

**NEW ZEALAND  
FILM MAKERS  
at the Auckland  
City Art Gallery**

**1984 - 1985**

# NEW ZEALAND FILM MAKERS at the Auckland City Art Gallery

A series devised  
by Roger Horrocks: 1

Wellesley Auditorium  
Thursday 5 July 1984  
7.30 pm

## SAM PILLSBURY



Sam Pillsbury (right) with  
actor John Carradine during the  
filming of *The Scarecrow*

### SAM PILLSBURY

Born in Connecticut (USA) in 1946, Sam Pillsbury has lived in New Zealand since 1960. He attended secondary school and university in Auckland, graduating in 1969 with an M.A. Honours degree in English. As a student, Pillsbury was a contributor to the influential literary magazine *The Word is Freed*. From university he moved to the National Film Unit, remaining there from the beginning of 1970 to August 1975, working as director on seven films. These included a complex study of Ralph Hotere (which placed various interpretations of the painter's work in contrast with one another), a satirical look at labour/management relations (*Men and Supermen*), and an investigation of the tragic sinking of the *Wahine*. He also worked as assistant director and editor on Paul Maunder's important drama *Gone Up North For A While*. The early 70s were a time when a new generation of film makers — such as Pillsbury and Maunder — emerged in New Zealand, eager to tackle controversial subjects, to experiment with new styles, and to push further the idea of a serious New Zealand film culture.

After resigning from the National Film Unit, Pillsbury formed his own production company. In 1977 he directed *Birth with R.D. Laing* (in collaboration with producer Helen Brew). This won a Feltex Award as the best television documentary of the year. Presenting birth vividly from the baby's point of view, and taking a critical look at our medical system from the mother's point of view, *Birth with R.D. Laing* created intense interest and controversy not only in New Zealand but also in Britain and the United States. Next, Pillsbury directed four half-hour television documentaries commissioned by Richard Thomas who wanted his Seven Days series to take a closer look at the lives of 'ordinary New Zealanders'. These documentaries broke new ground not only in their subject-matter but in their methods. *Mostly by Accident*, to mention one example, explored the complex of personal relationships within a hospital ward.

In 1978 Pillsbury directed *A Family of Ours* — a documentary about a family with a disturbed teenager — sponsored

by the Mental Health Foundation. This film was remarkable for its emotional intimacy and warmth. Karl Mutch has said of Pillsbury's work in general: "The overriding consistency of his films lies in the film-maker's attitude.... Pillsbury asks more than just our interest in his subjects; he asks that we care strongly about them." Unfortunately this important film has received only limited distribution.

Pillsbury's dramatic films have been as original as his documentaries. *Against the Lights*, for example, explores a particular incident — a late-night attack on a taxi-driver — from the point of view of each person involved. This surprising narrative structure forces the viewer to look beyond his or her preconceptions, to work harder to establish the 'truth of the matter' (the title of the story by Witi Ihimaera which served as the starting-point for the film). *The Scarecrow*, a feature-length dramatic film based on a novel by Ronald Hugh Morrieson, is Pillsbury's most ambitious work to date. The film has been popular with New Zealand audiences and been featured in many overseas film festivals, including the Directors' Fortnight at Cannes. Pillsbury has said of its origins, "One day I read a story, an eccentric story, about something that once happened in a small New Zealand town. It was told through a child's eyes, written by a man. It was wonderful. The man was an alcoholic music teacher who died ten years ago in obscurity. The story he wrote was about my childhood and the country I live in: tedious, comic, bizarre; amazing, frightening, silly. I knew the places, the characters and the events, and I wanted to make them come alive. Cinema is an event, an occasion, a celebration. And here was life, its humour, its vitality and its insignificance. I wanted to celebrate that."

Many talented people have worked with Pillsbury on his film projects. Unfortunately there is not space here to mention them all, but they include: Anand Hansa, Lynton Diggle and James Bartle (camera); Don Reynolds (sound); Melanie Read and Ian John (editing); Michael Heath (script); and Rob Whitehouse (production). Pillsbury is quick to remind interviewees that film making is teamwork rather than the pure self-expression of an *auteur*.

Still, we can celebrate Pillsbury's personal abilities: he is technically one of our most resourceful directors, he has a special talent for working with actors, and he succeeds in bringing a strong concern for human values to all his film making.

### From interviews with Sam Pillsbury

"One of the weakest things about a lot of New Zealand drama is that the characterisations are very flimsy; they seem to be the result of someone's very removed idea of what the average New Zealander is like. I've heard people say that New Zealanders are so boring that that's the only way you can show them. That's ridiculous, New Zealanders are just as vibrantly insane as people anywhere. They may be more inhibited, but if you zoom in on them and have a close look they are just as mad and amazing, bigoted and compassionate and stupid and bright as anyone else in the world." (*Voice Over*, 1977)

"It's interesting to note that the films that have been made in New Zealand so far, the ones we would call *real* New Zealand films have been by far the most successful.... Big money and big talk don't make good films. Wit, style, dedication, passion, commitment and conviction make good films....

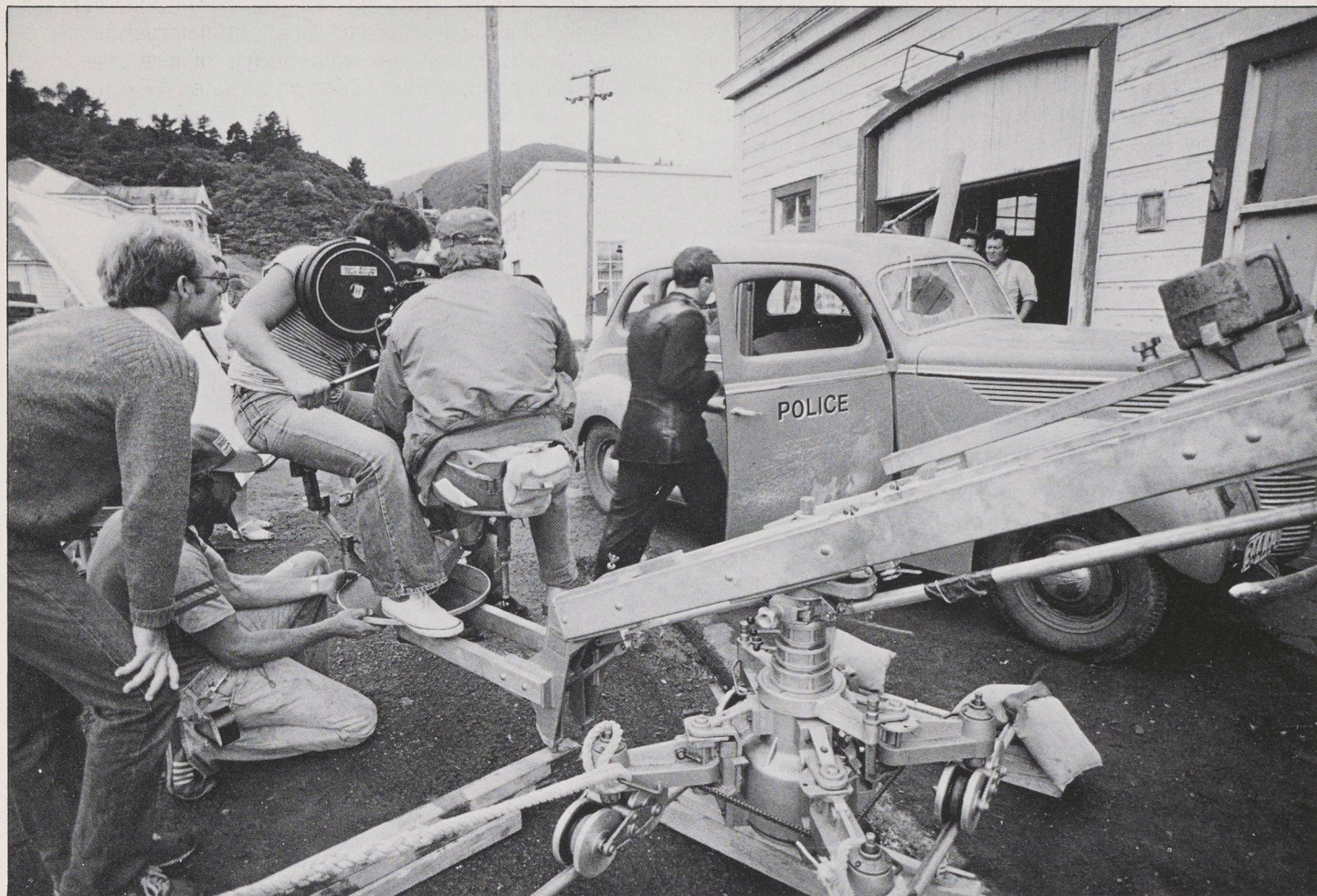
The more you think about using a certain formula, or aiming for a certain market, then the more danger you are in of losing what is the most wonderful thing about somebody's picture — which is that it is *somebody's* picture instead of *everybody's* picture." (*New Zealand Listener*, 17 April 1982)

