

# PRESS KIT: SENSES OF CINEMA

20 Years of the Filmmakers' Cooperatives

A film by John Hughes and Tom Zubrycki

Photo: Susan Lambert making SIZE 10





## SENSES OF CINEMA

charts the cultural life of late 20th century Australia through the rise, fall and afterlife of the Filmmakers' Co-operatives - the passionate individuals who moved through them, and the powerfully independent films they made.

Many of Australia's most celebrated independent filmmakers began their creative lives in the Filmmakers Co-ops. Dedicated, energetic and young, filmmakers like Jan Chapman, Gillian Armstrong and Phillip Noyce, fondly acknowledge the formative influence that was the Sydney Filmmaker's Co-op.

The founder of Sydney's underground cinema 'Ubu Films', Albie Thoms, along with Martha Ansara, Richard Brennan, Pat Fiske, Susan Lambert, Margot Nash, Jeni Thornley, Stephen Wallace and Tom Zubrycki, were all involved in the work of the Sydney Co-op.

In Melbourne Barbara Creed, Sue Ford, Ian Gaal, Peter Tammer and countless other artists and filmmakers embraced the international counterculture and emergent Australian cinema, through independent film and video.

The Filmmakers' Co-ops transitioned from making and exhibiting 1960s avant-garde movies, to distribution of films for the women's movement, Indigenous rights, prisoners' rights, gay and lesbian liberation, and gradually transitioned to a critical engagement with a market driven film industry.

By the early '80s conflicts between the community-based cooperatives and the managerial style of centralised government bureaucracy, challenged the Co-ops' viability, and led to their ultimate demise.

The Co-ops' stories and films are vibrant, surprising, and essential to Australian cultural history.

It's time to tell their tale.

"It was the early 1970s – the end of 23 years of Liberal/Country Party government – of Australia being one of the most censored and in some ways closed societies in the western world. There's a changing of the guard."

Phil Noyce

The rise and fall of Filmmakers' Co-operatives is a lively, untold story of late 20th century Australia that links social movements of the 1960s, '70s and '80s with an 'underground' cinema that fostered alternative filmmaking enterprise in production, distribution and exhibition.

An extraordinary diversity of creative ambition converged with a groundswell of social change, as the Co-ops became a forum and a vehicle for 'minority' voices denied expression in mainstream media.

The Co-ops nurtured Australia's 'film renaissance' and created new markets for strikingly innovative Australian content articulating a rebellious historical moment.

The co-ops catalogues constitute a remarkable invisible archive of radical and political cinema, yet to be reassembled as an accessible, digital collection.

Startlingly innovative works like Margot Nash and Robin Laurie's provocative agit-prop film WE AIM TO PLEASE (1976), Helen Grace's cool and critical SERIOUS UNDERTAKINGS (1983) and Gillian Leahy's MY LIFE WITHOUT STEVE (1985), a bold, contemplative, insightful essay drama reflecting on Gillian's break-up with her lover, generated passionate debates. Jeni Thornley's first-person diary film MAIDENS (1978), Barbara Creed's HOMOSEXUALITY: A FILM FOR DISCUSSION (1975) and Pat Fiske's wonderful documentation of contested geography and place in inner city Sydney WOOLLOOMOOLOO (1978), made a difference and were widely seen through the Co-ops distribution networks.

Then there are the features, the animations, the short dramas and activist video.



*Boobs A Lot, Aggy Read 1968*



*Bluto, Albie Thoms 1967*



*Vietnam Report, Kit Guyatt 1966*



*A Sketch on Abigayl's Belly, David Perry 1968*



*Bolero, Albie Thoms 1967*



*Phallic Forest, Kit Guyatt 1970*



Melbourne Co-op screenings began at Pinacotheca Gallery in Richmond in 1970. The following year, weekly screenings were held at a members built 'underground' cinema, 'Babylon' (161 Spring Street, now the European Cafe).

But Victorian authorities forced the Spring Street cinema to close and a new venue on Lygon Street Carlton (adjacent to today's Cinema Nova) flourished from late 1973 until July 1977, when federal government cutbacks forced the Co-op's closure.

After several years above Bob Gould's Third World Bookshop, the Sydney Co-op launched their new Filmmakers' Cinema in St Peters Lane, Darlinghurst (formally the New Theatre) in 1973.



The new Filmmakers Cinema opened in May with Bert Deling's radical feature DALMAS. It was Jan Chapman who made the curtains for the new Co-op cinema screen.

*"I'm embarrassed to say that I personally made the curtains for the cinema, but hasten to add that I was also for a time on the steering committee for this formidable and articulate collective, and eventually had my own films screened there."*

Jan Chapman



*"We won, they left. I don't know whether that was right or wrong, but certainly, the films moved. The Co-op, I think, overall benefited from it."*

Susan Lambert

The Filmmakers' Co-ops weathered internal tensions. Some filmmakers pursued professional and commercial ambitions in an emerging mainstream industry, while others practiced a dedicated resistance to this, favouring avant-garde creative expression, and/or political advocacy. The women's movement radically challenged the libertarian tendencies of the underground avant-garde that had initiated the co-ops.



