia, but found that she had been 'over-sold': for some time she had difficulty finding work since local theatrical producers assumed that she would be priced out of their range and that they had no suitably prestigious roles to offer her.

In its Australian release, Smithy proved its potential with a premiere season of seven weeks at the State Theatre, Sydney. In Australia and abroad the film had the advantage of Columbia's own distribution organisation and in England and the United States it received wider circulation than any previous Cinesound film. Critical responses supported the film's popular appeal: it received few adverse comments in Australia and was accepted overseas as a modest entertainment. The release showed that, given the backing of a distribution outlet, Cinesound was technically adept enough to compete effectively on the international market.

The credit which Smithy brought to Cinesound was transient. Greater Union had no share of the profit made

8 A Son is Born, directed by Eric Porter, was not released until after Smithy: Porter had rightly believed that his film could benefit from the publicity given his stars in Smithy.

9 Interview with Muriel Steinbeck, 28.3.70, recorded by the writer in Orange, New South Wales.

10 Usually the film drew fulsome praise from Australian critics, and even the Sydney Morning Herald, 1.7.46, p.6, produced the cliché which at least one newspaper seems to use for every Australian release: 'This is the best full-length film yet made in Australia'. The British trade paper, Today's Cinema, found the film 'quite a good screen job' (undated cutting, Muriel Steinbeck press-cutting book, held by the Film Division, National Library); and the American trade paper, Motion Picture Herald, 29.11.47, rated the film as 'Fair' and noted as selling points the touch of 'romance' and the 'effective' music score.
by the film (Hall and his crew had been hired to Columbia for a flat fee) and the success did nothing to re-establish the self-supporting pattern of Cinesound's pre-war activity, where profits from one film had helped to finance the next. It was also soon apparent that Columbia had no intention of fulfilling N.G. Pery's promises of further films. In 1947, when he visited Hollywood, Hall met Harry Cohn, the reputedly ruthless head of Columbia. As Hall recalls the meeting, Cohn in no way shared Pery's enthusiasm to commence regular production in Sydney, away from the tight controls of Cohn himself. To Cohn's lack of interest Hall attributes many of the cuts which were made to Smithy in the United States, as though Columbia had intended to disguise the fact that the film had been made in Australia. Later events showed that Columbia's attitude to Australian production was far from unusual, and that local producers had reason to suspect overseas companies which professed interest in making films in Australia.

The success was made even more tenuous by a realisation that Cinesound's laboratory and studio at Bondi were ill-equipped for renewed activity in feature production. Cinesound's cameras and sound equipment in 1946 were basically the same as those used in the early 1930s; during the war, replacements had been difficult to obtain and by 1945 Cinesound's equipment was out-moded. The studio's property store had also suffered from a fire which destroyed sets, costumes and props accumulated during the 1930s. It became apparent that if Cinesound

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11 The scenes removed from Smithy included the interview with William Morris Hughes and totalled about 20 minutes of screen time. The credits were re-shot, removing Pery's name and any indication of the film's Australian origin, including acknowledgements to the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and the R.A.A.F. In the United States the film was re-titled Pacific Adventure and in England, Southern Cross. Hall's story of Cohn is supported by B. Thomas, King Cohn (New York, 1967), a biography which describes Cohn's temperamental management of Columbia: Cohn's treatment of Smithy is consistent with his impulsive methods of administration.

12 Film Weekly, 15.5.47, p.4.
were to compete economically with Hollywood on the Australian market, thorough re-organisation and re-stocking were necessary.

After completing Smithy, Hall wrote an article for the trade press in which he detailed the difficulties which had been caused by inadequate facilities. For a production as elaborate as Smithy it had been a great hindrance that no second sound stage existed on which sets could be built in advance, and much expensive overtime had been needed to erect sets while the crew and cast were kept on stand-by. Progress was also hampered by antiquated lighting equipment which was too weak for the large sets needed in the film. Eventually Smithy was completed several weeks behind schedule. Hall was adamant:

More than any other single factor, the outstanding need of the Australian film production industry to-day is - tools of the trade.

The shortage of equipment is desperate. Too much of that which exists is makeshift.  

Rydge also drew attention to the studio's equipment in Greater Union's annual report for 1945: the report explained that a fall in Cinesound's profit from £7,223 in 1944 to £1,391 in 1945 was 'largely due to difficulties with the laboratory buildings and plant which were obsolete and almost completely worn out, and are being maintained in operation at considerable cost until the company can replace them'.

In recognition of this need to re-equip, Rydge sponsored a plan for the re-development of Cinesound's production resources. Arrangements were made for Hall to visit England and the U.S.A. to survey modern production techniques and to buy new equipment. The plan indicated a return to production on a far more intensive and ambitious scale than in the 1930s. No longer would films be made

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13 Film Weekly, 20.12.45, p.58H.
14 Quoted in Film Weekly, 29.8.46, p.5.
predominantly for the local market; instead Cinesound planned to collaborate with the British company of Ealing in making films of wider appeal. Ealing had already established a unit in Sydney at the Pagewood Studios and had justified its economic viability with The Overlanders released at about the same time as Smity. According to the plan, the units of Ealing and Cinesound would pool resources to produce a series of 'prestige' films made on 'generous' budgets and given world-wide release. The co-productions were to be made, not at Cinesound's old studio at Bondi, but at Ealing's base at Pagewood: the Bondi studio was never ideal for production, being a converted skating rink, but Pagewood had been built in the mid-1930s specifically as a film studio for the use of the production units which had been centred on the short-lived company of National Studios. 15

When Hall flew to England in November 1946, his itinerary included not only shopping for new equipment but also detailed discussions about the co-production scheme with Ealing's head office. In April Ealing announced that, in conjunction with Greater Union, the studios at both Pagewood and Bondi would be re-equipped as an interim measure, with the ultimate aim of building new studios and laboratories when the production programme had established itself. It was estimated that the re-fitting of the studios would cost about £100,000 and the fact that Greater Union was prepared to invest on this scale was seen as a vital step forward for local production. 16

The plans, however, were for castles in the air. The long conflict of interests between Norman Rydge and Ken Hall

15 These comments on the co-production plan are based on an interview with Ken Hall, by the writer, on 13.6.69, and on a report in Film Weekly, 24.10.46, p.4.
16 Film Weekly, 3.4.47, p.5.
finally came to a head in August 1947 when Rydge announced the abandonment of the scheme and the cancellation of most of the orders for new equipment. The decision was a blow to the Australian film industry's one hope of a studio capable of continuous feature production. Immediate reactions expressed shock and despair; to one producer, Australian production now lay 'dead in the bloodrunning gutter'. More than anyone else, Norman Rydge was held responsible for the 'extinction' of the industry. Much of the criticism of Rydge was emotional, casting him as the villain in a melodramatic business game. It is possible, however, even without the advantage of company records, to isolate factors which led to his decision to abandon feature production, among them a less favourable economic environment after the war, the warning of a near-failure in a major Australian production, and, most importantly, a basic shift in internal company politics.

Although two Australian features made since 1943 had been spectacularly profitable (The Overlanders and Smithy), declining business in theatres in the immediate post-war years made reliance on the home market increasingly risky. American servicemen with time and money to spend on entertainment had left, and the greater availability after the war of near-essential consumer goods made more important demands on money than picture-going. Theatre takings fell

17 Film Weekly, 28.8.47, p.1.
18 Film Weekly, 28.8.47, p.1. The producer quoted in the article is not named but is possibly Hall: none of the other directors interviewed wished their names to be withheld, and only Hall, being personally affected by the decision, had reason to be vehement in his pessimism.
19 Rydge's name was understandably abused more in private conversation than in print, but suggestions of typical criticism may be found in J. Baxter, The Australian Cinema (Sydney, 1970), p.74, and more briefly by Michael Thornhill in the Australian, 27.10.70, p.10: 'Those of us interested in Australian film production have, frankly, nothing for which to thank Sir Norman...'
dramatically: in the year ending June 1945, 151 million taxable admissions were paid in Australian cinemas, but in the next year the figure had declined to 142 million, and to 136 million in 1946-47. The trading decline was aggravated by the persistence of many wartime economic conditions which absorbed earnings: high taxation, including entertainment tax, increased wages, and heavy replacement costs for theatrical equipment. 'The honeymoon is over' became a well-worn phrase in the trade during the immediate post-war years.

Greater Union continued to make profits after the war, but because the figures were declining from year to year it was clearly a better long-term prospect to invest in the solid 'bricks and mortar' of theatres than in the revival of an insecure production enterprise which had been lying dormant for the last six years.

Rydge's distrust of film production was confirmed by his experience with Charles Chauvel's new film, *Sons of Matthew*. Greater Union had joined Universal Pictures to finance this story of a pioneering family in the Lamington Plateau in Queensland. Unlike Hall, Chauvel would not use back-projection and preferred to use actual locations, despite the enormous expense of filming in the Lamington forests. Progress was continually hampered by the difficulties of the locations, and the film ran seriously over its budget and months behind schedule. Shooting had begun in March 1947, but was not completed until late in the following year, during which time an entire unit was taken twice to Queensland and sets were built twice at the Cinesound studio, before Chauvel finally agreed to the use of back-projection for the

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20 Figures are extracted from the annual reports of the Commissioner for Taxation in Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers.
21 *Film Weekly*, 5.9.46, p.3.
more complex action scenes. Even by August 1947 the film's slow progress was sufficiently clear for Rydge to realise that his investment was precarious.

The finished film cost over £140,000, with the money invested by Rydge making no return until the premiere in December 1949, nearly three years after production had begun. To compensate for the unusually large capital outlay, Rydge had hoped that the film would make a fortune on the British market, yet despite release during the Christmas holidays, the film made little impact on the British public. Rydge reacted by sending Gordon Ellis, the General Manager of B.E.F., to England to put some 'Australian ginger' into the selling campaign; Ellis organised competitions and persuaded newspapers to publish stories about the making of the film, and eventually saved it from failure. Although Rydge's investment was ultimately justified, the money was not easily earned; Rydge took the experience as a lesson and, according to Hall, was determined never to be caught again.

Although the general decline in business and the warning provided by Sons of Matthew made Rydge uneasy about renewed activity at Cinesound, his final decision to withdraw from feature production was prompted above all by a major shift in company management. The change arose directly from an expansion drive by British film interests in an attempt to win better trading conditions for British films against American competition.

22 M. Dunn, How They Made Sons of Matthew (Sydney, 1949), is a florid but detailed account of Chauvel's extravagant methods and the bad luck which dogged the production. On the first trip to Queensland, for example, the unit ran into the worst period of floods and rainfall recorded in the area for eighty years; of the first 45 days spent on location (in which time many of the pre-war Cinesound features would have been completely shot), only eight were fine enough for shooting.