### Selective Bibliography

- Sam Pillsbury, 'Talking about that Swede, Ingmar'. *The Word is Freed* no.2, pp. 13ff.  
'Wayne Sellwood talks to Sam Pillsbury'. *Voice Over* no.24, 1977, pp. 3ff.  
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Brian McDonnell, *The Scarecrow: A Film Study Guide* (Auckland, Longman Paul, 1982).  
Brian McDonnell, 'The Making of *The Scarecrow*' and 'The Making of Sam Pillsbury'. *Metro*, April 1982, pp. 84ff.  
'Scared No More'. *New Zealand Listener*, 17 April 1982, pp. 15ff.  
Trish Gribben, 'Scarecrow'. *Insight*, May-June 1982, pp. 13ff.  
William Dart, 'Kiwi Rural Gothic'. *Art New Zealand* no.24, 1982, pp. 36ff.

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Catalogue written and compiled by Roger Horrocks.



Sam Pillsbury (left) directs  
*The Scarecrow*

## SAM PILLSBURY : A Filmography

- 1970 **SWITCHED ON** (as scriptwriter, editor, director)  
A recruitment film for the Electricity Department.  
National Film Unit. 35mm (released only on 16mm)  
colour. 8 minutes.
- 1971 **THERE IS A WAY** (as scriptwriter, editor, director)  
A documentary on school dental nursing.  
National Film Unit. Cinema release. 35mm colour.  
15 minutes.
- 1972 **GONE UP NORTH FOR A WHILE** (as editor and  
assistant director)  
A drama (directed by Paul Maunder) about the  
problems of an unmarried mother.  
National Film Unit. Television screening. 16mm B&W.  
39 minutes.
- 1972 **GAMES PROGRESS REPORT** (as director)  
A documentary on the preparations for the  
Commonwealth Games in Christchurch.  
National Film Unit. 16mm colour. 15 minutes.
- 1973 **WAHINE DAY** (as scriptwriter, editor, director)  
A documentary on the *Wahine* disaster.  
National Film Unit. 35mm colour and B&W. 20 minutes.
- 1974 **MARAE** (as scriptwriter, editor, director)  
A documentary on the adaptation of the Maori marae to  
urban situations.  
National Film Unit. Cinema release. 35mm colour. Two  
versions, 20 and 30 minutes.
- 1974 **GAMES 74** (as one of four directors)  
A documentary about the Commonwealth Games in  
Christchurch. Pillsbury's footage dealt with athletics,  
swimming and diving.  
National Film Unit. Cinema release. 16mm (blown up to  
35mm) colour. 105 minutes.
- 1974 **HOTERE** (as scriptwriter, editor, director)  
A documentary exploring the work of N.Z. artist Ralph  
Hotere.  
National Film Unit. 16mm colour. 35 minutes.
- 1975 **MEN AND SUPERMEN** (as scriptwriter, co-editor,  
director)  
A dramatised training film for factory foremen and  
managers.  
National Film Unit. 16mm colour. 32 minutes.

- 1976 **BIRTH WITH R.D. LAING** (as director)  
A documentary about birth from the point of view of mothers and babies, and a critique of institutional attitudes.  
Produced by Media Insights. Producer: Helen Brew. Screened TV1 on 24 October 1977 (in the Scene series). Won 1977 Feltex Award for Best Documentary, and 1978 Melbourne Film Festival Award for Best TV Film. 16mm colour. 57 minutes.
- 1977 **MUM'LL BE HOME IN THE MORNING, DEAR** (as director)  
A documentary about the problems of a solo working mother in Porirua. This was the first of four documentaries made by Pillsbury for TV1's Seven Days series, with Richard Thomas as executive producer. Screened TV1 on 20 February 1977. 16mm colour. 23 minutes.
- 1977 **JAILBIRD** (as director)  
A documentary about a recidivist. TV1 (Seven Days). Screened TV1 on 13 March 1977. 16mm colour. 26 minutes.
- 1977 **THE BIG SMOKE** (as director)  
A documentary about the problems of a young Maori moving from the country to the city (Wellington). TV1 (Seven Days). Screened TV1 on 27 March 1977. 16mm colour. 26 minutes.
- 1977 **MOSTLY BY ACCIDENT** (as director)  
A documentary which explores the social dynamics of a hospital ward, especially the relationships between the four patients. TV1 (Seven Days). Screened TV1 on 17 April 1977. 16mm colour. 26 minutes.
- 1977 **INNOVATIONS** (as producer, scriptwriter, editor, director)  
A promotional documentary for Pye (N.Z.) Ltd. Sam Pillsbury Film Productions. 16mm colour. 15 minutes.
- 1977 **BARRY DOESN'T LIVE HERE ANYMORE** (as director)  
A documentary about declining population in New Zealand, focussing on a particular couple and their reasons for emigrating. South Pacific Television (Perspective series). Executive producer: George Andrews. Screened SPTV on 26 August 1977. 16mm colour. 26 minutes.
- 1977 **A FISH STORY** (as director)  
A documentary about the dangers of mercury poisoning from fish. South Pacific Television (Perspective series). Screened SPTV on 27 November 1977. 16mm colour. 26 minutes.
- 1978 **A FAMILY OF OURS** (as producer, scriptwriter, director)  
A documentary about a family in crisis. Sam Pillsbury Film Productions, for the Mental Health Foundation. Screened TV2 on 2 April 1978. Feltex Awards finalist (documentary category). 16mm colour. 27 minutes.
- 1978 **AGAINST THE LIGHTS** (as producer, scriptwriter, director)  
A drama based on Witi Ihimaera's short story, 'Truth of the Matter' (about the motives for an attack on a taxi driver). Sam Pillsbury Film Productions for BCNZ Television. Screened Kaleidoscope on 8 September 1980, and at the Auckland Film Festival. 16mm colour. 27 minutes.
- 1979 **GOODBYE PORK PIE** (as assistant director)  
A feature film directed by Geoff Murphy. An AMA Production. 35mm colour. 105 minutes.
- 1980 **THE GREATEST RUN ON EARTH** (as producer, scriptwriter, director)  
A documentary about the Round the Bays run in Auckland. Sam Pillsbury Film Productions. Television screening on 29 August 1980. Feltex Awards finalist (documentary category). Prizes at Chicago and Torino Film Festivals. 16mm colour. 50 minutes.
- 1982 **THE SCARECROW** (as co-scriptwriter and director)  
A feature-film based on Ronald Hugh Morrieson's novel. The film was completed in 1981, released in 1982. An Oasis Films/National Film Unit co-production, in association with the N.Z. Film Commission. Film festival screenings include: Cannes (Directors' Fortnight, 1982), Rimini Myfest (award for best cast performance), Edinburgh, San Sebastian, Karlovy-Vary, Sydney, Toronto, Hong Kong, and Montreal. 35mm colour. 88 minutes.
- 1984 **THE QUIET EARTH** (as co-scriptwriter and co-producer)  
This feature film, directed by Geoff Murphy, is currently in production. It is based on a novel by Craig Harrison.
- In addition, since 1975 Pillsbury has directed a number of TV commercials.

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# NEW ZEALAND FILM MAKERS at the Auckland City Art Gallery

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Wellesley Auditorium  
Thursday 2 August 1984

7.30 pm

## MERATA MITA



Photo: Gil Hanly

### MERATA MITA

Few New Zealand films have generated as much discussion and controversy as *Patu!* (Merata Mita's feature-length documentary about the 1981 Springbok tour). While *Patu!* has been frequently praised for the wealth of information it contains, there is still a lot more to be said about the skill and effort that went into its production. The list of crew members reads like a Who's Who of New Zealand film making. Documentary films are not well understood in New Zealand — there seems to be little awareness of the complex structural decisions, the practical and legal problems, and the exhausting negotiations for money that occupy the film makers. In the case of *Patu!* an exceptional producer/director was required to give shape to a subject that had grown so large, eventful, and chaotic.