Battle lines were drawn as activist filmmakers dedicated to the women's movement and other 'liberation' imperatives displaced the '60s avant-garde with a new focus on identity politics, human rights and political issues.

Feminist Film Workers, formed in 1978 - dedicated to expanding the distribution of an activist catalogue of women's cinema concerned with women's liberation, sexuality and gender politics - was very successful; they built a substantial nationwide market in print sales and rentals.



*Serious Undertakings*  
Helen Grace, Erika Addis 1983



*Starting Right Now*  
Gillian Leahy 1976



*Woolloomooloo*  
Pat Fiske 1978



*Maidens*, Jeni Thornley 1978



*Love Letters from Teralba Road*,  
Stephen Wallace 1977



*Film For Discussion*,  
Sydney Women's Film Group 1974

*"The Co-op was crucial in establishing the gay and lesbian film culture. We hired all the gay and lesbian films we could find, and ones that had images of gay and lesbian people in them. We had screenings every month. People were able to analyse, discuss; it brought the gay community into the Co op."*

Digby Duncan

The gay and lesbian rights movement had an enormous impact, transforming personal lives and interpersonal relations; the One in Seven Collective's WITCHES AND FAGGOTS, DYKES AND POOFTERS (1980), documenting gay and lesbian Australian history, gathered extraordinary reportage of the first Gay Mardi Gras in 1978.



Alessandro Cavadini and Carolyn Strachan's NINGLA A-NA (1972) documenting the establishment and struggle over the Tent Embassy in Canberra, PROTECTED (1975) on the Queensland Acts, and TWO LAWS (1981) are landmark films demonstrating creative collaboration with Indigenous communities.

In 1981 the Filmmakers Co-op in Sydney initiated an 'Aboriginal Film Worker' position that allowed Madeline McGrady to organise distribution of films into Indigenous communities, and with Johnny Bayles and Jerry Bostock, to establish a Black Film Unit that made among other films the classic GUNIWAYA NGIGU - WE FIGHT (1983) documenting resistance to the Commonwealth Games in Brisbane in 1982.





*Faces*, Sue Ford 1976



*Marinetti*, Albie Thoms 1969



*Applause Please*, Ivan Gaal 1974



*N'ingla A-Na*, Alessandro Cavadini 1972



*Two Laws*, Borroloola Aboriginal Community,  
Carolyn Strachan, Alessandro Cavadini 1981



Guniwaya Ngigu - We Fight  
The Black Film Unit 1982

The Sydney Co-ops' monthly Filmnews launched in 1975. It was a remarkable publication, 1975-1995, edited for its entire existence by Tina Kaufman. Managed by an editorial committee, with interlocking directors from within the Co-op and contributions from some of Australia's most noteworthy cultural critics, it was distributed around Australia free; it was widely read and very influential. Filmnews engaged with government film industry agencies and their policy and practice, with vigour and candour.

The Co-ops had an historical contest with the Australian Film Institute (AFI), an agency of government that also ran independent film distribution and exhibition. The Australian Film Commission sought to 'rationalise' independent distribution and preferred the AFI over the Sydney Filmmakers Co-op, despite AFC research demonstrating the Co-op's more effective distribution of Australian titles, and better returns to filmmakers.

In the mid 1980s, a Co-op annual general meeting debated whether to defer payments owing to filmmakers or declare the Co-op bankrupt. The meeting voted for the latter. The AFC could have made up the shortfall, which had occurred largely because of the AFC's demand that the Co-op move from St Peters Lane in Darlinghurst to more salubrious and conventional business occupancy in Ultimo – but they didn't. Helen Grace reflected in 2011, "we weren't 'too big to fail'. Digby Duncan: "they could have funded the Co-op properly, or not at all. They chose not at all"

*"So then we formed the Save the Co-op action group. Australian Film Institute wanted to take over independent, government subsidized distribution of independent film, and we felt it should stay in Filmmaker's Co-op, filmmaker's hands."*

Gillian Leahy



*We Aim to Please*  
Robin Laurie and Margot Nash 1976



*Backroads*, Phillip Noyce 1979



*Witches and Faggots, Dykes and Poofers*  
The One in Seven Collective 1979



*My Survival as an Aboriginal*  
Essie Coffey 1979



*Stirring* Jane Oehr 1981



*My Life Without Steve*, Gillian Leahy 1987

*"Before the Co-op people thought: 'no one wants to see these films; there is no market for them. What the Co-op proved was that they did, and that there was a market for them and people did want to see those films and I think still do."*

Margot Nash

**Senses of Cinema** is a 'hidden history' project that gives voice to a generation (or two) little known outside informed Australian filmmaking communities. In bringing together films and stories from the Co-ops, we offer younger generations access to this 'invisible archive', as, unlike Film Australia, Commercial TV or ABC production, this body of work is not yet archived as a collection.