23 Hall interview, 13.6.69.
Britain had traditionally been the poor cousin of the major film producing countries, with a quota system that rewarded the production of films regardless of quality. During the 1930s, few British films had been good enough to receive favourable distribution, even in the British market where American films were given eighty per cent of playing time in theatres. Lacking the possibility of high returns, producers had no incentive to improve their standards. J. Arthur Rank, the owner of a fortune in flour mills, determined to break the vicious circle by simultaneously producing better films and finding them better opportunities in British and foreign cinemas.24

During the war years, Rank took advantage of the comparative financial weakness of other British producers, and used his huge financial resources to become Britain's self-appointed 'Movie Missionary'. After consolidating his ownership of more than 600 theatres in Britain, and surviving a government inquiry into monopoly charges, Rank turned to the world. He proceeded to buy, lease and build theatres in Canada, New Zealand, the West Indies, Malaya, Ceylon, and other countries of the British Empire; he built the largest theatre in Cairo; and a third interest was bought in a large South African theatre chain.

In addition, during the war, Rank took control of numerous British production companies and studios, including Pinewood and Denham, and became without question Britain's largest producer; his films reached a high level of sophistication and artistic integrity, with new talent emerging in directors such as David Lean and Carol Reed. In 1944, to distribute these films throughout the world,
Rank formed the company of Eagle-Lion, a name which symbolised the conquest of American-dominated markets. Eagle-Lion established trade even in Russia where British films had rarely been shown in the past. The climax of the expansion drive was a thoroughly-publicised tour of the United States in mid-1945. The tour was designed to impress the sceptical American industry as much as it was intended to seek specific improvements for British films, and Rank achieved much: promises of better terms for his films from the leading American distributors, and arrangements for American actors and technicians to work in England in the hope of raising British standards even further.

Witnessing Rank's rapid rise to power and hearing abundant rumours about his intentions, Australian film executives began to scurry to and from London for 'urgent' conferences. At first it seemed that Hoyts had won the race for Rank's favours: shortly before Rank's visit to America, the Managing Director of Hoyts, Ernest Turnbull, announced that his company had signed a five-year contract for the release of Rank's productions, with the possibility of Rank co-sponsoring the production of Australian films for the world market. 25 Not to be outdone, Norman Rydge flew to London in November 1945 and returned with news that indicated an abrupt change in Greater Union's ownership and future prospects.

The deal between Rank and Rydge concluded that, subject to existing contracts (including the one with Hoyts) and the approval of shareholders, Rank was to buy a permanent 50 per cent interest in the Greater Union organisation for a sum of £750,000. 26 On 25 March 1946, an Extraordinary General Meeting of Greater Union's

25 Film Weekly, 30.8.45, p.5.
shareholders approved the sale of half of the 400,000 issued shares. Rydge remained as Managing Director, and the number of company directors was increased to ten, five appointed by each partner.\footnote{Film Weekly, 21.3.46, p.1.} An official announcement by Greater Union defined the aim of the new arrangement, referring only to the benefit to Rank: to 'ensure and protect that there is available to British films in Australia adequate playing time which will enable the Rank group to proceed still further with their policy of concentrating on the production of films of a quality which are able to compete with all others on equal terms in the world markets'.\footnote{Film Weekly, 22.11.45, p.1.} The significance of the partnership was also great for Rydge: the deal guaranteed a supply of high quality films, making Greater Union far more secure than it previously had been when it had fought in the open market for distribution contracts. Moreover, Rank's primary interest lay in theatres, not only because they were safe investments, but because they were needed to justify the level of British production. With the stimulus of Rank's capital, Greater Union rapidly expanded its theatrical holdings. To its circuit of 72 theatres, it added the Clifford chain of 20 theatres in South Australia in September 1946, and in May the next year bought two additional suburban theatres in Adelaide. The old King's Theatre in Melbourne was bought for a large sum estimated at £50,000, and in the Sydney suburbs, 'considerable capital' was outlaid on new properties.\footnote{Film Weekly, 29.8.46, p.5, 3.10.46, p.4, and 5.6.47, p.4.}

For Rank, with his world-wide organisation, interest in Australian production was of slight importance; if objections were to be found to the joint production project there was likely to be little hesitation in abandoning the
plans. Rank at first indicated support for Cinesound's expansion and co-sponsored Hall's trip to England and his talks with Ealing. Public statements made by Rank and Rydge suggested that they were fully behind Hall. Repeatedly Rydge referred to the intention of making Pagewood 'the Hollywood of the South Pacific', and spoke about the scheme 'to make Pagewood a studio where Australian films can be made for a world-wide market, so that the Australian way of life and Australian scenic beauty will find its way on to the screens of all countries'. Such statements were soon to emerge as little more than lip-service to a popular ideal, and both Rank and Rydge were quick to be discouraged when objections to production suddenly crystallised in August 1947.

The decision to abandon Pagewood in August was precipitated by a 75 per cent tax imposed by the British Labour government on the earnings of all films imported into Britain. The tax was aimed primarily at the millions exported annually to Hollywood from British theatres, but applied with equal stringency to films from other countries. Effectively the tax prohibited the export of any films to Britain; instead of 'freezing' capital earned in theatres, the British government proposed to confiscate it as a tax. Not even Hollywood could afford to export films on those terms. For the 'world-standard' films which Cinesound and Ealing proposed to make at Pagewood, the loss of possible revenue from Britain posed an insoluble problem of financing. Rydge protested in the trade press:

We regard it as most unfair that Australian-made films must be taxed on the same basis as American. It seems that Empire preference has gone overboard ... There can be little future...

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30 Film Weekly, 1.4.46, p.4, and 16.5.46, p.1.
31 Film Weekly, 24.10.46, p.4.
32 For a detailed study of the tax, its intentions and effects, see A. Wood, op.cit., chapters 14, 15 and 16.
for the industry until the opportunity of obtaining reasonable revenue from England again becomes available.\(^{33}\)

While Rydge's statement was justified in relation to the expensive productions proposed at Pagewood, it was much less acceptable for the comparatively small scale on which Cinesound had worked before the war. During the 1930s, films had been made and sold in such a way that the home market covered the negative costs of each production, with the English market providing a surplus profit. Other film-makers in production at the time of the tax seemed to be more alarmed by Rydge's extreme reaction to the tax than by the tax itself: Chauvel believed the tax would lower the quality of Australian production because of the need to rely on the home market, but he had no intention of abandoning either *Sons of Matthew* or his future projects. Among other producers, A.K. McCreadie continued with plans for his second feature, confident that Australian films could be made cheaply enough to recoup their costs from Australian theatres.\(^{34}\)

Although Rydge withdrew from production, Cinesound's partner in the proposed development of Pagewood persisted with their current activities: Ealing at the time was in the middle of shooting *Eureka Stockade* for a cost of over £200,000, and rather than abandon the production the company brought extra technicians out from England so that the film could qualify as a British production in the terms of the tax. The fate of future productions by Ealing at


\(^{34}\) Of the others, Arthur Greville Collins continued with his film biography of William Farrer, *Strong is the Seed*, and Roy Darling embarked on the ill-fated production of *Intimate Stranger*. The only film in progress which may have been adversely affected by the tax was Darling's production, since it was abandoned during shooting, possibly because investors were discouraged by the change in the international market. (*Film Weekly*, 28.8.47, pp.1, 5). Other countries seemed to suffer more severely: in Canada, for example, production came to a standstill until the full effect of the tax could be assessed by the three major producers (cutting from the American trade paper, *Motion Picture Herald*, 15.11.47, in the Daniell Papers, Item 84).
Pagewood was left undecided until Eureka Stockade was completed.\textsuperscript{35} Ealing's patience was vindicated by the lifting of the tax after nine months; the company re-equipped Pagewood with its own resources and remained in production there for another five years.

For Cinesound, however, the damage had been done. In August 1947 the tax had provided Rydge with an excuse to evade a costly risk, even though Ealing's experience had suggested that co-productions between British and Australian units might be acceptable within the terms of the tax. By the time the tax was lifted it was too late for Rydge to change his mind: his partner, Rank, was then in no position to spare finance for inessential projects such as Australian production.

The tying of Rank's hands arose as a side-effect of the tax: Hollywood had responded to the tax by placing an embargo on film exports to Britain, and Rank had taken advantage of the absence of competition to launch a multi-million pound programme of production to fill the gap in British theatres. With a failure to consult the film industry which proved to be disastrous, the British government lifted the tax before Rank's films could be released: the market was supplied with a surplus of American and British films, and Rank's productions, many of which were poor in quality because of an over-extension of creative talent in the production drive, failed to find favourable releases. Rank lost money heavily and his debts mounted to more than £16 million. In 1948, under the severe supervision of Rank's General Manager, John Davis, expenditure was drastically cut.\textsuperscript{36} By 1951 Rank was out of debt and could reconsider production in Australia but by that time Cinesound had decayed too far to take an active role in any plans.\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{35} Film Weekly, 22.1.48, p.1, and 19.2.48, p.1.
\textsuperscript{36} The story is told in A. Wood, op.cit., chapters 15 and 16.
\textsuperscript{37} In 1955 a Rank production crew visited Australia to shoot scenes for A Town Like Alice and in January 1957 shooting began on Rank's production of Robbery Under Arms, for which most exteriors were filmed in Australia.
The abandonment of feature production at Cinesound meant not only that expansion was prohibited but that the studio was prevented from re-equipment even to pre-war standards: equipment which had become obsolete during the war was forced to remain in service. More than ever it seemed to Rydge's critics that he had at last won his long fight with production and finally rid Greater Union of a potential liability. The fact was in the interest of the shareholders, and after all it was to them that Rydge was responsible, but to the technicians and actors who had striven for years to make Cinesound a viable business, it was a profound disappointment. 38

Cinesound's reliance on Greater Union, which had once contributed to the profits of the company, now emerged as a crippling lack of independence, and Hall's position as an employee became painfully clear. Hall, like other producers, believed that, although Rydge's reaction to the tax had been extreme, its effects might be short-lived. Gradually however he came to realise that his proposals for new activities were meeting a stone wall of opposition from Greater Union executives. 39 Gradually too he saw Cinesound's remaining assets eroded away. In July, 1948 Greater Union took control of a Sydney company, Automatic Film Laboratories Ltd; Cinesound's obsolete laboratory was shut down rather than renovated, and Automatic thereafter operated as an independent company, handling all processing and printing required by Cinesound and Greater Union's distribution contracts. 40

In 1950 any remaining potential for feature production was removed. The studio at Bondi was sold for £40,000 to a

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38 Many of the above comments about the effect on Cinesound of the Rank partnership are based on interviews with Hall, 13.6.69, and with Arthur Smith (Cinesound's chief sound engineer), by the writer, on 8.10.69.