*Patu!* would be enough in itself to establish Merata Mita's reputation as a major New Zealand film maker, but in fact it is only one of many important projects in which she has played a major role. Each of these projects has broken new ground, enlarging what Mita describes as "New Zealand's oral history". In her words: "I think we're living at a particularly interesting time. ... There is emerging a strong voice in

literature and the arts. On the streets it was always there, of course — it's just that no one listened to it." Official history has concentrated on "the powerful few", but film provides a vehicle for "people's history". Mita has directed or co-directed documentaries about trade-union history, the Hokianga Maori community, the Mangere Bridge strike, a tour of maraes by a black theatre group from England, the Springbok protests, the Peace March to Waitangi, and the occupation of Bastion Point. She has also been involved with numerous television programmes on Maori and Pacific Island topics. Many of her films provide unique documentation — who but Merata Mita and Gerd Pohlmann were committed enough to go on recording the Mangere Bridge strike for two-and-a-half years? The New Zealand that such films confront us with is very different from the New Zealand usually presented on the cinema or television screen. Not that Mita is entirely isolated. She has had dedicated allies such as Leon Narbey and Barry Harbert (cameramen), Geoff Murphy (co-producer), Martyn Sanderson and Gerd Pohlmann (co-directors). The Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council has given support. And some 'street-level' documentaries have been made

by other groups such as Vanguard Films in Wellington. But the task of finding sponsors and buyers for projects of this kind has not grown any easier over the years, despite the public interest aroused by films such as *Patu!*

### Biography

Merata Mita was born in 1942 at Maketu in the Bay of Plenty. One of nine children, she received a traditional Maori upbringing. After an outstanding school career at Te Puke College she moved to Auckland for a two-year course at the Teachers' College, training to be a Home Science teacher. She then taught in a variety of schools, including one term in Fiji and eight years at Kawerau College. At Kawerau she began using film and video, which she found very effective in catching the interest of 'difficult' students. ("They weren't literary, they were oral. Film helped to bring out their talents.") Mita experimented with a variety of new teaching methods for her "slow learners, mostly Maori, mostly condemned to failure", but eventually she found the job too tiring and restricted. Back in Auckland around 1970 she did relief teaching and took a wide range of working-class jobs (such as cleaner, delivery driver, factory worker). She also joined Nga Tamatoa, a strong influence on her thinking. ("Nga Tamatoa was intertribal, urban, political. It also gave Maori women a place to speak, a place we didn't have on the marae.")

In 1977 when the office of the Race Relations Conciliator received an enquiry from a film maker (Chris Strewé) who needed help to develop a Waitangi documentary, Eddie Twist remembered Mita's film work with school students. Mita took the job, then worked on two other projects, but got tired of the fact that liaison work "was the usual position of Maoris on film crews — they're needed merely to make access to the maraes easier, to get to know who matters in Maori communities and so on". Fed up with film makers "putting Maoris under the microscope and misrepresenting them", she set out to learn to make her own films. The breakthrough for her was *Bastion Point: Day 507* which "started because Roger Rameka phone me up and said, 'It's on, can you get a film crew up here?' " Mita hurried to Bastion Point with Leon Narbey and Gerd Pohlmann, equipped with "bits and pieces of other people's gear", in time to film the eviction.

Over the last six years Mita has become one of New Zealand's most accomplished documentary film makers. "It's been a long road because there's nowhere you can go to get trained." Also, as women film makers all over the world have found, "Any woman who has worked herself into a position of respect in the industry has had to earn it many times over." (On several projects Mita has needed to take on a male collaborator before grants or equipment would be made available.) She continues to be concerned about the small number of Maoris and Pacific Islanders involved in film or television, and has herself run many training courses on maraes around New Zealand, as well as teaching video and film to street kids in South Auckland.

### From interviews with Merata Mita

"The underlying philosophy I have in my film making is derived from my understanding of whakapapa. If you take the film *Karanga Hokianga*, for instance, the whakapapa of the Hokianga was incredibly important, because the ancestors of those tribes had left their mark on that land, their presence remains. If you are aware of the whakapapa and who those people were and what they did, it becomes compelling. I have this enormous responsibility to them and their descendants to use the film as a vehicle for the oral tradition. Whakapapa is not just linear progression. You can stop it at a certain name, and all these other things come into it. Being Maori is an enormous advantage to me as a film

maker. I can unite the technical complexity of film with a traditional Maori philosophy that gives me a sense of certainty, an unfragmented view of society, and an orientation towards people rather than institutions. As the producer or director of a film, I'm actually in the position of the person who carried the oral tradition in olden times. If not the oral tradition, it's certainly involving the collective experience, which in time becomes the collective consciousness of people, that is being transmitted through me. It's similar to the way the whaikorero, and the stories that are told on the marae, keep history alive and maintain contact with the past. Carrying on a tradition means redeeming the past, redeeming culture. This gives me the passion and intensity that I spoke of earlier. And it means I'm not just motivated; I'm driven.

"Most of the films I have worked on have dealt with social issues rather than political ones. You make a film about a social issue and that causes a political stir, so it's more truthful to say that I'm not a political film maker but that my films make politics. As far as being radical, I only appear to be so because of the country's attitudes towards women and Maoris, and to anyone who holds a particular point of view. I'm a woman, I'm Maori, and I have a point of view when I make a film. It puts me in an ultra-sensitive position. My interest in social issues is a consequence of the fact that ever since I can remember as a kid, I've actually been on a collision course with political and social reality in this country. That has heightened my awareness. When I make or work on a film I always feel obliged not to subordinate the moral and sociological themes to more aesthetic ones.

"New Zealand film makers rush to the Maori area when they want politics, rush to the Maori area when they want radicalism, rush to the Maori area without an inkling of understanding about the dynamics of that society, its history and its culture. ... It's exploitative enough even when you know about the culture, history and customs. But to go to groups without any depth of knowledge is totally irresponsible. Unfortunately, that's what most film makers do in this country.

"There is an audience that wants to be extended, and I am part of that audience. When I sit down and watch anything on film or television, I want to be confronted with important ideas and developments in the sciences, arts, politics, in all fields. I can forgive many faults about film or television, technical ones or poor structure, but one thing I never forgive is boredom. And too many New Zealand features and much of New Zealand's television have been boring." (*The Republican*, February 1983)

"There was a lot of theatre in the Springbok protests. And so the Sibelius music, the drums and trumpets [on the soundtrack of *Patu!*] behind the aeroplane, was really a kind of send-up. Not as a put-down, but as something to enhance the theatrical aspect of the protest. I can remember those stirring Battle of Britain newsreels we used to see in those *Pictorial Parades* when I was a kid. By the way, our picture theatre was on the marae. This Greek guy used to bring the projector and the film and set it up in the meeting house. Sometimes for fun he would project the film on to the carvings. That's how I saw my first film.

"Most New Zealand movements have been based on some kind of moral issue rather than cold, hard, political analysis. Unfortunately it rarely progresses out of that naivety. ... When you're filming, you are fortunate to have some distance, you can make some kind of analysis. When you're in the march, your whole intensity is turned into that march, the slogans

turn you on and you become part of a mass that's moving in a particular direction. When you're making a film, you're observing that mass direction and you're observing the reaction from the other side, and you have the chance to think about it.

"One of the criticisms of *Patu!* has been that it doesn't have enough commentary. But all the ingredients are there to analyse — you don't need a constant voice doing it for you. Many of the documentaries we see on television have spoiled our ability to analyse the visual image. ... I think you gain far more from working things out yourself, than from someone spelling it out for you all the time.

"There is a smug attitude toward film making in New Zealand. Everyone thinks it's easy, they think you just pick up a camera and run out and film it and therefore it should be done like this, or that. It's endemic in our society, there is a lot of shallowness. ... The most basic tasks in a film aren't understood by the public, and so you run into all this glib, silly reviewing. ... I'm sick and tired of reading someone's opinion — everyone has opinions — what I want is some good critical analysis." (*Alternative Cinema*, Winter/Spring 1983)

"It is a sobering thought that women and true feminist values have never been honestly shown in the popular cinema. The possibilities remain limited until women become active in script writing, directing, producing and as part of the technical crew." (*Broadsheet*, April 1979)

### Interviews with the film maker

*New Zealand Listener* 4 July 1981, p.19 (interview by Pamela Stirling).

*Broadsheet* no.106, Jan/Feb 1983, pp.20-1.