The legacy of the Co-ops resonates with contemporary independent creative practice.

Today, filmmakers find themselves building a 'counter public sphere' through innovative distribution and exhibition practices as mainstream media, including public broadcasting, vacate commitment to documentary traditions, the short film and the low-budget feature, embracing instead ratings driven aesthetic forms. The essential values and imperatives that appealed then, retain their force. The spirit of the Co-ops emerges wherever people gather to make new work that gives voice to 'minority' experience, wherever people gather to see and discuss moving image work that speaks beyond mainstream media.

There is today an 'underground', and it is everywhere.

# WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



GILLIAN ARMSTRONG first garnered attention for her debut feature, **MY BRILLIANT CAREER** (1979), adapted from the classic novel by Miles Franklin. At the film's release, Gillian was the first woman to direct a feature-length film in Australia in almost 50 years. She has since produced films that have been nominated for Academy and Golden Globe Awards and has received awards from the Australian Film Institute, the Film Critics Circle of Australia, the Houston Film Festival, the British Critics Association and the British Academy. Gillian's most recent feature documentary, **WOMEN HE'S UNDRESSED**, premiered at the 2015 Sydney Film Festival. Gillian was the first President of the Australian Directors Guild and has received an AM for services to the Australian Film Industry. In 2007, Gillian was awarded an ADG Outstanding Achievement Award and in 2008 the Women in Hollywood Icon Award in recognition of her contribution to the film industry. In 2018 at the Australian International Film Forum in New York, Gillian received the inaugural AISF Pioneering Woman in Film Award and in 2019 Gillian received the AIMC Murray Forrest Award for Excellence in Filmcraft.



MARTHA ANSARA migrated to Australia in 1969, a time of social and political ferment. She became involved in the formation of the Sydney Filmmakers Cooperative and Women's Liberation and her activities in the anti-war movement led to her joining the Communist Party of Australia. She served for a time as a director of the Co-op and helped to form two women's film groups under its aegis. Martha was one of the first women in Australia to work as a cinematographer. She also produced and directed films on social issues, some of which continue to be in active distribution/exhibition. Martha has been a founding member of a number of cultural, women's and industry organisations, and is a Life Member of the Australian Directors Guild. She is in the Hall of Fame of the Australian Cinematographers Society (ACS) and wrote *The Shadowcatchers: a history of cinematography in Australia*, published by the ACS in 2013. The documentary **WOMEN OF STEEL** (2020), which Martha produced with director Robynne Murphy, has been nominated for both film and history awards and was screened theatrically and on the ABC.



RICHARD BRENNAN was born on June 24, 1943 in Sydney, New South Wales, Australia. He is a producer and production manager, known for **LONG WEEKEND** (1978), **LOVE LETTERS FROM TERALBA ROAD** (1977) and **STIR** (1980). He has been married to Jill Steel since June 22, 2005. He was awarded the O.A.M. (Order of Australia Medal) in the 1989 Queen's New Years Honours List for his services to the media, particularly filmmaking. In 2009, he was given a lifetime achievement award by the Film Critics Circle of Australia for his work as a producer and his ongoing support of Australian film and film culture in Australia.



ALESSANDRO CAVADINI was born in Italy and educated at Accademia di Belle Arti, Milano, Italy. He worked in design, theatre and film. He continued in these fields in Paris and then in Australia. Apart from his own films with Reddirtfilms which he produced, directed, shot, and edited, he has been hired in various capacities, as a director (including "Muhammad Ali" for Australian TV), as a Director of Photography, as sound recordist, and as an editor for over 15 films in Paris, Australia and the United States. Cavadini has worked as a journalist for "Nuovo Paese" (an Italian newspaper in Sydney), was a member of the board of the Sydney Filmmakers Cooperative and a member of the editorial board of *Filmnews*. In the United States, where he settled in 1982, Cavadini has taught film at Hofstra University and at Film and Video Arts. He continues to work in film and audio/visual installations, and is the Audio Visual director at The Jewish Museum in New York.