39 Hall interview, 13.6.69.

40 Film Weekly, 8.9.49, p.10.
soft-drink company and Cinesound moved in January 1951 to a converted suburban theatre, the Amusu, in the industrial area of Balmain, where the small studio was adequate only for modest advertising and documentary films.41 With heavy irony, Rydge issued a statement to the press describing the move from Bondi as a positive advance for Cinesound, 'the logical outcome of Cinesound's rapid development in the newsreel and production fields'.42 The move was seen by Hall as a 'funeral'.43

Realising the futility of trying to launch feature films at Cinesound, Hall attempted in 1951 to form his own company, Kenhall Productions Ltd, with the aim of establishing and maintaining 'an Australian owned' production industry.44 The first project was one Hall had been toying with since the early 1930s, an adaptation of Robbery Under Arms, to be produced for about £100,000 in conjunction with Ealing Studios. The directors of the company promised well; they included Charles E. Munro, a former Managing Director of Hoyts Theatres and now the controller of a large

41 Film Weekly, 13.7.50, p.5, and 26.10.50, p.5. The soft-drink company, Canada-Dry, soon went bankrupt and the Bondi property was again sold and reconverted into a film studio for the new production company of Southern International, led by Chips Rafferty and Lee Robinson. After they too went bankrupt, the studio was used by Ajax Films until early 1971 for the making of advertising films, television series, and feature films such as Squeeze a Flower (1970) and Adam's Woman (1970).

42 Film Weekly, 26.10.50, p.5.

43 Hall interview, 13.6.69.

44 Most of the following information on Kenhall Productions is based on a letter from Ken Hall to the writer, 26.8.70, and on items 144 and 198/1 in the Daniell Papers. The Daniell Papers include a draft prospectus for the company, correspondence between Hall and Daniell and between the company and the Department of National Development. Hall wrote in the above letter: 'it was Charles [Munro] who named it Kenhall Productions - something I took strong exception to because I thought it a bad selling title. And I knew the Englishmen wouldn't like it. But I let it go temporarily because I knew we would change it once we got the project off the ground.
'independent' theatre circuit; John Tait, Managing Director of J.C. Williamson Theatres; R.E. Denison, a newspaper owner with interests also in radio broadcasting and film production; Frederick Daniell, who had worked with Hall during the war and who now was an executive in Denison's 'empire'; and Stanley Crick, who had long been associated with the Australian film industry in all its branches. Detailed preparations were made for the first production: a shooting script was prepared, and a provisional agreement reached with Ealing for the use of Pagewood, for their financial support and for world-wide distribution.

Despite the security offered by its directors and the care of the preparations, the company foundered in September 1951, largely because of external economic changes. In mid-1951, the Capital Issues Board of the Department of National Development attempted to ward off inflation by ruling against the floating of public companies for various ventures including film production. Despite repeated appeals by Hall, Daniell and others, Kenhall Productions was refused permission to issue its prospectus and raise capital. The ruling affected not only Hall's own programme but most other Australian producers: Ealing was prompted to close its studio at Pagewood early in 1952 because it could no longer find Australian support for its work; and a project by Chips Rafferty to produce films for American television was also rejected.  

Cinesound's life after August 1947 needs little comment. The company concentrated its efforts on newsreels, advertising and sponsored documentaries, with profits built into the contracts for sponsored films. Budgets were usually kept too low by competition with other advertising studios to afford either featurettes of the style used for wartime propaganda, or the development of 'personalities' in the way that Frank Hurley had used his name to boost

45 Film Weekly, 24.1.52, p.1.
pre-war sponsored films. Instead, most of the hundreds of documentaries made by Cinesound after the war were straightforward 'industrials', with little to inspire the film-makers or their audiences. A few exceptions appeared among the large number produced: Hall remembers with affection a film about an old folk's home, Haven on the Hill (1956), and some films won a modicum of critical praise and an occasional award, among them South Pacific Playground (1953), and a group of films made for British Petroleum, Cattle Carters (1962), Muloorina (1963), and Man and a Mural (1965).

Hall directed some documentaries himself, but the output was too large for him to give personal supervision to all; he tended to concentrate on administration and to leave the field work to house directors such as William Carty and Bede Whiteman. Hall preferred to give personal attention to the weekly Cinesound Review which more closely resembled the popular entertainment he enjoyed producing. He was aware that much of the effort he put into the newsreel during these years was wasted on trivia but the work helped to relieve much of the frustration he felt about the studio's feature activities. Under his supervision the newsreel maintained its notable qualities of vaudeville humour and a readiness to hold a critical editorial policy on controversial issues.

With a restless mind trained in public relations, Hall was always ready to involve Cinesound in ambitious projects to attract business for the newsreel and the

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46 The exact number of films is impossible to ascertain without access to company records: many of the films were made for private organisations and never shown publicly, others were compilations or re-issues of earlier work, and others still were impossible to distinguish from advertisements. The National Library's annual list of Australian Films from 1945 to 1970 attributes a total of over 180 to Cinesound.

47 Hall interview, 13.6.69. Hall recalls: 'I went into a period of ten years of gloom and despondency and I worked off the frustrations of doing nothing ... by forcing myself into newsreel operations and giving them bigger and more importance in my mind than they really deserved'.
sponsored films. In August 1950 Hall won permission to send two newsreel cameramen, Geoff Thompson and Bede Whiteman, to cover the Korean war. At that time they were the only Australian photographers present in the active zone. The coverage of sporting events, such as the Davis Cup, the Melbourne Cup, and various car trials, continued to inspire Hall to the same rivalry with Movietone that he enjoyed before the war, and in his enthusiasm to be first in getting news into the theatres, Hall even produced two full issues of the *Cinesound Review* in one week during the 1953 Davis Cup tournament.

The introduction of commercial television to Australia in the mid-1950s stimulated the Australian film industry by creating a demand for advertising films as well as, in the early years, newsreels, and documentaries. Since 1949 Hall had been producing documentaries on Australian subjects specifically for American television, and with the advent of Australian television he took every opportunity to win business for his company, and for nine years film segments in news broadcasts from Channel TCN9 in Sydney were made under contract by Cinesound. Ironically, while Greater Union's theatres suffered from the impact of television, Cinesound became busier than it had been since the making of *Smithy* a decade before.

In December 1956 Hall accepted without compunction an offer from Frank Packer to become the chief executive officer of Packer's Television Corporation which operated Channel 9, Sydney. The post was largely administrative and Hall's talent for the work was demonstrated as the company moved out of debt and into accelerating profits. He remained there until his retirement in 1968.

48 Film Weekly, 17.8.50, p.5, and 31.8.50, p.5.
49 Film Weekly, 7.1.54, p.3.
50 Film Weekly, 5.5.49, p.1.
51 Hall interview, 13.6.69. Hall had known Packer personally since the 1920s.
Hall's position at Cinesound was taken by Andrew Helgeson, an exhibitor from Queensland who had had little experience of production. Under Helgeson the quality of Cinesound's work declined along with the morale of the staff; it became obvious that without the force of Hall's personality and his sense of showmanship there was little to hold the company together. The Cinesound Review became a plodding and timid routine, made only to satisfy Greater Union's quota requirements in New South Wales theatres, and inflicted on declining audiences regardless of their reactions.

With television, Cinesound's staff had expanded greatly, from about twenty to seventy, and the studio continued to serve as a training ground for new talent, although young film-makers were soon disgruntled with frustration. Under the direction of the young editor, Anthony Buckley, for example, the Cinesound Review from 1962 to 1964 occasionally regained some of the liveliness lost after Hall's resignation, but there was no support for Buckley's work. He recalls once taking money from the

At the time of his appointment to Cinesound, Helgeson was a zone manager with the Birch, Carroll and Coyle chain in Queensland, and was based at Townsville. He had first joined the film industry as a salesman at the Brisbane branch of Paramount. After war service he had joined Birch, Carroll and Coyle and had taken an active interest in Townsville's civic affairs. (Film Weekly, 6.3.52, p.5.)

See above, pp.32ff.for discussion of the New South Wales quota law.

These comments on Cinesound after Hall's resignation are based partly on interviews with Anthony Buckley and Howard Rubie (members of Cinesound's staff in the 1960s), by the writer, on 12.6.69. The decline in quality of Cinesound's work is self-evident from the viewing of any late issues of Cinesound Review, although, in fairness, mention should be made of some lively reels by William Carty, particularly his stories on Japan and south-east Asia early in 1970, and his Symphony in Steel which was screened at the 1970 Sydney Film Festival. The decline in morale at Cinesound was also self-evident to any casual visitor to the studio in 1969, and was reflected in the Cinesound Christmas Party Film for 1969, a crude collection of seedy jokes at the expense of the 'boss' and stressing the studio's run-down condition and makeshift methods.
studio's tea fund to pay the copyright for the use of a song by the Beatles in a newsreel story of the group's Australian tour. In the early 1960s, several young filmmakers at Cinesound, including a particularly talented photographer and director, Howard Rubie, planned the production of a feature film Tusitala, based on Robert Louis Stevenson's experiences in Samoa. Helgeson was talked into supporting the project, and financial backing was gained from local film and theatrical entrepreneurs. Rydge however refused to commit himself to the project and it was finally abandoned since distribution could not be assured through Greater Union.  

The last years of Cinesound gave few people pride in their work, and there is little purpose in dwelling on the lack of leadership, the drab surroundings, and the grind of routine work produced without imagination or enjoyment. The impression that Cinesound was being allowed to run to seed grew stronger towards the end of the 1960s: the company could not compete effectively with modern and better managed studios such as Artransa and Supreme Films, and virtually the only incentive to maintain the studio was nominal compliance with the New South Wales quota legislation.

In October 1970 Cinesound merged with its old rival, Movietone, in a new company clumsily named Cinesound-Movietone Pty Ltd, under Movietone's General Manager, Frank Killian. The merger seemed to be motivated primarily by the need to join the forces of the two companies so that they would no longer compete in their limited field of theatrical newsreels, and so that, with their combined resources, the new company could make a reasonable bid for a share of the production business in Sydney. The success of the new company remains to be seen, but its future in 1972 seemed to be firmly in the sphere of television commercials and sponsored documentaries. The

55 Buckley and Rubie interviews, 12.6.69.
company was given a base at Movietone's studio in Camperdown, and the old Amusu Theatre in Balmain was taken over by another Greater Union subsidiary, the National Theatre Supply Company. *Cinesound Review* and *Movietone News* ceased production and were replaced for quota requirements by the new *Australian Movie Magazine*, which in its first issues showed little improvement over its predecessors. To some it seemed that, with the merger, Rydge (now Sir Norman) had at last confirmed his victory over production, but otherwise the merger was quiet and even the trade press scarcely noted the event. As the Cinesound kangaroo hopped from the screen for the last time, Ken Hall commented: 'It brings the curtain down. On a Greek Tragedy? ... but, no, there were no Greeks, only Philistines'.  