*Auckland Star* 22 Feb 1983, p.43 (Terry Snow).

*The Republican* no.44, Feb 1983, pp.8-15 (Bruce Jesson).

*Alternative Cinema* vol.11 nos. 2-3, Winter/Spring 1983, pp.11-21 (Roger Horrocks).

*Broadsheet* no.111, July/Aug 1983, pp.22-5 (Lyn Crossley).

*New Zealand Herald* 27 August 1983, p.1 Section 2 (Tony Reid).

*Alternative Cinema* vol.11 no.4, Summer 1983/4, pp.37-42 (Julie Benjamin).

### Articles by Merata Mita

'The Celluloid Image', *Broadsheet* no.68, April 1979, pp.11ff.

'Merata Mita on Waitangi', *Broadsheet* no.116, Jan/Feb 1984, pp.16-17

### Articles about Mita's work

'Political Films in New Zealand' (Roger Horrocks and Karl Mutch), *Alternative Cinema* vol.10 nos.1-2, Autumn/Winter 1982, pp.6-12.

*Patu!* (articles by Bruce Jesson, Martyn Sanderson and Tim Shadbolt) *Alternative Cinema* vol.11 nos.2-3, Winter/Spring 1983, pp.8-23.

## MERATA MITA: A Filmography

1977 **WAITANGI: THE STORY OF A TREATY AND ITS INHERITORS** (as co-ordinator)

This film was primarily the work of Chris Strewe, an ex-

patriate who was studying at the Berlin Film School. As his graduation film, Strewe returned to New Zealand to remedy his ignorance of Maori culture by making a documentary. Merata Mita did the necessary liaison work and helped with interviews.

16mm colour. Approx. 60 minutes. Sound: Gerd Pohlmann. Director and editor: Chris Strewe. Screened on West German television.

1977 Mita did similar liaison work for two other documentary projects — a Japanese crew and a Canadian crew visiting New Zealand.

1979 **KARANGA HOKIANGA** (as director and co-editor)  
The first film that Mita directed is a documentary about the Catholic Maori communities that pooled their resources to stage a Festival of Faith in Hokianga. The film explores the coming-together of two traditions of spirituality — Maori and Christian. Mita was invited to make the film by a local priest, Father Tate.  
16mm colour. 60 minutes. Editors: Gerd Pohlmann and Merata Mita. Camera: Leon Narbey. Sound: Gerd Pohlmann. Sponsored and distributed by the Catholic Church.

1980 **BASTION POINT: DAY 507** (as co-director and co-editor)

This film — a collaboration between Merata Mita, Leon Narbey and Gerd Pohlmann — documents the occupation of Bastion Point in the struggle for Maori land rights. It concentrates on the day the protestors were forcibly removed. This was the only film crew permitted in the occupied area. Although footage was shot in 1978, lack of money delayed the completion of the film until 1980.

16mm colour (incorporating B&W stills). 26 minutes. Directors: Mita, Narbey, Pohlmann. Editors: Mita, Narbey. Made with the assistance of the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council. Special Jury Prize at the Oberhausen Festival, and screened at the Moscow, Belgrade, Newcastle and Edinburgh Film Festivals.

1980 **THE HAMMER AND THE ANVIL** (as co-producer and co-director)

This wide-ranging documentary traces the history of the New Zealand trade-union movement. It was begun in 1979 and completed 1½ years later, at the end of 1980.

16mm colour. 50 minutes. Producers/directors: Merata Mita and Gerd Pohlmann. Camera: Leon Narbey. Editor: Pohlmann. Executive producer: George Andrews. Sponsored by South Pacific Television (CIP fund), with the assistance of some trade unions and the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council. Screened on SPTV and sold to the West German trade-union movement.

1980-1 **KOHA**

Mita worked as a researcher and reporter for this television series from its inception. Later she also took the role of presenter. Mita worked with Robert Pouwhare on many of the *Koha* programmes during 1980-1. She remembers particularly the first programme (which welcomed New Zealand viewers on to the *Koha* marae); a survey of traditional and modern carving styles (whakairo) and an attempt to present a Maori view of the Aramoana debate which created controversy. (Her programme was re-edited outside the *Koha* unit to "give it more balance".)

For background on the *Koha* series, see *New Zealand Listener*, 22 March 1980, p.38. Other members of the team were Ray Waru, Michael Evans, Perry Maitai, Selwyn Muru, Katherine Findlay and Brent Leslie.



- 1981 **KESKIDEE — AROHA** (as co-producer and co-director)  
Keskidee, a black theatre group from London, was invited to tour New Zealand. While documenting the tour, the film also observes the complex give-and-take between the Keskidee group and the Maori communities they visited.  
16mm colour. 52 minutes. Producers/directors: Martyn Sanderson and Merata Mita. Camera: Kevin Hayward. Editor: Annie Collins. Produced by Scratch Pictures with support from CIP, the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council, and the Keskidee-Aroha Collective. Screened by TVNZ, ABC, and East German television.
- 1981 **KINLEITH 1981** (research and liaison)  
Mita researched one area of this film — the activities of women during the Kinleith strike. The film was directed by Gerd Pohlmann and commissioned by the Federation of Labour.
- 1982 **THE PROTESTORS** (as actor)  
Based on a script by Rowley Habib, *The Protestors* is a fictional account of a Maori land protest (reminiscent of the Bastion Point situation). The process of workshoping the script allowed the actors to contribute some ideas or lines of their own.  
16mm colour. 60 minutes. Director: Peter Muxlow. Producer: Tony Isaac. Cast included Zac Wallace, Aroha Harris, Don Selwyn, Billy T. James, Nikki Farrell, Merata Mita. Screened TV1 on 16 May 1982 as the last programme in the Loose Enz series. Feltex Award (Best Script).
- 1982 **THE BRIDGE: A STORY OF MEN IN DISPUTE** (as co-director)  
An account of the epic Mangere Bridge strike which lasted for 2½ years (from May 1978). According to Gerd Pohlmann, "Above all *The Bridge* is an account of New Zealand working-class life in the seventies, a portrayal of the dynamics of an industrial dispute and of working people living through a crisis."  
16mm colour. 57 minutes. Directors: Gerd Pohlmann and Merata Mita. Producer: Pohlmann. Camera: Leon Narbey. Editor: Annie Collins. Narrator: Zac Wallace. Sponsored by CIP (but TVNZ has chosen not to screen the film yet). Premiered at the Wellington Film Festival in 1982.
- 1982 **SOUTH AUCKLAND: TWO CITIES** (co-scripting and research)  
A documentary contrasting the two sides of Manukau City — on one side, Otara and Mangere with a Polynesian, working-class population, and on the other side, the predominantly white, affluent suburb of Pakuranga. The original idea for the documentary came from Neil Roberts and Merata Mita, who also researched and scripted it.  
16mm colour. 50 minutes. Director: Alan Thurston. Executive Producer: George Andrews. Reporter: Neil Roberts. Screened on TV1 on 17 October 1982 as part of the 'Lookout: New Streets' series. Nominated for a Feltex Award.
- 1982 **AUCKLAND FA'A-SAMOA** (as researcher)  
Merata Mita worked as researcher on this documentary in which Albert Wendt examined Auckland's Samoan community.  
16mm colour. 50 minutes. Director: Keith Hunter. Producer: George Andrews. Screened on TV1 on 31 October 1982 as part of the 'New Streets' series.
- 1982 **UTU** (as actor and casting adviser)  
*Utū* is a feature film, directed by Geoff Murphy, about a Maori rebel in the 1860s. Mita played the role of Matu, and worked as casting adviser. She also did liaison work, helping to sort out the various problems that arose between the project and local Maori communities.  
35mm colour. Utu Productions Ltd, in association with the New Zealand Film Commission.
- 1982 **ONE OF THOSE BLIGHTERS** (as actor and production manager)  
Mita was temporarily involved as production manager and actor in this dramatised documentary about the life of novelist Ronald Hugh Morrieson at Hawera.  
16mm colour. 50 minutes (original version 90 minutes). Producer: Larry Parr. Director: Lynton Butler. Produced by Pallet, with the support of the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council and the New Zealand Film Commission. Screened on TV1 on 24 April 1983 as 'Play of the Week'.
- 1983 **PATU!** (as producer/director)  
*Patu!* is a feature-length documentary about the 1981 tour of New Zealand by the South African Springbok team and the protest against it by the anti-apartheid movement. Many film makers donated their services to help make this film possible. The film was shot in 1981, but lack of money and other problems delayed its completion until 1983. Grants by religious groups and by the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council aroused public controversy.  
16mm colour. 110 minutes. (There is also an 82-minute version for television; a 50-minute version is being prepared now.) Producer/director: Merata Mita. Co-ordinators: Gerd Pohlmann, Gaylene Preston, Martyn Sanderson. Principal photography: Barry Harbert. Editor: Annie Collins. Sound: Gerd Pohlmann. Music: Diatribe. Produced by Awatea Films, with the support of the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council, the National Catholic Commission for Evangelisation, Justice, and Development, the World Council of Churches, and anti-apartheid groups such as HART and CARE. The film won the International Students' Prize at the Leipzig Festival, and the MRAP Prize at the Anti-Racist Film Festival in Amiens. It has been screened at many other film festivals including London, Los Angeles, Tashkent, Honolulu and Toronto.
- 1983 **DANGEROUS GAMES** (as director and scriptwriter)  
This band clip for Diatribe was directed by Mita, with special effects by Geoff Murphy.  
16mm colour. 4 minutes. Screened on 'Radio with Pictures'.
- 1984 **THE QUIET EARTH** (script involvement and crew member)  
This feature film, based on a novel by Craig Harrison, is now in production. The final version of the script was workshoped by Bruno Lawrence, Merata Mita, Geoff Murphy and Sam Pillsbury. Mita is also working on the film as vehicle co-ordinator.
- 1984 **TE HIKOI KI WAITANGI** (in progress)  
Mita is directing and producing this documentary about the march to Waitangi and the meaning of the Treaty today. The film (16mm colour) is now at the editing stage.  
Associate Producer: Geoff Murphy. Editors: Murphy and Mita. Camera: Barry Harbert and Mathew Murphy. Sound: Diane Twiss. With the support of the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council and many donations by private individuals.
- 1984 **THE BOY AND THE UNIVERSE** (in progress)  
Mita is currently working on a feature film script about a Maori boy and his relationship with his grandmother. The story considers the relevance of the grandmother's values to the experience of the new generation.