TOM COWAN has a distinguished film career as a director and as cinematographer. While a trainee at ABC-TV, he directed **THE DANCING CLASS** (1964). It won the AFI's Best Film of the Year. It also won a First Prize at the Commonwealth Awards in Edinburgh. Tom Cowan wrote, co-produced and directed four feature films in the 1970s. His **JOURNEY AMONG WOMEN** won the AFI's Most Creative Feature Film Award in 1977. It was commercially highly successful as well as being a personal statement - running for 16 weeks in Sydney's George Street Theatre and selling in 17 countries. The other feature films as director are **THE OFFICE PICNIC**, **PROMISED WOMAN** and **SWEET DREAMERS**. His first IMAX film as Director of Photography was **ANTARCTICA** (1991). It won the Prix du Jury at the Festival de la Geode - the major award for giant screen films. He also shot **AFRICA'S ELEPHANT KINGDOM** (1998) for Imax. It stayed in Variety's Top 50 grossing list for over two years and won Tom the Australian Cinematographer Society's Gold Award. Tom's feature script **ON FIRE** was a screenplay award winner at the Telluride Festival in 1999. His first Local Emotion Picture feature film entitled **ORANGE LOVE STORY** was a hit at the Melbourne International Film Festival in August 2004, and his latest feature film project was **LIFE CLASS** (2016).



DIGBY DUNCAN continues her love of the image. She works as an art photographer drawn to the patterns and textures of the natural world as well as the challenge of portraiture. She exhibits locally and has been artist-in-residence in Tetouan in Morocco; Oaxaca in Mexico and Beijing in China. Her role as a film producer continues with distribution work as films made in the 1980s continue to be in demand.



Sandy Edwards is a key figure in Australian photography. She started her career as a photographer in the 1970s, developing as a portrait and documentary photographer. In 1991 she joined Stills Gallery where she became Codirector and Curator over 27 years. In 2008, she founded Arthere, an organisation to support photographers as artists in the exhibiting art world. She has mentored hundreds of photographers in this role and has become a spokesperson for photography as an artform. As a photographer, her work focusses on women's issues and Indigenous issues in Australia. Her images have been exhibited widely throughout key institutions in Australia, including in notable group exhibitions *What's in a face?: aspects of portrait photography*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, *Points of View*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, *Close Relations*, Australian Centre for Photography, and *Shades of Light: Photography in Australia 1939-1988*, National Gallery of Australia. Her acclaimed series *Paradise is a Place* was published by Random House with text by Gillian Mears. She is represented in collections at the National Gallery of Australia, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Parliament House, Monash Gallery of Art and in many private collections.



HELEN GRACE is an artist, writer and teacher, based in Sydney and (formerly) Hong Kong. Her photo media work is in the collections of Artbank, National Gallery of Australia, Art Gallery of NSW and Art Gallery of South Australia as well as private collections nationally and internationally. She was the Founding Director of the MA Programme in Visual Culture Studies, Chinese University of Hong Kong and is now Associate, Department of Gender and Cultural Studies at the University of Sydney. Her recent projects include *Justice for Violet and Bruce* (Wagga Wagga Art Gallery, 2022), *And awe was all we could feel* (2020) (CCP, UNSW Art Galleries), multi-art form exhibition, *The Housing Question* with Narelle Jubelin (Penrith Regional Galleries, 2019), *Thought Log* (SCA Galleries, 2016) and *Map of Spirits*, Gallery 4A (Sydney, 2016). Her recent books include *Culture, Aesthetics and Affect in Ubiquitous Media: The Prosaic Image* (Routledge, 2014) and *Technovisuality: Cultural Re-enchantment and the Experience of Technology* (IB Tauris, 2016).



PAT FISKE has directed and/or produced many award-winning documentaries and has mentored several young filmmakers over the years. In 2001-2002, she was a Documentary Consultant at SBS Independent Television for 18 months. In 2001, she was awarded the prestigious Stanley Hawes Award for her outstanding contribution to the documentary industry in Australia and was Co-Head of Documentary at AFTRS from 2002-2008. Some of her films as Director: **ROCKING THE FOUNDATIONS; WOOLLOOMOOLOO; FOR ALL THE WORLD TO SEE; AUSTRALIA DAZE; FOLLOWING THE FENCE LINE; LEAPING OFF THE EDGE; AN ARTIST IN EDEN; LARRIKIN LAD; FOOTPRINTS ON OUR LAND.** As Producer: **BUSINESS BEHIND BARS; SELLING SICKNESS; RIVER OF NO RETURN; BEATS ACROSS BORDERS; SCARLET ROAD; LOVE MARRIAGE IN KABUL; OYSTER; ROSEMARY'S WAY** and most recently **WHEN THE CAMERA STOPPED ROLLING** and **TIGER ON THE ROCKS.**



FRED HARDEN was born in Melbourne in 1947, and was one of the founding members of the Melbourne Filmmaker's Co-op. He was an industry writer and the Technical Editor of the magazine *Cinema Papers* for twelve years, and worked in production and special effects in both TV and film. He later became Editor of *Australian MultiMedia Magazine*, and *Regional Food Australia*. Fred has since worked on a variety of film and TV projects about food and food growing, and has worked as a freelance food writer for the Sydney Morning Herald. He now works with his wife, Jan, on her Australian Food History Timeline and on cataloguing his own archives of film and stills history. This can be found online as a blog essay, and also as a memoir entitled *While I Remember*. <<https://www.whileremember.it/author/fredharden/>>