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56 Ken Hall, in a letter to the writer, 11.9.70.
CONCLUSION

Cinesound's withdrawal from feature production can be dated from one particular action: the decision by Rydge and Rank to abandon plans for the re-development of Cinesound's cut-dated resources in mid-1947. Similarly, simple and immediate causes may be isolated for the initial establishment of Cinesound as a feature production company: the invention of sound-recording equipment by Arthur Smith and the extraordinary popularity of *On Our Selection* in 1932.

But in neither case is the immediate cause sufficient to explain the finality of the action by Rydge and Rank, or the rapid development which took place at Cinesound during the 1930s. Many incentives and disincentives have been suggested in the course of this thesis in an attempt to give credibility to the dramatic and sudden rise of Cinesound and its equally sharp decline.

In 1932, the formation of Cinesound was conditioned strongly by the Depression and the needs of Stuart Doyle to find a solution to his problems of declining theatre attendances and unreliable film supply. Once 'talkie' production had proved to be technically feasible, Doyle initiated the production of *On Our Selection* primarily as a low-cost attempt to make a film that would, as surely as Doyle was able to predict, appeal to Australian audiences. This experiment and the films which followed were given some degree of security as investments by the principles of showmanship held by Doyle, Ken Hall, and the Cinesound crew, placing consideration of the audience foremost among the criteria which determined both a film's style and its content. Showmanship pervaded most of the studio's work: its creation of 'personalities' in the studio's newreels and documentaries; the deliberate imitation of Hollywood in the depiction of characters and settings; and the extravagance and ambition of the studio's 'action' scenes, whether a bushfire, a timber drive or the bursting of a dam wall. A highly active and imaginative publicity campaign was associated with each of the
studio's productions and an image was created of a professional motion picture studio on Hollywood lines, which contrasted strongly with the less ambitious nature of some of Cinesound's contemporaries.

During the 1930s, Cinesound, as well as other Australian producers, had ready access to Australian theatres, provided that their films reached a certain level of competence. Only with a comparatively poor production such as *Strike Me Lucky* was Cinesound at any advantage over other producers because of its direct association with one of the major Australian theatre chains. Especially for the distribution company of British Empire Films, Australian films, whether from Cinesound or from other companies, reduced the exchange's reliance on British products which often had limited appeal to Australian audiences. But although Cinesound was important to the operations of the whole Greater Union organisation, especially to B.E.F., the high level of risk involved in feature production could only be tolerated while the studio showed a profit, since depressed conditions in the industry persisted throughout the 1930s and Greater Union was not to clear its debts until 1942.

The cessation of feature production at Cinesound can be related directly to the purchase in 1947 of a fifty per cent interest in Greater Union by J. Arthur Rank: with the improved quality of British films after the war and the guarantee of a regular supply of films, the economic need for Australian films declined within the new organisation. Cinesound was further inhibited by its technical inability to continue with effective feature production after the war: although standards of professionalism had been maintained during the war and had won international recognition with the award of an 'Oscar' from Hollywood, the studio's equipment had become worn and outmoded during the war years. While the post-war production of *Smithy* showed that Cinesound could still command a huge public following, it also showed that to continue production, extensive re-development was needed; it was precisely these funds to re-develop the studio which Rydge and Rank chose to withdraw in 1947.
Several motives for the withdrawal of funds are evident: the disenchancement of Rydge with feature production following the near-failure of *Sons of Matthew*, declining business in the theatres after the war which increased the risk of any production, and the reluctance of Rank to involve himself in Australian production. Given his final responsibility to his share-holders, Rydge may have had strong reasons for abandoning such an uncertain venture as the making of feature films, but his case was badly presented: the film-makers whose work was affected tended to be more articulate and it is their viewpoint which has characterised Rydge as a wilful saboteur. Rydge in return rarely, if ever, made a positive statement about his attitude after 1947, and in his silence he has been generally condemned by those with a concern for feature film production in Australia.

The decision of Rydge and Rank to abandon the redevelopment of Cinesound affected not only the operations of Ken Hall and his staff, but also the prospects of most Australian producers. The link between Greater Union and the J. Arthur Rank Organisation meant that both of the major Australian theatre chains were dominated by overseas interests, since the American company of Twentieth Century-Fox had a controlling interest in the Hoyts theatre chain. Although the agencies of American distributors such as Columbia, M.G.M., and Twentieth Century-Fox had shown occasional interest in releasing Australian films, their interest was unreliable. No producer could afford to risk the amount required for production in the hope that a distributor would show an interest in the work when it was finished. Greater Union had been a much more reliable outlet for Australian films of reasonable quality, but after 1947, Greater Union had its needs filled by the Rank Organisation and had nothing to gain financially by the encouragement of competition from Australian producers.

The dearth of Australian feature films during the 1950s and 1960s must largely be attributed to the difficulties of finding distribution for them in Australian theatres. Those
films that were made in Australia were usually co-productions with other countries, or were forced to rely on exhibition through independent distributors. The results were far from encouraging. Support for film producers from government bodies was restricted to the New South Wales quota for Australian films, but although the Act, passed in 1936, had boosted the prospects of some companies it was virtually inoperative by 1939. Effective government action was not to emerge until 1970.

But even if Cinesound had continued with feature production after 1947 it seems likely that, by the 1960s at least, drastic revisions would have been necessary in the company's style and approach. With television catering more and more for Cinesound's former family audience, cinemas tended to become more and more specialised; while family films could still win handsome returns, cinemas began to find an increasing audience in the 17 to 30 age group. Changes became necessary in approaches to production to meet the demands of the new and depleted audience. While 'showmanship' in the 1930s had been inextricably associated with the idea of film 'stars' and emulation of Hollywood, such elements tended to have a more limited appeal in the 1960s with youthful audiences growing sceptical of the manufactured values of the old Hollywood system, and a general tendency towards 'internationalism' in popular culture causing a relaxation of Hollywood's dominant influence on film standards and styles. While films with youthful appeal, from Jailhouse Rock to Easy Rider, prospered in the cinemas, re-runs of the Cinesound features found a new popularity on television.

'Showmanship' as a practical philosophy, however, remains valid today in the context of commercial film production whether for cinemas or for television. The stress given by Hall to the need of the producer to know his audience and to address himself directly to its interests, the importance of advance publicity and of professional competence, remain relevant factors for any production in the 1970s. From this point of
view, Ken Hall would probably have been a commercially successful producer at any time, since his work embodied his clear-sighted appreciation of the market available to him.

Although much of Cinesound's record of commercial success must finally be attributed to the circumstances of the 1930s in the ease of access to theatres and the pattern of cinema attendance, at the same time the company owed much to the timeless elements of its publicity, its concept of showmanship, and the style of Hall's management. Through a combination of these factors Cinesound displayed a marked development from crudity in its techniques and content to a degree of sophistication which if not directly expressive of Australian attitudes, found an enthusiastically responsive audience in Australia. As a phenomenon, partly of the 1930s, and partly of conscious calculation, Cinesound stands apart as Australia's only successful attempt at continuous feature production; the failure of other companies in the 1930s to emulate Cinesound's success can be attributed less to Cinesound's position in the Greater Union organisation than to the failure of those producers to accept the rigorous standards which Hall and his team applied to their work.
CINESOUND'S NAME AND TRADE-MARKS

The word 'cinesound' was commonly used in the film trade in the early years of the 'talkie' era to denote any talking picture. In 1931, the term was often used by Stuart Doyle and his publicists to describe the short sound films made in the laboratory of Australasian Films at Bondi. At this time, many months before the company of Cinesound was formed, the Australasian laboratory was usually referred to as 'the Cinesound City'.

The trade-marks used on Cinesound's features varied in their style, but the most common was an image of a man chipping the name of the company from a large block of stone. The trade-mark of the Cinesound Review, however, was the one popularly associated with the company from its formation in 1932 until the 1950s: accompanied by a brief fanfare, the trade-mark showed a kangaroo which after a short pause jumped off-screen over the title, Cinesound Review. Hall has recalled the difficulties experienced in getting the kangaroo to jump over the letters of the title and out of camera range. This trade-mark was used until the early 1950s when the negatives of the title scene were lost and a new title had to be filmed, this time simply showing a kangaroo's head inside the 'C' of Cinesound Review.
45. A frame from the title sequence used during the 1930s and 1940s.
APPENDIX I

CINESOUND'S FEATURE PRODUCTIONS

The following credits have been taken from the films themselves, unless otherwise indicated. For ease of reference, the form of the credits has been standardised. The films are listed below in chronological order. Although it is not strictly a Cinesound production, Smithy has been included to show the degree of continuity in Cinesound's cast and crew, despite the interruption of the war years.

1. On Our Selection
   (Released in July 1932)
   (Alternative title: Down on the Farm in U.K.)

Cinesound Productions Limited and Bailey and Grant present
ON OUR SELECTION
Adapted from the Works of Steele Rudd
Cinesound Recording

Produced by Bert Bailey

Screen Version ... Bert Bailey, Ken G. Hall
Photographer ... Walter H.B. Sully
Recording Engineers ... Arthur Smith, Clive Cross
Production Manager ... John Souter
Film Editor ... George Malcolm
Production Supervision ... Bert Cross

Directed by Ken G. Hall

The Cast:
Bert Bailey ... as Dad Rudd¹
Fred MacDonald ... Dave
Alfreda Bevan ... Mum
John McGowan ... Maloney
Molly Raynor ... Kate
Richard Fair ... Sandy
John Warwick ... Jim Carey
Billy Driscoll ... Uncle
Lillias A'deson ... Lilly White
Len Budrick ... Old Carey
Bobbie Beaumont ... Sarah
Ossie Wenban ... Joe
Fred Kerry ... Cranky Jack
Dorothy Dunckley ... Mrs White
Fred Browne ... Billy Bearup
Arthur Dodda

¹ No character names are given on the credits of the film; the following list of characters has been compiled from reviews, especially Sydney Morning Herald, 15.8.32, p.4.
2. *The Squatter's Daughter*
(Released in September 1933)
(Alternative title: Down Under in U.K.)

