**Left springs out of a suitcase**

**FILM**

Simon Plant

It lay inside a battered attaché case, tightly coiled and smelling of vinegar. But when documentarist John Hughes took a closer look at the dusty celluloid in the 1980s, he realised he was peering at hidden history.

In his hands he had trims and off-cuts from long-forgotten Left-wing films made in post-war Melbourne.

“IT was an exciting moment. I’d been continually looking for this kind of footage for years and, suddenly, here it was,” he recalls.

Decades after the case came into his hands, Hughes has wound the fragmentary films into a compelling documentary called *The Archive Project*.

In it, he documents the rise and fall of the Realist Film Unit — a company of film enthusiasts with Communist Party affiliations who made 13 films between 1946 and 1952.

The unit, led by film-makers Ken Coldicutt and Bob Mathews, believed motion pictures with a conscience could advance peace and prosperity. So Realist cameras — conscience could advance peace and prosperity. So Realist cameras —

Forty years ago, the Realist Film Unit — a company of film enthusiasts with Communist Party affiliations who made 13 films between 1946 and 1952 — sought out their passion for diverse cinema. The Melbourne and Sydney Film Festivals owe their start to these politically active men.

Hughes, whose films include *What I Have Written* (1996) and *After Mabo* (1997) and who is now commissioning director for SBS Indigenous, felt obliged to tell the duo’s story.

“I wanted to make sure future histories of independent Australian film acknowledged their contribution,” he says.

Screening *The Archive Project* in the lead-up to the Commonwealth Games, Hughes hopes his film will inspire younger artists, especially those with “dissenting voices in these security-conscious times”.

“It reminds film-makers today that there is an important tradition of Australian film culture that is intertwined in the social and political conditions of the moment.”

**THE ARCHIVE PROJECT**

*The Archive Project and The Queen in Australia are part of Real Life on Film: Documentarists from Kenya to Coburg at ACMI (February 11-21)*

Hughes will also give a masterclass at the Australian International Documentary Conference on Tuesday, Feb 14

Details: www.aidc.com.au

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**Herald Sun, Friday, February 10, 2006 www.heraldsun.com.au**

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**Music**

**The Lion King**

PERFORMANCES: Wed - Sat 8:00pm, Wed 1:00pm

Regent Theatre, 191 Collins Street, Melbourne

Book, Music and Lyrics by Jonathan Larson

Performance dates, times and prices subject to change without notice

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**VALENTINES CABARET**

The Multi Award Winning Broadway Hit Musical

**Performances**

Regent Theatre - 191 Collins Street, Melbourne

Book, Music and Lyrics by Jonathan Larson

Performance dates, times and prices subject to change without notice

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*SERIOUSLY*

**PET SHOP BOYS REINTERPRETED**

**The Lion King**

Regent Theatre, 191 Collins Street, Melbourne

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**New Theatre marches in Melbourne in 1946, filmed by Realist Film Unit.**

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**On the march:** Elizabeth Coldicott films the 1950 May Day parade in Melbourne.