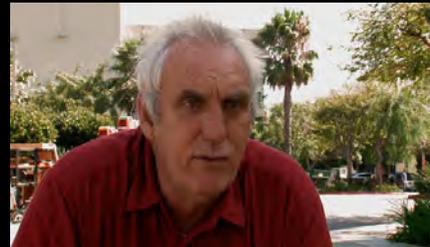
IVAN GAAL came to Australia as a refugee from Hungary in 1957 at the age of 18. Through the sport of canoeing, winning an Australian championship and Olympic selection for the 1960 Rome Olympics, he settled in Melbourne. He became involved with the alternative theatre group, the Pram Factory, working as a photographer and filmmaker. His films: **APPLAUSE PLEASE, SOFT SOAP** and **CAMBERWELL JUNCTION** were then considered cult classics by Melbourne independent cinema enthusiasts. Gaal worked as a filmmaker with the Victorian Department of Education, while continuing his independent film and photography practice. His films were shown at MIFF and the St Kilda Film Festival. His 2015 film, **A MAN FROM THE OTHER SIDE** was a finalist and received honourable mention in the Dare To Struggle Film Festival in Sydney, (April 2022). He was a finalist in the National Photographic Portrait Prize in Canberra in 2013, 2015 and 2022. All of Gaal's short films and documentaries are held by the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI), Melbourne and also in the National Film and Sound Archive in Canberra. His memoir, *"It's All Good..."* contains his involvement with the Melbourne Film Co-op. The book is available at the State Library of Victoria and in the National Library in Canberra. Many of Ivan's films are on YouTube under the name of Ivan Gaal.



SUSAN LAMBERT is one of Australia's leading independent filmmakers. She has produced and directed award-winning films for Australian and international broadcasters and her work has been theatrically released around the world and has screened at major international film festivals. After directing the feminist feature **ON GUARD** (1985), the experimental feature **LANDSLIDES** (1990) and the feature film **TALK** (1995), Susan formed the production company Jumping Dog Productions in 2001 and has produced documentaries for BBC, Channel 4, Channel 5 (UK), NDR (Germany), CBC (Canada), CICC (China), Netflix Worldwide, DR9 (Denmark), Channel 9, ABC and SBS (Australia) among others. Her 2015 feature documentary **TYKE ELEPHANT OUTLAW** received wide critical acclaim and was acquired by Netflix and major international broadcasters. The company's latest co-production is the international award-winning feature documentary **THE BOWRAVILLE MURDERS** (2021) that screened theatrically in Australia and was a documentary finalist at the Sydney Film Festival. Susan continues to be active in the development of the Australian independent film and television industry, and the ongoing fight for gender equality, Indigenous justice, animal rights and environmental issues.



As an anthropology student at the University of Sydney, GILLIAN LEAHY was active in the anti-Vietnam war and Women's Liberation Movements. Gillian went on to become a filmmaker and academic. She has made over 16 films, mostly documentaries. She is best known for her experimental essay documentary, **MY LIFE WITHOUT STEVE** (1986). Her recent film, **BAXTER AND ME**, is an autobiographical memoir which traces her and her dog Baxter's life over a year and then reflects on Gill's past dogs, her involvement in the Women's Liberation Movement, and her past films. From 1983 until recently, she taught filmmaking at the University of Technology, Sydney.



PHILLIP NOYCE is a highly acclaimed film director. In 1978, he directed and co-wrote **NEWSFRONT**, which won Best Film, Best Director and Best Original Screenplay at the Australian Film Awards. In addition to opening the London Film Festival, **NEWSFRONT** was the first Australian film to screen at the New York Film Festival. The success of his film **DEAD CALM** (1989), starring Nicole Kidman, Sam Neill and Billy Zane, brought Noyce to Hollywood, where he directed six films over the next decade, including **PATRIOT GAMES** (1992) **CLEAR AND PRESENT DANGER** (1994) starring Harrison Ford, and **THE BONE COLLECTOR** (1999). In 2002 **THE QUIET AMERICAN** starring Michael Caine was released, closely followed by **RABBIT PROOF FENCE**, which won Best Picture at the Australian Film Awards, and together with **THE QUIET AMERICAN** garnered Noyce numerous best director awards including the National Board of Review in the US, and the London Film Critics Circle. Noyce shot the spy thriller **SALT** in 2010, which grossed \$295 million worldwide. In 2014, Noyce directed **THE GIVER** starring Jeff Bridges and Meryl Streep. **THE GIVER** won the Heartland Film's Truly Moving Picture Award. Noyce also has a variety of television credits both in Australia and the US. His most recent feature, **ABOVE SUSPICION** (2019) stars Emilia Clarke and Jack Huston.