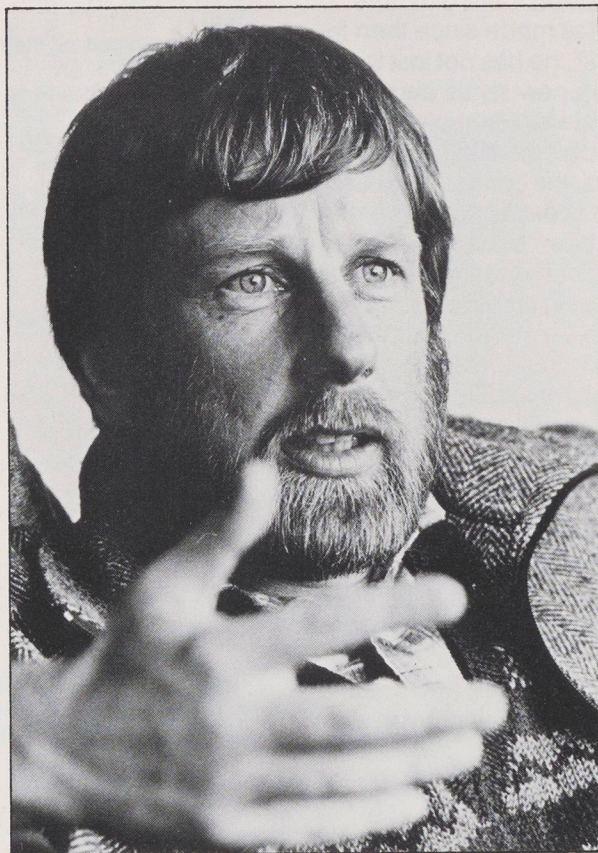
# NEW ZEALAND FILM MAKERS

at the Auckland  
City Art Gallery

A series devised  
by Roger Horrocks: 3

Wellesley Auditorium  
Thursday 6 September 1984  
7.30 pm

## GEOFF STEVEN



### GEOFF STEVEN

Born in Auckland in 1946, Geoff Steven belongs to the wave of New Zealand film makers that appeared around 1970, newcomers fiercely committed to the idea of developing a local 'film culture' in which film would seem just as natural and just as important a means of expression as writing or painting.

Leaving school at 16, Steven became a trainee graphic artist, then a photographer. In 1967 he shifted to Sydney where he continued to work in fashion photography; then, after six months in Japan and a period of travel in Europe, he went to Dublin where he obtained another photographic job. Time spent at the Admore Studios making production stills boosted his interest in film making. After a six-month visit to Sweden, Steven returned to New Zealand early in 1970, fed up with commercial photography and determined to make his own films.

*But Then* (1970-1), an experimental film about two young dropouts, showed that Steven was already doing some hard thinking about the art of film making. He remarked: "I wanted to get away from the static form of photography, to get into time and motion." Presenting a droll, 'stoned' view of the city, *But*

*Then* was also propelled by the counter-culture energies that had grown in strength during the late 60s. It was a lively time for new work in all the arts, as reflected in magazines such as *The Word Is Freed*. In Auckland Steven "hung around the Free University" and campaigned for the setting-up of a film makers' co-operative, where equipment could be shared by the independents. ("Everyone was sitting up at the Kiwi pub talking about making films. I thought we should form a co-op and get started.") As a result, Alternative Cinema was established on 2 October 1972 at a meeting of film makers organised by Steven and John Daly-Peoples. Premises in Hobson Street were established in the following year and since then Alternative Cinema has continued to be an important force in New Zealand film making. 'Alternative' refers to types of film making separate from the advertising industry and from mainstream television, and at the same time more ambitious than amateur and home movie making as they existed then.

How to make a living from such an independent approach? There were no easy answers for the film makers of the new wave. Steven worked as cameraman on various films con-

nected in one way or another with the co-op. In 1973 he collaborated with Denis Taylor and Philip Dadson on an 'experimental feature film', *Test Pictures*, shot at Huia. Its crew and cast worked mostly without wages, sharing food donated by friends. It was only by such efforts as this that feature film production was revived in New Zealand during the 1970s.

In 1973 Steven formed Seehear Films with sound-recordingist Philip Dadson. Commissions from the Education Department and other public sponsors provided bread-and-butter work over the next few years. The most important Seehear film of this period was a 60-minute participant's view of the Maori Land March of 1975. In 1977 the television service offered work to Steven and to Sam Pillsbury, partly in response to public criticism that it had ignored talented independent directors. In the many documentaries that Steven has made since then for television, or in co-production with TVNZ, he has not lost touch with his original commitment to develop new styles and to explore alternative aspects of New Zealand life. His subjects have included: Pacific Islanders and the problems they encounter in New Zealand, Vietnamese immigrants, the controversial Centrepoint commune, and various forms of street art such as graffiti and tattooing. Stylistically, Steven has been drawn to direct or observational film making (such as that of Frederick Wiseman) which minimises commentary, prefers long takes to overactive forms of editing, and encourages each viewer to reach his or her own conclusions. His Centrepoint documentary provides a striking example. The approach has sometimes brought Steven into conflict with the journalistic traditions of television. Some television reporters see little or no need for a director, whereas Steven has sometimes seen no need for a reporter.

A new company Phase Three was formed in 1977 by Steven, John Maynard and Piers Davies, as the local film scene advanced to a new phase — 35mm feature films. In this format Steven has been able to explore a different range of possibilities such as choreographed or structural film making. He has said: "With a documentary, all the elements are there and it is like surfing. You have to ride them like waves to get where you want to." A feature film is more "like composing music", or building a structure out of nothing. Some sequences of *Test Pictures* had already illustrated this approach, but Steven was able to develop it further in *Strata*, creating complex patterns out of "figures in a landscape".

Also distinctive is the way in which Steven likes to build a story around a particular location, rather than writing the story first then searching for a suitable location or constructing a set. *Skin Deep* was made on a remarkably low budget by selecting a small town as an existing set, researching it, and writing a script that made the most of its possibilities. Story and place were similarly integrated in *Strata*.

To some extent, then, Steven's two approaches — the observational and the structural — can come together. He wants the story to 'ride' the landscape, yet he is always intensely interested in structure and composition. His feature film *Skin Deep* incorporates some of the strengths of his documentary work; and each of his documentaries includes sequences that have an original visual structure. It is no accident that Steven has often chosen to work with people involved in the visual arts — for example, cameraman Leon Narbey, sculptor and composer Philip Dadson, and producer and curator John Maynard.