Stuart F. Doyle on behalf of Cinesound Productions Limited
presents THE SQUATTER'S DAUGHTER

Based on the Play by Bert Bailey and Edmund Duggan
Cinesound Recording

Photography ... Frank Hurley, George Malcolm
Recording Engineer ... Arthur Smith
Dialogue Production ... George Cross
Technical Supervision ... Bert Cross

Screenplay ... Gayne Dexter, E.V. Timms
Film Editing ... William Shepherd, George Malcolm
Production Manager ... John Warwick
Art Direction ... Fred Finlay
Musical Numbers ... Frank Chapple, Tom King
Wardrobe ... Madame Pellier, Joan Grey
Furnishings ... Bebarfeld's, Sydney

Directed by Ken G. Hall

The Cast:
Jocelyn Howarth as Joan Enderby²
Gratn Lyndsay [Richard Fair]
John Warwick ... Clive Sherrington
Fred MacDonald ... A Shearer
W. Lane Bayliff ... 'Old Ironbark'
Dorothy Dunckley ... Miss Ramsbottom
Owen Ainley ... Jimmy
Kathleen Esler ... Zena
Claude Turton ... Jebal Zim
George Lloyd ... A Shearer
Katie Towers ... Poppy, the Cook
George Cross
Will Gilbert
Les Warton
Victor Knight
'Bidgee'

3. *The Silence of Dean Maitland*
(Released in May 1934)

Stuart F. Doyle on behalf of Cinesound Productions Limited
presents THE SILENCE OF DEAN MAITLAND

Founded on the Novel by Maxwell Gray
A Cinesound Production

Adaptation and
Modernisation ... Gayne Dexter
Dialogue and Continuity ... Edmund Barclay

² No character names are given on the credits of the film; the following list of characters has been compiled from reviews, especially the Sydney Mail, 4.10.33, p.16.
Dialogue Rehearsal ... George D. Parker
Casting Supervision ... George Cross
Production Manager ... John Warwick
Music Direction ... Hamilton Webber

Photography ... Frank Hurley
Special Effects ... George Malcolm
Recording Engineer ... Arthur Smith
Film Editing ... William Shepherd
Art Director ... Fred Finlay
Chief Mechanist ... Edward Bedford
Modern Furnishings ... Grace Bros., Ltd., Sydney

Produced and Directed by Ken G. Hall

The Cast:
John Longden as Dean Maitland
Charlotte Francis ... Alma Lee
Jocelyn Howarth ... Alma Gray
John Warwick ... Henry Everard
John Pickard ... Tommy Everard
Patricia Minchin ... Marion Everard
Audrey Nicholson ... Lillian Maitland
Billy Kerr ... Cyril Maitland Jnr.
Fred MacDonald ... Granfer
George Lloyd ... Bill Grove
Claude Turton
W. Lane Bayliff
Rodney Smith
Les Warton
Douglas Herald
Leal Douglas
Carlton Stuart

4. Strike Me Lucky
(Released in November 1934)

Cinesound Productions Limited present Roy Rene ('Mo') in
STRIKE ME LUCKY
A Farce with Music
Cinesound Recording
Copyright MCMXXXIV by Cinesound Productions Limited

Photography ... Frank Hurley, George Heath
Scenario ... Victor Roberts, George D. Parker
Recording Engineer ... Arthur Smith
Film Editor ... William Shepherd
Settings ... Frank Finlay
Music ... Hamilton Webber
Lyrics ... Victor Roberts

Assistant Director ... John Warwick
Dialogue Production ... George D. Parker
Casting Manager ... George Cross
Classical Ballet ... Leon Kellaway
Gangster Ballet ... Richard White
Costumes ... Jocelyn Poynter
Chief Mechanist ... Edward Bedford
Furnishings ... Grace Bros., Ltd., Sydney
Directed by Ken G. Hall

The Cast:
Roy Rene
Yvonne Blanchard
Lorraine Smith
John D'Arcy
Eric Masters
Alex McKinnon
Dan Agar
Baby Pamela Bevan
Molly Raynor
Bert le Blanc
Les Warton
Harry Burgess
Fred Kerry
Marie D'Alton
Arthur Dodds
Charles Wheeler
Jack O'Malley
Charles Keegan
Nellie Small
Eva Sheedy

5. Grandad Rudd
(Released in February 1935)
(Alternative title: Ruling the Roost in U.K.)

Cinesound Productions Limited and Bailey and Grant present
Bert Bailey in GRANDAD RUDD
Adapted from the play by Steele Rudd

Produced by
Photography
Recording
Film Editor
Assistant Director
Production Manager
Settings
Chief Mechanist
Screen Adaptation
Furnishings

Bert Bailey
Frank Hurley, George Heath
Arthur Smith
William Shepherd
John Warwick
John Souter
Fred Finlay
Edward Bedfird
Victor Roberts, George D. Parker
Grace Bros., Ltd., Sydney

Directed by Ken G. Hall

The Cast:
Bert Bailey as Grandad Rudd
Fred MacDonald
George Lloyd
William McGowan
Kathleen Hamilton
Lilias Adeson
Les Warton
Elaine Hamill
John Cameron
John D'Arcy
Molly Raynor

Dave
Dan
Joe
Madge
Lil
Regan
Betty
Tom Dalley
Henry Cook
Amelia Banks
William Stewart ... Banks
Marie D'Alton ... Mrs Banks
Peggy Yeoman
Marguerite Adele
George Blackwood
Ambrose Foster
Percy Danby

6. Thoroughbred
(Released in May 1936)

Stuart F. Doyle presents Helen Twelvetrees in THOROUGHBRED
A Cinesound Production

Original Screenplay ... Edmond Seward
Photography ... George Heath
Sound ... Clive Cross
Film Editing ... William Shepherd
Musical Director ... Hamilton Webber

Settings ... Fred Finlay, J. Alan Kenyon
Assistant Director ... Ronald Whelan
Dialogue Supervisor ... George D. Parker
Unit Management ... John Souter, Harry Strachan
Casting ... George Cross
Gowns ... Farmers (Sydney), Mavis
         Ripper (Melbourne)
Furnishings ... Grace Bros., Ltd., Sydney

Directed by Ken G. Hall

The Cast:
Helen Twelvetrees as Joan 3
Frank Leighton ... Tommy Dawson
John Longdon ... Bill Peel
Nellie Barnes ... Judy Cross
Elaine Hamill ... Linda
Ronald Whelan ... Genna
Les Warton ... Grafter
Harold Meade ... Russell Peel
Nellie Ferguson ... 'Ma' Dawson
George Lloyd ... Sleepyfeet
Lynton Moore ... Hops Warton
John D'Arcy ... Jack Dent
Alf Stanton ... Midget Martin
Don McNiver
Ruth Craven (courtesy Frank Neil)
'Stormalong'
[Edmond Seward ... Mr Terry] 4

3 No character names are given on the credits of the film; the following list of characters is based on a list in Everyone's, 6.5.36, p.27.
4 The brief appearance of Edmond Seward (the film's scriptwriter) in this role is not credited in the film.
7. Orphan of the Wilderness
(Released in December 1936)
(Alternative titles: Chut, Orphan of the Wilderness in U.K.; Wild Innocence in U.S.A.)

Cinesound Productions present ORPHAN OF THE WILDERNESS
From the 'Cosmopolitan' and 'Nash's' magazine story
by Dorothy Cottrell

Photography ... George Heath
Sound ... Clive Cross
Film Editor ... William Shepherd
Assistant Director ... Ronald Whelan
Production Manager ... John Souter
Music Direction ... Hamilton Webber
Art Direction ... J. Alan Kenyon
Casting ... George Cross
[Screenplay ... Edmond Seward]

Directed by Ken G. Hall

The Cast:
Brian Abbott as Tom Henton
Ethel Saker ... Mrs Henton
Gwen Munro ... Margot
Harry Abdy ... Shorty McGee
Ronald Whelan ... Mel
Joe Valli ... Andrew McMeeker
Sylvia Kellaway ... Jill
June Munro ... June
Edna Montgomery ... Nell
Claude Turton ... Dan, the Shepherd
Arthur Cornell ... Circus Watchman
Leo Cracknell ... Otto Arbígres
Sid Knowles ... Beller
John Souter ... Grocer
Victor Fitzherbert ... Seconds
Jack Solomons ... Burke
Capt. A.C. Stevens ... The Strong Man
George Scott ... The Kid
Dick Ryan 'Chut'
'Steve Baby'
'Mike'

8. It Isn't Done
(Released in February 1937)

Stuart F. Doyle presents IT ISN'T DONE
From the Original Story by Cecil Kellaway
A Cinesound Production

Adaptation ... Frank Harvey
Photography ... George Heath
Recording ... Clive Cross
Film Editor ... William Shepherd
Directed by Ken G. Hall

The Cast:
Cecil Kellaway as Hubert Blaydon
Shirley Ann Richards as Patricia Blaydon
John Longden as Peter Ashton
Frank Harvey as Lord Deneve
Nellie Ferguson as Mrs Blaydon
Harvey Adams as Jarms
Campbell Copelin as Ronald Dudley
Bobbie Hunt as Lady Deneve
Leslie Victor as Potter
Harold Meade as Lord Addersley
Rita Fauncefort as Mrs Dudley
Douglas Channell as Harry Blaydon
Sylvia Kellaway as Elsie Blaydon
Hilda Dorrington as Mrs Ashton
Ronald Whelan as Perroni
Les Warton as The Swaggie
Frank Dunn as Mr King
William Edgley as The Doctor

9. Tall Timbers
(Released in August 1937)

Cinesound Productions Ltd. present TALL TIMBERS
with Frank Leighton Shirley Ann Richards

Screenplay ... Frank Harvey
Based on the Original Story by Frank Hurley
Photography ... George Heath
Sound ... Clive Cross
Art Director ... Eric Thompson
Special Effects Director ... J. Alan Kenyon
Film Editing ... William Shepherd
Assistant Director ... Ronald Whelan
Music Direction ... Lindley Evans
Dialogue Supervision ... Frank Harvey
Production Management ... John Souter, Harry Strachan
Casting ... George Cross
Costumes ... Mavis Ripper

Directed by Ken G. Hall

The Cast:
Frank Leighton as Jim Thornton
Shirley Ann Richards as Joan Burbridge
Campbell Copelin as Charles Blake
Frank Harvey  ...  Darley
Harvey Adams  ...  Stephen Burbridge
Aileen Britton  ...  Claire Darley
Ronald Whelan  ...  Ludwig Rich
Joe Valli  ...  Scotty
George Lloyd  ...  Bill
Letty Craydon  ...  Rosanna
W. Lane Bayliff  ...  Gavan
Peter Dunstan  ...  Robbie

**10. Lovers and Luggers**  
(Released in December 1937)  
(Alternative title: Vengeance of the Deep in U.S.A.)

Cinesound Productions present Lloyd Hughes in  
LOVERS AND LUGGERS  
with Shirley Ann Richards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Performer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Screenplay and Dialogue</td>
<td>Frank Harvey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story Treatment</td>
<td>Edmund Barclay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photography</td>
<td>George Heath</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday Island Exteriors</td>
<td>Frank Hurley</td>
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<tr>
<td>Art Direction</td>
<td>Eric Thompson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special Effects</td>
<td>J. Alan Kenyon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sound</td>
<td>Clive Cross</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film Editor</td>
<td>William Shepherd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Director</td>
<td>Ronald Whelan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production Management</td>
<td>John Souter, Harry Strachan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue Supervision</td>
<td>Frank Harvey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casting</td>
<td>George Cross</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musical Direction</td>
<td>Hamilton Webber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costumes</td>
<td>Mavis Ripper</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Directed by Ken G. Hall

The Cast:
Lloyd Hughes  as  Daubenny Carshott
Shirley Ann Richards  ...  Lorna Quidley
Sidney Wheeler  ...  Captain Quidley
James Raglan  ...  Craig Henderson
Elaine Hamill  ...  Stella Raff
Frank Harvey  ...  Carshott's Manager
Ronald Whelan  ...  Mendoza
Alec Kellaway  ...  McTavish
Leslie Victor  ...  Dormer
Campbell Copelin  ...  Archie
Charlie Chan  ...  Kishimuni
Marcelle Marnay  ...  Lotus
Horace Cleary  ...  China Tom
Claude Turton  ...  Charlie Quong
Bonnie Hunt  ...  Lady Winter
Paul Furness  ...  Professor of Psychology
Charles Zoli  ...  Carshott's Valet
## 11. The Broken Melody
(Released in June 1938)
(Alternative title: The Vagabond Violinist in U.K.)