MADELINE MCGRADY is a Gomerai writer, activist and filmmaker who made the first film about black deaths in custody (**WELCOME TO WEE WAA**, 1983). Madeline grew up on the Toomelah mission in NSW before moving to Sydney in the 1980s and becoming involved in its creative communities. In 1982, she made the feature length documentary **WE FIGHT (GUNIWAYA NGIGU)** about anti-racism protests during the Commonwealth Games, which was the first feature film to be made by an Aboriginal film crew. It was also the first of many political documentaries Madeline went on to make. Soon after joining the Sydney Filmmakers Co-op, Madeline helped set up the Black Film Unit. She used the Co-op as a hub to draw in other Aboriginal people interested in films and filmmaking. She invited them to join in training sessions in all facets of filmmaking, and took co-op films on the road to communities in Northern NSW (where she had the best time). Madeline also co-founded Radio Redfern, Sydney's first Aboriginal community radio station. Her film, **ALWAYS WAS ALWAYS WILL BE**, documents important land rights demonstrations and aired on SBS. Madeline was the first Indigenous person to sit on the Australian Film Commission board, appointed after writing extensively about access issues for Indigenous filmmakers and viewers. She continues to advocate for Indigenous rights and has been a mentor to many future filmmakers.



JANE OEHR travelled from Melbourne to study overseas as an actress before joining BBC TV as a Trainee Director in London. There she made documentaries about the cinema including a film about French director, Agnes Varda. She returned to Australia to work as an independent director making **TAMU - THE GUEST** about the life of Australian painter Donald Friend in Bali, and **NIUGINI CULTURE SHOCK** which won the Rouben Mamoulian Award for Best Film in 1975 at the Sydney Film Festival. Her next film, **STIRRING**, (with Film Australia (Commonwealth Film Unit)) was a controversial feature documentary about corporal punishment in a Sydney boys' school. It was banned from public screening for years but went on to win an AFI Award. Jane has continued to write and direct drama including the low budget features **ON THE LOOSE** and **HEADS 'N' TAILS**. In 2002 she made a feature length intimate portrait of her mother, **MUM AT 88**, which revealed hitherto unknown aspects of her mother's life, and in 2008 she made the similarly intimate portrait, **TEA WITH MADAME CLOS** about the oldest woman in the French Village where she lives some of the year. In her time as a Project Manager with the Australian Film Commission she has also supported many emerging filmmakers. As a documentary filmmaker, Jane continues to pursue the study of people and behaviour that has characterised her films, as well as their political and controversial content.



MARGOT NASH started her career as an actor in the Melbourne Theatre Company, later becoming a member of the Australian Performing Group at the Pram Factory in Melbourne. She performed in anti-Vietnam war street theatre in the late 60s and early 1970s in Adelaide and in 1973 formed ASIF - the Anarcho Surrealist Insurrectionary Feminists - with Robin Laurie. They wrote a manifesto, produced magazines and a film, **WE AIM TO PLEASE**, about female sexuality. Margot was co-filmmaker and editor on the 1982 feature documentary **FOR LOVE OR MONEY**, a landmark history of women and work in Australia. She went on to write and direct a number of award-winning films including **SHADOW PANIC** (1989), **VACANT POSSESSION** (1994) and **THE SILENCES** (2015). Margot was active in the Sydney Filmmakers Co-op in the late 70s and 80s and on the board of Filmnews. Margot is also a film educator and an academic. She has been a consultant and a mentor for Indigenous filmmakers at CAAMA and has worked in the Pacific running documentary training workshops for Pacific Island women television producers. She is currently a Visiting Fellow in Communications at the University of Technology Sydney.



CAROLYN STRACHAN was born in Australia. At an early age, she was an apprentice on avant-garde and documentary films and in 1972 she formed Reddirt films, a production company with Alessandro Cavadini which produced many films and videos with Aboriginal communities throughout Australia. Strachan was on the Board of the Sydney Filmmakers Cooperative where founded a film workshop program for Sydney high school students. Strachan was a member of the editorial board of the Australian national film newspaper, *Filmnews*. She was also a member of the Feminist Film Workers and under these auspices she wrote and designed an audio-visual presentation for the Sydney Film Festival entitled *"Images of Women in Australian Feature Films"*. Since moving to New York in 1982, she has taught film at Fordham University, School of Visual Arts, City College and currently teaches at Hunter College and Borough of Manhattan Community College.



Peter Tammer was born in 1943 in Melbourne and began working in the film industry as an editor when he was 19 years old. He started creating his own independent short films in 1963, and later was a founding member of the Melbourne Filmmaker's Co-op. In 1973, he started tutoring in film at Melbourne State College in Carlton, and by 1979 was lecturing in film at the Swinburne Film and Television School. In 1986, Tammer was appointed Senior Lecturer in Film, at the Film and Television School, which later transferred to the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA). While teaching, Tammer continued making his own independent films, producing a series of award-winning films in the 1980s, including **MALLACOOTA STAMPEDE** (1981), **JOURNEY TO THE END OF NIGHT** (1982), and **HEY MARCEL** (1984). A cherished project on the film scholar and actor John Flaus, entitled **FLAUSFILM**, was begun in 1988 and finally completed in 2009. He retired from teaching in 1998 and now lives in country Victoria.