The size of Steven's filmography is impressive. His approach to the process of film making has always been a thoughtful one and he has contributed greatly to the range of styles in New Zealand film making. Also, his writing and organising have done

much to promote a lively film culture and to develop fresh ideas about the future of local film making. Meanwhile he continues to surprise us with new approaches to documentary such as his latest film, *Signatures of the Soul*, a study of tattooing that has attracted world-wide interest.

Catalogue researched and written by Roger Horrocks.

The Auckland City Art Gallery would like to thank the New Zealand Film Commission for its support of this 1984-5 series.

#### Documentation

- Julienne Dickey 'But Then', *Alternative Cinema* vol.1 no.2, April 1973, p.17.  
Karen Sims, (report on the making of *Test Pictures*), *Auckland Star*, 10 February 1973, p.9.  
*Alternative Cinema* (item on *Test Pictures*), vol.1 no.2, April 1973, pp.13-14.  
Roger Horrocks, 'Test Pictures: An Important Film', *Craccum*, vol.49 no.11, 10 June 1975, pp.8-9.  
*The Dominion* (report on the controversy over *Test Pictures*), 5 July 1975, p.6.  
Audrey Gordon, 'Production with No Profit Motive' (*Test Pictures*), *N.Z. Woman's Weekly*, 21 July 1975, pp.28-9.  
*The Dominion* (item on *Skin Deep*), 7 April 1978.  
John Reynolds (on *Skin Deep*), *Movie Magazine*, April-May 1978, pp.42-3.  
Roger Horrocks, 'Getting Under the Skin of Small Town Life', *Voice Over* no.27, April-May 1978, pp.8-9.  
*Auckland Star* (item on *Skin Deep*), 20 May 1978 (Weekender).  
Des Dubbelt, (*Skin Deep* review), *Variety*, 4 October 1978.  
Robert J. Williams, *Skin Deep* — novel derived from the film script (A.H. & A.W. Reed, 1979).  
Terry Bell, 'Getting Under the N.Z. Skin', *New Zealand Listener*, 24 February 1979.  
Mag Freeman, '*Skin Deep*', *Broadsheet*, April 1979.  
Richard Von Sturmer, '*Skin Deep*', *Islands* no.25.  
William Dart, '*Skin Deep*: N.Z. Cinema Comes of Age', *Art New Zealand* no.12.  
Vincent Canby, (*Skin Deep* review), *New York Times*, 20 April 1979.  
*New Zealand Herald* (on *Strata*), 17 March 1982.  
*Auckland Star* (on *Strata*), 19 March 1982, p.13.  
Rosemary Hemmings, '*Strata*', *Art New Zealand* no.24, Winter 1982.  
'Journey Unfulfilled' (*Strata*), *New Zealand Listener*, 3 April 1983, pp.54-5.  
Karl Mutch, 'Two N.Z. Film makers: A Critical Study' (a wide-ranging study of Steven's work), M.A. thesis, University of Auckland, 1979. (Unpublished but available in the University Library.)

#### Interviews with Geoff Steven

- John Reynolds (interviewer), *Zoom*, April 1978, pp.34-5.  
*Craccum*, 19 February 1979, pp.24-5.  
William Dart, *Celluloid Strip*, Summer 1979-80, p.15 and p.51.  
*Photo and Audio*, vol.1. no.2, March 1979, pp.58-9.  
*Alternative Cinema*, December 1980, pp.2-4 (on the China films).  
Jonathan Owen, *Adventure*, December 1982, pp.73-4.  
*Inner City News*, 18 October 1983, p.2.  
John Reynolds, 'The Structure Reflects the Content' (videotaped discussion with Steven about *Skin Deep*), 35-minute colour ¾" videotape (available from John Reynolds, Auckland Teachers College).

#### Essays by Geoff Steven

Steven's work has appeared in many issues of *Alternative Cinema* magazine since December 1972.

#### Photographic work

Portfolios of Steven's photographs have appeared in *Thursday* and *Metro* (no.1, May-June 1981).

## Geoff Steven : A Filmography

- 1970 DON BINNEY (as cameraman and co-director)**  
A film about the painter Don Binney made by 'the ICE Film Workshop' (Geoff Steven and Barry Lett).  
16mm B&W silent film, approx. 12 minutes.
- 1971 BUT THEN (as director, cameraman, editor)**  
"But then, along came a young generation who took time out from society, who smoked pot and talked of alternative lifestyles." An experimental film about a day in the life of two young men wandering around Auckland. Made on a budget of \$300. Working title: *Let the Wise Man Fly*.  
16mm B&W, 19 minutes. Actors: David Blackwell and Peter Calder. Script from an idea by John Graham. Music by Paul Lee. Made with the assistance of Harry Fischer. The film was screened at the Barry Lett Gallery and Auckland University, and toured the country with the Living Theatre Troupe's production of *Futz*.
- 1972 EARTHWORKS (as photographer)**  
Steven contributed still photographs to this film which Philip Dadson made with footage sent to him from around the world by artists who had participated in his simultaneous recording of the Equinox on 24 September 1981 (described in Jim Allen and Wylan Curnow's book *New Art*).
- 1973 OFFERING TO THE GOD OF SPEED (as cameraman)**  
Steven shot the New Zealand footage for this documentary, directed by Roger Donaldson, about champion motorcycle rider Bert Munro. Produced by Aardvark Films.
- 1974 AND ALL THAT (as cameraman and co-director)**  
Sometimes catalogued as *1066 And All That*, this documentary observes the making of the film *1066* at Onepoto Primary School (as described in John Reynold's book *Camera in the Classroom*). *And All That* incorporates stories, poems and pictures by the children.  
16mm colour, 17 minutes. Sound and co-direction: Philip Dadson. Assistance from the Department of Education (Curriculum Development Unit).
- 1974 FLIGHT OF MANU RANGI (as cameraman)**  
Steven shot this 20-minute colour film about hot-air ballooning, directed by Paul McWhinney for IbeX Films.
- 1974 STANLEY (as cameraman)**  
A documentary about Stanley Graham who became a fugitive from the law in 1941. The director, Howard Willis, went on to write a book about Graham, which in turn became the starting-point for a feature film (*Bad Blood*). Completed in 1974, *Stanley* was screened several years later on New Zealand television in the Survey series.  
16mm colour, 30 minutes. Producer: Mike Glynn. Nightwood Films Ltd for NZBC television.
- 1975 AORERE — AN ATTEMPT AT CHANGE (as cameraman)**  
A documentary about adult education at a South Auckland school (Aorere College).  
16mm colour, 15 minutes. Director: Dave Gibson. Produced by Zero 16 Ltd for the Dept. of Education.
- 1975 TEST PICTURES (as cameraman and editor)**  
Subtitled 'Eleven Vignettes of a Relationship', this feature-length experimental drama traces the summer spent at Huia by a young couple. The film emphasises mood, landscape, and visual structure rather than narrative. It was shot over a period of three months (February-April 1973) at the Hinge Estate. It was possible to make the film for only \$14,000 because crew members worked without pay. *Test Pictures* became a controversial topic in July 1975 when Patricia Bartlett protested against a \$7,000 Arts Council grant and NZBC recognition. The film's working title was *The Magic Turtle* (from the *I Ching*). There is no director's credit but Steven edited as well as shot the film. A debate over ownership delayed completion. It was premiered on 1 July 1975 at the Wellington Film Festival (which paid for the release print).  
16mm B&W, 90 minutes. Script: Denis Taylor. Sound: Philip Dadson. Actors: Lee Feltham and Denis Taylor. 1975 Wellington and Auckland Film Festivals. Steven took the film to the 1975 ABU-Shiraz Young Film makers' Festival in Iran (as the official New Zealand representative).
- 1975 OFF THE EDGE (as one of the cameramen)**  
A feature-length documentary on skiing and hang-gliding in the Southern Alps, directed and produced by Michael Firth. Steven was cameraman for part of the shoot (the flight off the Minarets, the pioneer hut sequence, and other sync footage).  
35mm (blown-up from 16mm) colour, 70 minutes. Cinema release. 1977 Academy Awards nominee (documentary category). Screened TV1, 7 August 1981.
- 1975 TE MATAKITE O AOTEAROA (as director, scriptwriter, co-editor)**  
**co-editor**  
Steven's first professional directing credit was this documentary about the Maori land rights march from Te Hapua to Wellington (September-October 1975). The film records the events and explores the motives and feelings of the marchers. Steven's crew consisted of Philip Dadson (sound), Leon Narbey (camera), and Gil Scrine (camera assistant).  
16mm colour, 60 minutes. Produced by Seehear Ltd in co-production with TV2, on a budget of \$14,000. Assistance by the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council, the World Council of Churches Programme to Combat Racism, and other organisations. Screened by the Cinematheque Francaise, Paris 1983, as part of its New Zealand film retrospective.
- 1976 START-STOP (as cameraman and co-director)**  
A documentary about the Auckland Rapid Rail project. When this project was abruptly halted, Steven and co-director Philip Dadson salvaged a film from the footage they had shot up to that time.  
16mm colour, 20 minutes. Sound: Philip Dadson. Produced by Seehear Ltd for New Zealand Railways.
- 1976 PAN-PACIFIC BIENNALE (as cameraman and editor)**  
A videotape documentation of the Pan-Pacific Biennale at the Auckland City Art Gallery in 1976.  
¾" colour video, 30 minutes.
- 1976 ASPECTS OF A SMALL TOWN (as cameraman and director)**  
A three-screen videotape presentation at the Auckland City Art Gallery 1-28 November 1978), as no.10 in the Gallery's Project Programme. This "record and social survey of a small N.Z. country town" (Raetihi) was an experiment in combining three real time tapes, with viewers having to make their own 'editing' decisions about which screen to watch. Steven had become fascinated with Raetihi after visiting it during the Land March film, and he saw this video project as research for a feature film (*Skin Deep*).  
¾" colour video, 3 x 20 minutes.
- 1977 THE EASIEST THING IN THE WORLD (as director)**  
This documentary about bankruptcy — based on the experiences of a young contractor — was the first of three programmes directed by Steven for TV1's Seven Days series. Each programme was made in three to four weeks (one week each for research and filming, and one to two weeks for editing).  
16mm colour, 30 minutes. Reporter: Martyn Bates. Executive producer: Richard Thomas. Screened on TV1 on 20 March 1977 (Seven Days: 'People in Crisis').
- 1977 WHEELING THROUGH WONDERLAND (as director)**  
*Wheeling Through Wonderland* documents the experiences and group dynamics of a busload of tourists travelling through the North Island on a TransTour 'Wonderland' excursion.  
16mm colour, 30 minutes. Reporter: Ian Johnstone. Camera: Hamdani Milas. Executive Producer: Richard Thomas. Screened on TV1 on 10 April 1977 (Seven Days: 'Getting Together').
- 1977 LINK (as producer, director, scriptwriter, editor)**  
The first of two documentaries made by Seehear Ltd for New Zealand Railways, *Link* looks at the rail ferry and other rail freight operations. It has been widely used in schools, and also received a television screening.  
16mm colour, 30 minutes. Camera: Leon Narbey. Sound: Philip Dadson.
- 1977 NO. 1 IN FREIGHT (as producer, director, scriptwriter, editor)**  
A staff training film for New Zealand Railways, made from the out-takes of *Link*.  
16mm colour, 15 minutes.