Cinesound Features present THE BROKEN MELODY

Based on the Novel by F.J. Thwaites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Screenplay</td>
<td>Frank Harvey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photography</td>
<td>George Heath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sound</td>
<td>Clive Cross</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film Editor</td>
<td>William Shepherd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art Direction</td>
<td>Eric Thompson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Effects</td>
<td>J. Alan Kenyon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Director</td>
<td>Ronald Whelan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production Management</td>
<td>John Souter, Harry Strachan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>Frank Harvey</td>
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<td>Casting</td>
<td>George Cross</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costumes</td>
<td>Mavis Ripper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Original Operatic Score</td>
<td>Alfred Hill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Violin Theme</td>
<td>Horace Keats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conductor</td>
<td>Hamilton Webber</td>
</tr>
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</table>

The Cast:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Actor</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lloyd Hughes</td>
<td>as John Ainsworth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diana Du Cane</td>
<td>Ann Brady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank Harvey</td>
<td>Mon. Jules de Latanac</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosalind Kennerdale</td>
<td>Madame le Lange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alec Kellaway</td>
<td>Joe Larkin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harry Abdy</td>
<td>Sam Harris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rita Pauncefort</td>
<td>Bella</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harold Meade</td>
<td>Michael Ainsworth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June Munro</td>
<td>Nibs Ainsworth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ronald Whelan</td>
<td>Bullman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lionello Cecil</td>
<td>The Tenor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letty Craydon</td>
<td>London Maid</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Produced and Directed by Ken G. Hall

## 12. Let George Do It
(Released in June 1938)
(Alternative title: In the Nick of Time in U.K.)

Cinesound Productions present George Wallace in LET GEORGE DO IT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Screenplay</td>
<td>George Wallace, Frank Harvey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adapted from an Original Story</td>
<td>by Hal H. Carleton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photography</td>
<td>George Heath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recording</td>
<td>Clive Cross</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art Direction</td>
<td>Eric Thompson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Effects</td>
<td>J. Alan Kenyon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film Editor</td>
<td>William Shepherd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Director</td>
<td>Ronald Whelan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Production Management  ...  John Souter, Harry Strachan
Casting  ...  George Cross
Musical Direction  ...  Hamilton Webber, Maurie Gilman
Water Ballet  ...  Jan Kowsky

Produced and Directed by Ken G. Hall

The Cast:
George Wallace  as  Joe Blake
Letty Craydon  ...  Clara
Joe Valli  ...  'Happy' Morgan
Alec Kellaway  ...  Mysto the Great
Gwen Munro  ...  Molly
George Lloyd  ...  'Unk'
Harry Abdy  ...  Elmer Zilch
Neil Carlton  ...  John Randall
Leal Douglas  ...  Mrs Burp
Jack Settle  ...  Stage Manager
Millie Doris  ...  Madame Montez
Sid Doody  ...  Poultry Farmer
Lou Vernon  ...  Martini
Butt and Berrigan  ...  Dean and Donovan
Charles Lawrence  ...  Solicitor
Stan Tolhurst  ...  The Drunk
Dud Cantrell's Vocal Trio  ...  Vocalists
Pat Doonan  ...  'Patsy'
Frank Perrin  ...  'Monty'
Dan Agar  ...  Chemist

13. Dad and Dave Come to Town
(Released in September 1938)
(Alternative title: The Rudd Family Goes to Town in U.K.)

Cinesound Productions present Bert Bailey in
DAD AND DAVE COME TO TOWN
Based on the works by Steele Rudd

Screenplay  ...  Frank Harvey, Bert Bailey
Photography  ...  George Heath
Sound  ...  Clive Cross
Art Director  ...  Eric Thompson
Special Effects  ...  J. Alan Kenyon
Film Editing  ...  William Shepherd

Wardrobe and Fashion
Parade  ...  Mavis Ripper
Music Direction  ...  Hamilton Webber, Maurie Gilman
Assistant Director  ...  Ronald Whelan
Production Management  ...  John Souter, Harry Strachan
Casting  ...  George Cross
Montage Effects  ...  John Kingsford Smith
Hosiery  ...  Holeproof

5 Jan Kowsky is the stage name of Leon Kellaway (cf. credit for Classical Ballet in Strike Me Lucky).
### The Cast:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bert Bailey</td>
<td>Dad Rudd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shirley Ann Richards</td>
<td>Jill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fred MacDonald</td>
<td>Dave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billy Rayes</td>
<td>Jim Bradley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alec Kellaway</td>
<td>Entwistle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sidney Wheeler</td>
<td>Pierre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connie Martyn</td>
<td>Mum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ossie Wenban</td>
<td>Joe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valerie Scanlon</td>
<td>Sarah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muriel Ford</td>
<td>Myrtle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leila Steppe</td>
<td>Sonia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marshall Crosby</td>
<td>Ryan Snr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Finch</td>
<td>Bill Ryan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cecil Perry</td>
<td>Rawlings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billy Stewart</td>
<td>Bob Thompson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie D'Alton</td>
<td>Miss Quince</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leslie Victor</td>
<td>Brown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Lloyd</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack Settle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sid Doody</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyril Northcote</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Produced and Directed by Ken G. Hall

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### 14. Mr Chedworth Steps Out

(Released in April 1939)

Cinesound Productions present Cecil Kellaway in

**ME CHEDWORTH STEPS OUT**

Adapted from the Novel by Francis Morton Howard

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Screenplay</td>
<td>George Harvey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photography</td>
<td>George Heath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sound</td>
<td>Clive Cross</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art Direction</td>
<td>Eric Thompson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Effects</td>
<td>J. Alan Kenyon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film Editor</td>
<td>William Shepherd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Director</td>
<td>Ronald Whelan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production Management</td>
<td>John Souter, Harry Strachan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casting</td>
<td>George Cross</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musical Direction</td>
<td>Hamilton Webber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millinery</td>
<td>Valerie West</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Produced and Directed by Ken G. Hall

### The Cast:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cecil Kellaway</td>
<td>George Chedworth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Raglan</td>
<td>Brian Carford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joan Deering</td>
<td>Gwen Chedworth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rita Pauncefort</td>
<td>Julie Chedworth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jean Hatton</td>
<td>Susie Chedworth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Finch</td>
<td>Arthur Chedworth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rodney Jacobs</td>
<td>Fred Chedworth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sidney Wheeler</td>
<td>Leon Fencott</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ronald Whelan</td>
<td>Benny</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Leslie Victor ... Leslie
Cecil Perry ... MacGuire
Charmaine Ross ... Ada Fencott
Harvey Adams ... Mason
Ben Lewin ... Welch
Barrett Lennard ... Perce Faulkner
Field Fisher ... The Bailiff
Letty Craydon ... Mrs Blundell
Les Norton ... Sol Barnes
Phil Smith ... Estate Agent

15. Gone to the Dogs
(Released in September 1939)

Cinesound Features Pty Ltd present George Wallace in
GONE TO THE DOGS

Original Screenplay ... George Wallace, Frank Harvey, Frank Coffey
Original Musical Numbers ... 'We'll Build a Little Home'
Lyrics and Music by George Wallace
Arranged by Henry Kripps
'Gone to the Dogs'
Lyrics by Harry Allen
Music by Henry Kripps

Photography ... George Heath
Sound ... Clive Cross
Film Editor ... William Shepherd
Art Direction ... Eric Thompson
Special Effects ... J. Alan Kenyon
Assistant Director ... Ronald Whelan
Production Management ... John Souter, Harry Strachan
Casting Manager ... George Cross
Musical Direction ... Henry Kripps
Millinery ... Valerie West

The Cast:
George Wallace as George
Lois Green ... Jean MacAllister
John Dobbie ... Henry Applegate
John Fleeting ... Jimmy Alderson
Ronald Whelan ... Willard
Alec Kellaway ... Mad Jack
Letty Craydon ... Mrs MacAllister
Kathleen Esler ... Irene Inchcape
Howard Craven ... Ted Inchcape
Harold Meade ... Mr Inchcape
Lou Vernon ... Doctor Sundermann
George Lloyd ... Quin
Harry Abdy ... Hogg
Reginald Collins ... Benson
Jack Settle ... Head Keeper
Stephen Doo ... Sing Lo
'Hughie' ... Aloysius, the Dog

Produced and Directed by Ken G. Hall
16. Come Up Smiling
(Released in December 1939)
(Alternative title: Ants in His Pants for later
Australian release)

Cinesound Features Pty Ltd present Will Mahoney in COME UP SMILING
with Shirley Ann Richards Jean Hatton Evie Hayes Alec Kellaway Sidney Wheeler

Adapted from an Original Story by John Addison Chandler
Screenplay ... William Freshman
"That's the Way to Handle Your Man"
Lyrics by Bob Geraghty, Ronald Whelan
'Poor Little Sheep'
Lyrics by Will Mahoney, Ronald Whelan
Musical Arrangement by Bob Geraghty, Henry Kripps
'Come Up Smiling'
Lyrics by Harry Allen
Music by Henry Kripps

Photography ... George Heath
Sound ... Clive Cross
Film Editor ... William Shepherd
Art Direction ... Eric Thomson
Special Effects ... J. Alan Kenyon
Assistant Director ... Ronald Whelan
Musical Director ... Henry Kripps
Production Management ... John Souter, Harry Strachan
Casting ... George Cross
Wardrobe ... Dorothy Richards
Millinery ... Valerie West

Produced by Ken G. Hall

Directed by William Freshman

The Cast:
Will Mahoney as Barney O'Hara
Shirley Ann Richards ... Eve Cameron
Jean Hatton ... Pat
Evie Hayes ... Kitty Katkin
Sidney Wheeler ... Worthington Howard
Alec Kellaway ... 'The Killer'
Guy Hastings ... Colonel Cameron
John Fleetling ... John Wynyard
Ronald Whelan ... Max
Harry Abdy ... Sharkey
Lou Vernon ... Signor Rudolpho
Harold Meade ... Sir James Hall
Charles Zoli ... Rudolpho's Valet
Bob Geraghty ... Pressman
Jack Dunleavy ... Referee
[Chips Rafferty ... 'Extra' in circus crowd] 7