STEPHEN WALLACE A.M. has directed six feature films, nine telemovies, numerous short films, worked on multiple television series and has a small theatre company. Known for his eye for talent and passion for working with young artists, many established actors can attribute their first feature film, or on-screen debut to Wallace; from Bryan Brown to Russell Crowe, Naomi Watts and many others. Over the course of his career, Wallace's films have been recognised with over 38 nominations at local and international film festivals, and in 2005, Wallace was awarded an Order of Australia in the Queen's Birthday Honours List for his contributions to the Australian film and television industry. In 2012, the ADG awarded Wallace the prestigious Cecil Holmes Award. A founding signatory, Wallace was President of the Australian Directors Guild between 1991 and 2000 and remains on the Board today as Treasurer. He also sits on the board of The Australian Screen Directors Collecting Society (ASDACS).



ALBIE THOMS was a filmmaker and author, best known for his work founding the underground cinema collective, Ubu Films. He was a pioneer of Australian avant-gardism, producing celebrated shorts **BLUNDERBALL**, **BLUTO** and **BOLERO** (all 1967) before establishing the Sydney Filmmaker's Cooperative, incorporating Ubu Films, in 1969. He was a regular contributor to *Filmnews*, and made the experimental documentary, **SUNSHINE CITY** (1973). From 1974 he produced the ABC TV youth program **GTK** directed the experimental narrative feature **PALM BEACH** (1980), and wrote and directed mainstream documentaries including **SURFMOVIES** (1981), **THE BRADMAN ERA** (1983) and **JOK - THE WILD ONE** (1984). He published two books on film, *Polemics for a New Cinema* (1978) and *Surfmovies* (2000) and wrote several catalogue essays for exhibitions at the Art Gallery of NSW. His memoir *My Generation* (2012) is published by Media21. The NFSA has catalogued 8,000 individual works such as scripts, photographs, posters, videos, films, correspondence and papers relating to Albie's involvement with the Sydney Filmmakers' Co-operative. Albie passed away in 2012.



**Jeni Thornley** is a documentary filmmaker, writer and film valuer. Her poetic documentaries, **MAIDENS** (1978), the collaborative features **FOR LOVE OR MONEY** (1983), **TO THE OTHER SHORE** (1998) and **ISLAND HOME COUNTRY** (2008) are landmark films in Australian independent and feminist cinema, widely distributed and nationally broadcast on ABC TV and SBS. A founding member of Sydney Women's Film Group, Jeni became active in distribution and exhibition at Sydney Filmmakers Co-op, wrote for *Filmnews* and worked on independent films as both actress and collaborator, including on **FILM FOR DISCUSSION** (1973). She was a National Coordinator of the 1975 Women's International Film Festival and worked as a camera assistant at Film Australia. In 1984 she became Manager of the Women's Film Fund (AFC) and later Project Coordinator in Documentary Development. Jeni lectured in documentary at UTS during 2002-2013 and completed her doctorate. Her current documentary, **MEMORY FILM: A FILMMAKER'S DIARY**, is an immersive poetic essay about transformation and 'the personal is political' based on her historical Super 8 Archive. Jeni is a Visiting Scholar in the School of Communication, UTS and writes about film regularly, contributing to scholarly publications and film culture magazines. <https://jenithornley.com/>

## DIRECTORS' STATEMENT

*"The struggle [...] against power is a struggle of memory against forgetting."*

Milan Kundera

A powerful capacity of documentary film is remembrance. For us, a guiding imperative of the Co-op film has been to set out for emerging generations of filmmakers a history of Australian independent film culture in Australia that is a radical tradition, characterised by critical and passionate creative ambition. If **Senses of Cinema** arouses curiosity among younger filmmakers of the digital era about the 'invisible archive' of analogue film and video made and distributed by dedicated and passionate young filmmakers around the Filmmakers Co-ops from the mid '60s to the mid '80s, the struggle over ten years to get the work out there will have been very worthwhile.

**John Hughes'** credits as a producer, writer and director span four decades of award winning film, art and television projects. He has been a commissioning editor (SBS Independent 1998-2001) and writes on documentary (*Studies in Documentary Film, Senses of Cinema*). His moving image works are collected by museums and galleries in Australia and internationally. An Adjunct Professor with RMIT University and Honorary Fellow with the University of Melbourne; he has a PhD from RMIT University Melbourne, is a recipient of the Stanley Hawes Award, Critics Circle Award, NSW Premiers History Award, AFI and ATOM Awards and was elected a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities in 2017. His most recent broadcast film was PEACE PILGRIMS (ABC Compass August 2001).