- 1977 NAIVE, UNSOPHISTICATED OR PRIMITIVE? (as director)**  
 "Pacific Islanders explain their side of the story and how it feels to be considered 'naive, unsophisticated or primitive'." This documentary made in Auckland ('the world's largest Polynesian city') avoids the usual type of voice-over narration so that the only spoken comments are by Pacific Islanders. The title is based on remarks made by a local judge.  
 16mm colour, 30 minutes. Reporter: Dairne Shanahan. Producer: Philip Geddes. Screened on TV1 on 4 September 1977 (Seven Days).
- 1977 AFTER THE WAR (as director)**  
 A documentary about the Vietnamese boat people in New Zealand. It focuses on two families, documenting their experiences as they adjust to life in this country.  
 16mm colour, 30 minutes. Reporter: Bill Saunders. Executive Producer: George Andrews. For South Pacific Television's Perspective series (screened 13 November 1977). See *New Zealand Listener* story, 12 November 1977, pp.14-15.
- 1978 SKIN DEEP (as director and co-writer)**  
 A feature-length drama about the ways in which local residents respond to the establishment of a massage parlour in their town ('Carlton'). *Skin Deep* was the first 35mm feature film in which the New Zealand Film Commission (at that time the Interim Commission) was a major investor. The film was made on a budget of \$180,000 (with \$70,000 from the Commission, \$10,000 from Amalgamated Theatres, and the rest from private investors). It was shot during March and April 1978 in Raetihi.  
 35mm colour, 103 minutes. (TV version, 90 minutes.) Producer: John Maynard. Script: Geoff Steven, Piers Davies, Roger Horrocks. Director of Photography: Leon Narbey. Camera operator: Paul Leach. Assistant Director: Susan Pointon. Production Manager: Sue May. Actors include: Deryn Cooper, Ken Blackburn, Grant Tilly, Glenys Levestam. Premiered at the Chicago Film Festival in 1978. Selected for the 1979 New Directors/New Films series at the Museum of Modern Art (New York), and for the following film festivals: Denver, Seattle, Melbourne, Moscow (Information), and London (1979); Banglore, Hong Kong, and Asian Film Festival (1980). Cinema release in New Zealand. Screened TV1 on 6 August 1981.
- 1978 OUTSIDE IN (as cameraman)**  
 A documentary about imaginative approaches to art education in three New Zealand schools.  
 16mm colour, 31 minutes. Direction and sound: Philip Dadson.
- 1979 GUNG HO: REWI ALLEY OF CHINA (as director and co-scriptwriter)**  
 A documentary about Rewi Alley, an expatriate New Zealander who played an important part in China's industrial development. He is associated with the slogan 'gung ho' ('work together'). Steven's film crew consisted of Leon Narbey (camera), Graham Morris (sound), and Geoff Chapple (co-scriptwriter). In China for ten weeks from the end of April 1979, the group travelled 15,000 km. Alley, who did a great deal of travelling with them, tells his own life story in the film. Geoff Chapple later wrote a *Listener* account (3 May 1980) and a biography, *Rewi Alley of China* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1980).  
 16mm colour, 50 minutes. Producer: John Maynard. Editor: Annie Collins. A co-production of Phase Three Films and the National Film Unit, with support from BCNZ and Air New Zealand. Screened TV1, 9 May 1980 (Lookout).
- 1979 THE HUMBLE FORCE (as director and co-scriptwriter)**  
 This wide-ranging documentary about China was made by the same team with Rewi Alley acting as an observer and narrator.  
 16mm colour, 50 minutes. Same credits as *Gung Ho*. Screened TV1, 16 May 1980 (Lookout).
- 1979 CHINA'S PATRIOT ARMY (as director and co-scriptwriter)**  
 The last of the three documentaries about China was mostly filmed during an unexpected two-day visit to a Liberation Army camp (the 196 Infantry Division), combined with some military scenes shot elsewhere in China.  
 16mm colour, 20 minutes. Same credits as *Gung Ho* (excluding Collins). Screened on New Zealand television in the Foreign Correspondent series.
- 1980 THE FIRST STEP (as director and co-scriptwriter)**  
 "Three travellers in a shocking-pink container work their way along New Zealand's railway system" -- a film for use in schools, which explains rail transport in an entertaining way.  
 16mm colour, 22 minutes. Script by Steven and Phillip Tremewan. Actors: Mary Reegan, Paul Owen-Lome, Arthur Ranford. Camera: Leon Narbey. Editor: Annie Collins. Music: Mike Chunn. Executive Producer: Bob Hollingum. Made by Seehear Films for New Zealand Railways.
- 1980 SKIN PICS (as director)**  
 This documentary about 'tattoo culture' brings together examples from different parts of New Zealand and considers tattooing as folk art. Commissioned by TVNZ for the Contact series, it involved one month of research, one week of filming (May 1980), and two weeks of editing. Paul Hartigan painted the title graphic.  
 Researcher: Julianne Stretton. Executive Producer: D.O.C. Williams. Screened TV2, 4 August 1980.
- 1980 CENTREPOINT: A SPIRITUAL GROWTH COMMUNITY (as director and co-scriptwriter)**  
 Described by reviewers as 'the most controversial TVNZ documentary of the year', this film surveyed a week of activities at the Centrepoint community at Albany (in June 1980). It began as a 30-minute project, but Steven persuaded TVNZ (for whom he was working on contract) to expand it to 50 minutes. TVNZ wanted, however, to cut some of the most emotional material. Steven appealed against the cuts and it was agreed finally that only one minute had to be replaced. TVNZ warned viewers that they might find the programme disturbing. Some did, and the programme was debated in newspaper columns. (See *New Zealand Listener*, 11 October 1980, pp.44-6, for more background.)  
 16mm colour, 50 minutes. Script by Geoff Steven and Julianne Stretton. Camera: John Philpotts. Sound: Brenton Ojala. Editing: Bill Henderson. Producer: D.O.C. Williams. Screened TV1, 17 October 1980. Selected for the 'Cinema du Reel' Festival of Ethnographic and Sociological Films in Paris, April 1982.
- 1980 AUCKLAND TEXTURES (as director)**  
 A montage of Auckland landscapes, some shot from the air, commissioned by the Auckland War Memorial Museum as a permanent display. Made towards the end of 1980, the film does not have an official title but Steven refers to it as *Auckland Textures*.  
 16mm colour, approx. 8 minutes. Camera: Leon Narbey.
- 1981 THE WRITING ON THE WALL (as producer and director)**  
 Sponsored by TVNZ, this documentary collects examples of graffiti from different parts of the country, and considers why people paint graffiti and how the styles have changed over the years. Tim Shadbolt was the presenter. The programme was made in approximately six weeks (February-March 1981). See *New Zealand Listener*, 5 September 1981, pp.52-4.  
 16mm colour, 30 minutes. Researcher: Julianne Stretton. Camera: Chris White. Producer: D.O.C. Williams. Screened TV1, 10 September 1981 (Contact).
- 1982 ADVENTURES IN MAORILAND (as director and scriptwriter)**  
 This film, sometimes called *Hei Tiki*, is subtitled 'Alexander Markey and the Making of *Hei Tiki*'. It is the first in-depth documentary about New Zealand's early film history. It focuses on the feature film *Hei Tiki*, made by director and con-man Alexander Markey in 1929-31. Steven's documentary was mostly shot during a ten-day period circa April 1981, but negotiations for the right to use old film footage delayed completion for about a year. See *New Zealand Listener*, 12 March 1983, pp.14-15.  
 16mm colour and B&W, 50 minutes. Researcher: Julianne Stretton. Principal photography: Alan Locke. Sound: Don Reynolds. Editor: Alf West. Producer: John Maynard. A Phase Three production, with C.I.P. support. Screened TV1, 13 March 1983 (Lookout). Screened by the Cinematheque Francaise as part of its New Zealand film retrospective.
- 1982 STRATA (as director and co-scriptwriter)**  
 Steven's second feature film had the working-title *Figures Beyond Glass*. It observes the behaviour of two groups of people moving through an extraordinary volcanic landscape (with locations in the Tongariro National Park and on White Island). One group consists of travellers who have escaped from a quarantine centre, the other group centres round a famous volcanologist. The script