6 John Addison Chandler is a pseudonym for Ken G. Hall.
7 This appearance, Rafferty's first, is not credited in the film.
17. Dad Rudd, M.P.  
(Released in June 1940)

Cinesound Features Pty Ltd presents Bert Bailey in DAD RUDD, M.P.  
Founded on the Works of Steele Rudd

Screenplay ... Frank Harvey, Bert Bailey  
Photography ... George Heath  
Sound ... Clive Cross  
Special Effects ... J. Alan Kenyon  
Art Direction ... Eric Thompson  
Film Editor ... William Shepherd  
Musical Direction ... Henry Kripps  
Assistant Director ... Ronald Whelan  
Casting ... George Cross  
Unit Management ... John Souter, Harry Strachan  
Wardrobe ... Dorothy Richards  
Millinery ... Valerie West

Produced and Directed by Ken G. Hall

The Cast:  
Bert Bailey as Dad Rudd  
Connie Martyn ... Mum  
Yvonne East ... Ann Rudd  
Fred MacDonald ... Dave  
Ossie Wenban ... Joe  
Valerie Scanlan ... Sally  
Alec Kellaway ... Entwistle  
Frank Harvey ... Henry Webster  
Grant Taylor ... Jim Webster  
Jean Robertson ... Mrs Webster  
Barbara Weeks ... Sybil Vane  
Ronald Whelan ... Lewis  
Letty Craydon ... Mrs McGrury  
Marshall Crosby ... Ryan  
Joe Valli ... MacTavish  
Field Fisher ... Jenkins  
Billy Stewart ... Bloggs  
Natalie Raine ... Susie  
Lorna Westbrook ... Minnie  
Leo Gordon ... Fordham  
[Chips Rafferty ... Fireman] 8

18. Smithy  
(Released in June 1946)  
(Alternative titles: Southern Cross in U.K.; Pacific Adventure in U.S.A.)

Columbia Pictures
SMITHY  
The Immortal Story of Sir Charles Kingsford Smith  
with Ron Randell  

8 This appearance by Rafferty is not credited in the film.
Screenplay ... John Chandler, 9 Alec Coppel
Based on an Adaptation by Ken G. Hall, Max Afford

Photography ... George Heath
Second Cameraman ... H.L. Nicholas
Art Director ... J. Alan Kenyon
Assistant Art Director ... George Hurst
Assistant Director ... William Shepherd
Film Editor ... Terry Banks
Sound Engineers ... Clive Cross, Arthur Smith
Special Effects ... Jack Gardiner
Interior Decoration ... Joyce Brown

Music and Musical Direction ... Kenry Kripps
Pacific Score ... Alfred Hill
Recorded by ... Sydney Symphony Orchestra
Research ... Norman Ellison
Gowns Designs by ... Mavis Ripper
Gowns Made by ... David Jones Ltd.
Uniforms ... Wardrop, Melbourne
R.A.A.F. Liaison Officers ... Wing Commander John Kingsford Smith, Squadron Leader G.R. Chaseling

Produced by N.P. Pery
Directed by Ken G. Hall

The Cast:
Ron Randell as Charles Kingsford Smith
Muriel Steinbeck ... Mary Powell
John Tate ... Charles Ulm
Joy Nichols ... Kay Sutton
Nan Taylor ... Nan Kingsford Smith
John Dunne ... Harold Kingsford Smith
Alec Kellaway ... Capt. Allan Hancock
John Dease ... Sir Hubert Wilkins
Marshall Crosby ... Arthur Powell
Edward Smith ... Beau Sheil
Alan Herbert ... Tommy Pethybridge
John Fleeting ... Keith Anderson
Joe Valli ... Stringer
G.J. Montgomery-Jackson ... Warner
Gundy Hill ... Lyon

In Person: The Rt. Hon. William Morris Hughes
Capt. P.G. Taylor
John Stannage

---

9 John Chandler is a pseudonym for Ken G. Hall.
Appendix II

Cinesound's War Films

The films made by Cinesound during the war for government departments have in many cases been lost, and since printed sources offer little information, the following list is far from exhaustive. Credits have been taken from the films themselves, unless otherwise indicated. The films are listed alphabetically since release dates are in some cases unknown.

1. Air Raid

Credits from film:

Produced for the Department of Home Security
Produced by Cinesound Productions Pty Ltd
Technical Direction: National Emergency Services of N.S.W.
Released by the National Films Council

Length: 5 minutes
Released in Sydney: February 1942
Distributor: Paramount
Present Location: Australian War Memorial

2. Another Threshold
Film for the Austerity War Loan.

Credits from Film Weekly, 10.9.42, p.27:

A Cinesound Production
Produced by the Department of Information
The Cast:
Joe Valli
Peter Finch
Muriel Steinbeck
Ron Taylor

Length: 10 minutes
Released in Sydney: September 1942
Distributor: B.E.F.
Present Location: Unknown

3. Australia is Like This
Documentary about Australia for information of U.S. Forces.

Credits from film:

Produced by the Department of Information in co-operation with the United States Army, South West Pacific Area
Musical Score written and directed by U.S. Army personnel, performed by The Australian Broadcasting Commission's State Symphony Orchestra
3. Australia is Like This (contd)

The Cast:
U.S. Army personnel
Patricia Firmin
John Nugent-Hayward
Muriel Steinbeck
Grant Taylor
John McCallum

Additional credits from the National Library of Australia, Australian Films (1940-58):
Made by the U.S. Signal Corps in co-operation with Cinesound
Producer ... Jack S. Allan
Script ... Jesse J. Lasky, Jnr,
J. Allan

Length: 19 minutes
Not released in Australia
Present Location: National Library of Australia

4. Blackout
Credits: as for Air Raid
Length: 5 minutes
Released in Sydney: February 1942
Distributor: Paramount
Present Location: Australian War Memorial

5. Bombs
Credits: as for Air Raid
Length: 5 minutes
Released in Sydney: February 1942
Distributor: Paramount
Present Location: Australian War Memorial

6. Diary of Diana
Recruitment film for the W.A.A.A.F.
No credits available
Length: 5 minutes
Released in Sydney: January 1943
Distributor: M.G.M.
Present Location: Australian War Memorial
7. The Eleventh Hour
Narrative Film for Austerity War Loan.

Credits from Film Weekly, 19.11.42, p.29:
Produced and directed by Ken G. Hall
A Cinesound Production
The Cast:
Muriel Steinbeck
John Nugent-Hayward
Margaret Sinclair

Length: 14 minutes
Released in Sydney: November 1942
Distributor: Columbia
Present Location: Unknown

8. Eve on Leave
Film for the Lady Gowrie National Shilling Drive for
recreational facilities for women in the Services.
No credits available
Length: 8 minutes
Distributor: B.E.F.
Released in Sydney: September 1942
Present Location: Unknown

9. High Road to Adventure
Film for Air Training Corps recruitment drive.

Credits from Film Weekly, 17.6.43, p.41:
Produced and Directed by Ken G. Hall
Produced for the Department of Information

Length: 9 minutes
Distributor: Universal
Released in Sydney: June 1943
Present Location: Unknown

10. I Had a Son
Narrative film for the Fourth Liberty Loan.

Credits from film:
A Cinesound Production
Produced and Directed by Ken G. Hall
Scenario: Robert MacKinnon
Assistant Director and Film Editor: William Shepherd
Photography: Bert Nicholas
Special Effects: Ronald Horner
Sound: Clive Cross, Arthur Smith

The Cast:
John Tate
George Randall

Length: 8 minutes
10. **I Had a Son** (contd)
Released in Sydney: November 1942
Distributor: Columbia
Present Location: National Library of Australia

11. **Incendiary Bombs**
Instructional film
No credits available
Length: ?
Released in Sydney: August 1940
Distributor: ?
Present Location: Unknown

12. **Know Your Ally - Australia**
One of an American series of documentaries on the Allied countries.

Credits from Film Weekly, 29.4.43, p.5:

Australian sequences directed by Ken G. Hall
General Director: Frank Capra

Not released in Australia
Present Location: Unknown

13. **100,000 Cobbers**
Narrative film for recruiting drive.

Credits from film:

Presented by the Department of Information
A Cinesound Production
Produced and Directed by Ken G. Hall
Film Editor ... William Shepherd
Camera ... Bert Nicholas
Sound ... Arthur Smith, Clive Cross
Story Treatment ... Frank Coffey, John Lennon, Ken G. Hall

The Cast:
Sgt. John Fleeting, A.I.F. ... Peter
Joe Valli, ex-A.I.F. ... Scotty
Sig. Barry Ross, A.I.F. ... Bluey
Pte Grant Taylor, A.M.F. ... Bill
Gilbert Ellis ... Jim
Aileen Britton
Shirley Ann Richards
Lornal Westbrook
Patricia Firmin

Length: 40 minutes
Released in Sydney: March 1942
Distributor: B.E.F.

Present Location: Australian War Memorial and National Library of Australia.
14. Return Journey

Narrative film for the First Victory Loan.

Credits from film:

A Cinesound Production
Produced and Directed by Ken G. Hall
Scenario ... Robert MacKinnon
Assistant Director and
Film Editor ... William Shepherd
Photography ... Bert Nicholas
Special Effects ... Ronald Horner
Sound ... Clive Cross, Arthur Smith
The Cast:
John Tate
Neva Carr Glynn
Ronald Whelan (uncredited)
Marshall Crosby (uncredited)
Joe Valli (uncredited)

Length: 8 minutes

Released: 1942

Distributor: ?

Present Location: National Library of Australia

15. The Road to Victory

Newsreel compilation about the war in Europe.

Credits from film:

Presented by National Films Council
Produced by The Department of Information
Compiled and Edited at Cinesound Studios by Ken G. Hall
Commentary ... Tom Gurr
Commentator ... Harry Dearth
Film Editors ... Hugh McInnes, Phyllis O'Reilly
Musical Score ... Willy Redstone

Length: 14 minutes

Released in Sydney: January 1941

Distributor: R.K.O.-Radio

Present Location: National Library of Australia

16. South West Pacific

Documentary about Australia's role as the main Allied base in the South West Pacific.

Credits from film:

A Cinesound Picture
Written by ... Tom Gurr
Assistant Director and
Film Editor ... William Shepherd
Photography ... Bert Nicholas
Sound ... Clive Cross
Settings ... Eric Thompson
Special Effects ... Ronald Horner
Produced and Directed by Ken G. Hall
16. South West Pacific (contd)

The Cast:

Alec Kellaway as The Mechanic
John Nugent-Hayward ... The Factory Manager
Bert Bailey ... The Farmer
Bill Perryman ... The Road Builder
Muriel Steinbeck ... The Munitions Worker
Walter Pym ... The Sailor
George Randall ... The Merchant Seaman
Peter Finch ... R.A.A.F. Pilot
Ralph Smart ... R.A.A.F. Pilot
Joe Valli ... R.A.F. Mechanic
Chips Rafferty ... R.A.A.F. Mechanic
Wayne Froman ... U.S.A.C. Mechanic
Grant Taylor ... A.I.F. Soldier
Ron Randell ... U.S. Soldier

Length: 40 minutes
Released: mid-1943
Distributor: B.E.F.