Previous films dedicated to a radical Australian film history include FILM-WORK (1981), THE ARCHIVE PROJECT (2006) INDONESIA CALLING (MIFF 2008)

Website: [www.earlyworks.com.au](http://www.earlyworks.com.au)

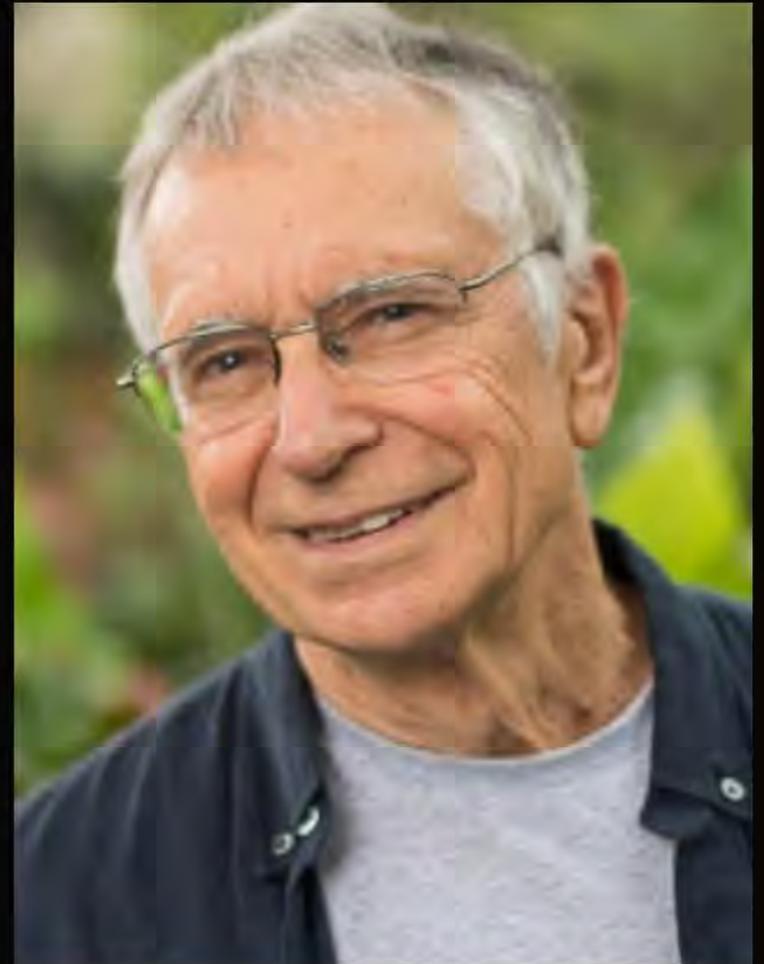
*The Films of John Hughes: a history of independent screen production in Australia* (Cumming, 2014) is published by ATOM.



**Tom Zubrycki** has been making documentaries for over 45 years. He has won many awards for his work and his mentorship on behalf of the industry. As director Tom's documentaries have a distinctive observational story-telling style, and have focused around a personal response to the issues of the day. Films like *THE DIPLOMAT* (MIFF 2000), *MOLLY & MOBARAK* (MIFF 2003), *THE HUNGRY TIDE* (MIFF 2011) and *HOPE ROAD* (MIFF 2017). As producer and executive producer Tom has worked both with experienced and also new and emerging directors. Recent films include *FAIR GAME* (2017), *UNDERMINED – TALES OF THE KIMBERLEY* (MIFF, 2018), *THE WEATHER DIARIES* (2020) and *ABLAZE* (MIFF 2021).

Tom is a recipient of the prestigious Stanley Hawes Award, and has actively championed the cause of the documentary sector over a number of years. His monograph *The Changing Landscape of Australian Documentary* published in 2019 by Currency House was a Platform Paper about the state of documentary in Australia from a historical perspective.

More information on his website. [www.tomzubrycki.com](http://www.tomzubrycki.com)



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# Senses of Cinema

20 years of the Filmmakers' Co-operatives

A film by John Hughes & Tom Zubrycki

FILMMAKERS CINEMA PICTURES PRESENTS  
WITH VICSCREEN AND THE MELBOURNE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL PREMIERE FUND  
(EXECUTIVE PRODUCER MARK WOODS)

DIRECTED AND PRODUCED BY JOHN HUGHES & TOM ZUBRYCKI \* WRITTEN BY JOHN HUGHES  
ORIGINAL SCORE DALE CORNELIUS \* DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY SIMON SMITH ASC  
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KULIN NATION AS THE CUSTODIANS OF THE LAND IN WHICH WE LIVE AND WORK  
WE PAY OUR RESPECTS TO THEIR ELDERS PAST AND PRESENT  
WE RECOGNISE THAT SOVEREIGNTY WAS NEVER CEDED



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