Present Location: Australian War Memorial and National Library of Australia.
Appendix III - Production Costs

In the absence of company records it is difficult to make meaningful statements about Cinesound's finances. The following list of production costs was compiled by B. Niland in his unpublished 'Ken Hall Filmography' (c.1968), based on interviews with Hall; besides relying solely on Hall's memory, the value of the list is weakened by the lack of definition about the items included in the figures given.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Film</th>
<th>Cost (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On Our Selection</td>
<td>6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Squatter's Daughter</td>
<td>16,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Silence of Dean Maitland</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strike Me Lucky</td>
<td>16,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandad Rudd</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoroughbred</td>
<td>24,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orphan of the Wilderness</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It Isn't Done</td>
<td>21,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tall Timbers</td>
<td>13,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lovers and Luggers</td>
<td>24,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Broken Melody</td>
<td>20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let George Do It</td>
<td>21,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dad and Dave Come to Town</td>
<td>23,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Chedworth Steps Out</td>
<td>21,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gone to the Dogs</td>
<td>20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Come Up Smiling</td>
<td>22,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dad Rudd, M.P.</td>
<td>23,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More useful guides to the costs incurred during feature production are available only by chance. Financial statements relating to The Silence of Dean Maitland are held by Judith O'Connor, the daughter of J. A. Lipman, who owned the rights of the story and who received royalties from Cinesound. The following statement is a list of costs involved in this production in 1933:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Film cost - Negative and one Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salaries and Wages of Production Staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Salaried Artists and Setting

Salaries - Artists....£1,595. 2. 5
Properties and Settings....£971. 6. 9
Location Expenses....£115.12. 8
Sundries....£419. 1. 2
Sales Tax....£63.17. 5
Titles....£35.13. 0
Copyright Fees....£22. 0. 0
Overhead Expenses for the production period of 19 weeks....£993. 0.10

£10,132. 6. 0

Total receipts earned by the film in Australian and New Zealand theatres amounted to £23,715.18.5 in December 1963, when the last statement was sent to Mrs O'Connor.

Further cost details are to be found in item 232/1 of the Daniell Papers where estimates are made for the production of Mr Chedworth Steps Out (1939). It is unclear whether the figures given are the actual estimates made by Cinesound or are guesses by Daniell (who was not associated in any way with Cinesound at that time), but whatever their source, the following figures may be taken as some indication of the salaries paid to actors in Australian films at that time.

Cecil Kellaway (under 8 weeks contract) : £500
Peter Finch for 6 weeks at £10 per week
Sidney Wheeler for 6 weeks at £15 per week
Joan Deering for 6 weeks at £10 per week
Rita Pauncefort for 5 weeks at £15 per week
Jean Hatton for 6 weeks at £6 per week

Other cast members were paid daily rates, usually £2.2.0, but up to £6 for James Raglan, £10 for Harvey Adams, £4.4.0 for Ronald Whelan, £4.4.0 for Cecil Perry, and £10 for Les Warton. 'Extras' received 15/- a day.

Staff salaries: Hall received £30 per week; Ronald Whelan £10 per week; and George Heath, £15 per week. Frank Harvey received £20 per week for 4 weeks, for writing the screenplay.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

A) FILMS

1. Feature Films: prints of all Cinesound features are held by the Film Division, National Library of Australia (see Appendix I for titles).

2. Wartime Propaganda Films: few of these films have been preserved in official libraries; those held by the Film Division, National Library of Australia and the Australian War Memorial are listed in Appendix II.

3. Cinesound Review: approximately 300 uncatalogued issues of this news magazine, covering the years 1932-1970, are held by the Film Division, National Library of Australia.

B) INTERVIEWS

The following interviews were conducted by the writer, who holds all tapes, transcripts, and notes. Those marked with an asterisk were tape-recorded.

Anthony Buckley, Sydney, 12.6.69 (Buckley worked at Cinesound, primarily as an editor, in the 1950s and early 1960s).

Jean Francis, Sydney, 9.6.69 (Mrs Francis was private secretary to Ken Hall throughout his period at Cinesound).

Ken Hall, six interviews conducted in Sydney: 11.2.69, 15.2.69, 21.4.69, 9.6.69*, 13.6.69*, 24.8.69*.

Molly Raynor, Sydney, 12.6.69 (Miss Raynor acted in several Cinesound films, including On Our Selection [1932] and Grandad Rudd [1935]).

Howard Rubie, Sydney, 12.6.69 (Rubie worked primarily as a photographer at Cinesound during the early 1960s).

*Arthur Smith, Sydney, 8.10.69 (Smith was responsible for the development of sound-recording equipment at Cinesound in the early 1930s).

*Muriel Steinbeck, Orange, N.S.W., 28.3.70 (Miss Steinbeck acted in several wartime propaganda films and the feature, Smithy [1946]).

*Stan Tolhurst, Sydney, 17.7.70 (Tolhurst acted in Let George Do It [1938] and assisted with the production of the Cinesound Review for several years in the mid-1930s).

John Warwick, Sydney, 12.6.69 (Warwick was Hall's assistant director until 1935 and acted in several films including The Squatter's Daughter [1933]).
Reference was also made to the following interviews with
Ken Hall:
  original tape held by the A.B.C., Sydney; transcript
  held by the writer.
- by R. Trindall, in Industrial Photography and Commercial
  Camera, vol. 6, no. 4, April 1968, pp. 32-36.

C) CORRESPONDENCE
Much information was gained from correspondence
conducted by the writer from 1969-1972, with the following
people (all letters are held by the writer):
  Anthony Buckley (see under Interviews).
  William Carty (director of many short films at Cinesound
  in the post-war years).
  Ken Hall
  Kitty Monkman (wife of director, Noel Monkman).
  Judith O'Connor (daughter of entrepreneur, J.A. Lipman).
  Shirley Ann Richards (actress in many Cinesound features
  during the 1930s).

D) CONTEMPORARY SOURCES
1. Official - Published

   The Statutes of New South Wales, 1934-39.

   Royal Commission on the Moving Picture Industry in
   Australia (1927), Minutes of Evidence (bound in one
   volume, held by the Film Division, National Library
   of Australia).

   Royal Commission on the Moving Picture Industry in
   Australia (1927), Report, in Commonwealth of
   Australia, Parliamentary Papers, 1926-28, vol. 4.

   Inquiry into the Film Industry in New South Wales
   (1934), Report, in N.S.W. Parliamentary Papers,
   1934-5, vol. 3.

2. Official - Unpublished

   New South Wales Supreme Court Archives, file PN/R4 1491

   Australian Naval Board Archives, Melbourne, file
   G 560/201/103-149: The Exploits of the Emden (1928).
   (Photocopy held by Film Division, National Library
   of Australia).

   New South Wales Companies Office, Sydney: file on
   Cinesound Productions Pty Limited, 1932-70 (includes
   Certificate of Incorporation, 8.6.32; Memorandum of
   Association; Statement of Capital, 31.5.32; Articles
   of Association; Schedules of Shareholders, 3.10.34;
2. **Official - Unpublished (cont'd)**

Register of Directors, from 1937; Summaries of Share Capital, from 1959).

Doyle, S., Statutory Declaration, made before the N.S.W. Government Inquiry into the Film Division, on 12.1.34. (Photocopy held by the Film Division, National Library of Australia).

3. **Unofficial**

Cinesound Scrapbooks - 20 volumes of unsorted cuttings, covering the production, distribution and exhibition of all Cinesound features in Australia and New Zealand (held by the Film Division, National Library of Australia)

Cinesound Stills - 13 volumes of stills, covering all Cinesound features except On Our Selection (1932), The Squatter's Daughter (1933), The Silence of Dean Maitland (1934), and Dad Rudd, M.P. (1940). (Held by the Film Division, National Library of Australia).

Scripts: photocopies of original scripts for all Cinesound features, except Let George Do It (1938) and Gone to the Dogs (1939), are held by the Film Division, National Library of Australia.

Financial Statements relating to The Silence of Dean Maitland, originals held by Judith O'Connor (daughter of J.A. Lipman who owned the rights to the story) and copies held by the Film Division, National Library of Australia.

Frederick Daniell, Papers (MS 1634, National Library of Australia): 75 boxes of unsorted papers dealing inter alia, with the Australian film industry, from the early 1930s to the 1950s.

Niland, B., 'Ken Hall Filmography', unpublished notes based on interviews with Hall, c.1968 (copy held by the Film Division, National Library of Australia).

Scrapbook of Muriel Steinbeck, covering the period from the mid-1940s to the late 1950s, and including the production of Smithy (1946). (Copy held by the Film Division, National Library of Australia).

4. **Newspapers and Periodicals**

The following were consulted for the years indicated:

*Argus* (Melbourne), 1930-40.

*Australian Exhibitor* (Sydney), 1944-46.

*Cinesound Herald* (two issues of this house newspaper, for May 1935 and July 1937, are held by the Film Division, National Library of Australia).

*Everyones* (Sydney), 1927-35.

*Film Weekly* (Sydney), 1927-72.

*Film Weekly Motion Picture Directory* (Sydney), 1932-72.


*National Library of Australia, Australian Films* (Canberra), 1940-71.

*Sydney Morning Herald*, 1930-40.
4. Newspapers and Periodicals (contd)

Reference was also made to two articles by Ken Hall in Masque (Sydney), Nov.-Dec. 1967, pp. 24-28, and May-June 1968, pp. 5-8.

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'The Frank Hurley Unit of Cinesound Productions Limited, Industrial Films Department' (Sydney, n.d.) (brochure held by the Film Division, National Library of Australia).


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Seward, E., Thoroughbred (Sydney, 1936).


Union Picture Theatres [sic], Ten Years of Progress in the Motion Picture Industry of Australia (Sydney, 1921).

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E) LATER SOURCES

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Butlin, S.J., War Economy, 1939-1942 (Canberra, 1965).

Dunn, M., How They Made Sons of Matthew (Sydney, 1949).

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Legg, F., and Hurley, T., Once More on My Adventure (Sydney, 1966).

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Thomas, B., King Cohn (New York, 1967).


2. Articles and Serials

Chandler, B., 'A Hall of Doubtful Fame', in Film Digest, December 1965, no.6, pp.3-7.


3. Unpublished Theses


4. Films

Forgotten Cinema, made in 1967 by Anthony Buckley (copy held by the Film Division, National Library of Australia).

The Pictures that Moved, made in 1970 by the Australian Commonwealth Film Unit (copy held by the Film Division, National Library of Australia).

Roy Rene (episode in the Memoirs series), made in 1969 by United Telecasters Sydney Limited (Channel TEN) who hold all copies.