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## LEON NARBHEY



### LEON NARBHEY

Leon Narbhey (b. 1947) is known today as one of New Zealand's best lighting cameramen. He has been director of photography for four feature films: *Skin Deep*, *Strata*, *Trespases*, and *Other Halves*. Over the last ten years he has been involved as lighting cameraman in some of the most adventurous documentaries made in this country (such as *In Spring One Plants Alone*, *In Joy*, *The Bridge*, *Te Matakite O Aotearoa*, and *Patu!*), besides directing or co-directing three of his own (*Man of the Trees*, *Mixed Bag*, and *Bastion Point: Day 507*).

Not so well known to filmgoers is Narbhey's previous career as a sculptor. In the late 60s and early 70s he created a number of 'light/sound environments' in New Zealand art galleries and pioneered a new style of experimental film making. This background in the visual arts helps to explain the very sophisticated feeling for light, colour, movement and form that Narbhey brings to all aspects of his film work.

Narbhey enrolled in the School of Fine Arts at the University of Auckland in 1965, graduating four years later with a D.F.A. (Honours) degree. His lecturers included the photographer Robert Hutchins and the sculptor Jim Allen (who introduced a number of new ideas about performance and environmental art to Elam). Narbhey developed his own specialisation — 'Electric Light in Movement' (the title of his D.F.A. thesis). "I was interested in light and the control of light .... [I set up] rooms with programmed lights, and the dimensions of those spaces tended to change according to the way the light struck or reflected." He first turned to film merely as a way of documenting his installations but found that colour and lighting needed to be rethought in film terms. Also there was the possibility of creating new editing rhythms. In 1968 Narbhey made the films *Room One* and *Room Two*. (The second had music by his friend Philip Dadson, another Elam sculptor who became interested in film making.) After Narbhey created a large light/sound environment as the opening exhibition at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth, he used it as the basis for his

complex *Film of Real Time* (1971). Still a pleasure to look at today, these films were a remarkable achievement in their time because nobody in New Zealand had done work of this kind before. Narbey had read about overseas film makers such as Michael Snow but he had had no opportunity to see their work. His own films were therefore 'experimental' in the most ambitious sense of the word.

After graduating from Elam, Narbey trained for a year (1969) at the Auckland Secondary Teachers' College, but then returned to the art school as a Technical Instructor. During 1972 he moved to Canterbury University to take up the position of Visiting Lecturer in Fine Arts (sculpture and mixed media). During the next few years he was active in the Canterbury Film Society, and together with his wife Anita, helped to establish the Christchurch branch of Alternative Cinema (a film makers' co-operative). He shot footage for an ambitious new film, *Parallax*. Then, around 1974, he made a big change of direction, turning away from the art scene and from the solid reputation that his sculpture and films had earned there, to become a television cameraman. How to explain this decision? The local audience for experimental films and sculpture was still small, and Narbey's growing interest in social issues made him search for ways of getting involved with a wider community.

A second factor was his desire to learn more about camerawork, an aim that had developed while he worked on *Parallax*. After two short-term jobs (*Rally* and *The Games Affair*), Narbey became a television cameraman in Christchurch for three years (1974-7), shooting footage for a number of news, current affairs and documentary programmes (News at Ten, Country Calendar, Focus, Seven Days, etc). Television provided an excellent training ground, but eventually Narbey came to feel frustrated with its production-line aspects, the barriers between different departments, and the limited range of projects. A co-production between TVNZ and Geoff Steven's company gave Narbey the opportunity to work on the Maori Land March film of 1975; then two years later, he left television to take up Steven's offer of a job on *Link*. Since then, Narbey has been based in Auckland as a freelance cameraman and film maker.

While acknowledging that television is doing some things well, Narbey believes that it has only scratched the surface so far as local documentaries are concerned. As examples of what could be achieved here, Narbey points to the best years of the National Film Board of Canada or to American documentaries such as those of the Maysles Brothers.

Narbey has found that sponsorship for this sort of work is also difficult to find outside the television system. Among the most controversial documentaries made in recent years, Narbey's name is usually to be found on the credits, in some cases having donated his time. In 1980-1 he directed and shot a film of his own about Richard St-Barbe Baker, the 'Man of the Trees', who visited New Zealand to support the conservation movement. Other Narbey projects (such as a documentary about Christmas in a Polynesian household) are unfortunately still waiting for sponsors.

He has gained a legendary reputation for his ability to film in difficult situations. A sense of tact and rapport with people can be as important as camera skills, as demonstrated by the films he shot during an extensive tour of China, or those which document strikes (*The Bridge*), protests (*Patu!* and *Bastion Point*), domestic relationships (*In Spring One Plants Alone*), Maori protocol (*Te Matakite*), and emotional group situations (*In Joy*).

As a D.O.P. (director of photography) on feature films, Narbey has enjoyed a close relationship with directors such as John Laing (whose work is informed by his knowledge of editing) and Geoff Steven (whose structured, 'observational' approach is thoroughly familiar to Narbey after nine collaborations). Feature films allow more time than documentaries for planning lighting and camera movement, but in some respects the responsibility is greater. ("With the production costing thousands of dollars an hour, you can't hold up the film too long while you play with the lighting. You have to get to the guts of the shot quickly.") There are always new problems: "You plan to light the scene in a particular way, but that afternoon the weather is different so you have to rethink it on the spot."

In 1983 Narbey left the industry to become a Visiting Lecturer in Film at Ilam (Canterbury University), but returned to freelance work in 1984. He has also served as a member of the Arts Council/Film Commission's grants panel. As a film-goer he keeps a close eye on the work of a number of overseas cinematographers such as Nestor Almendros, Sven Nykvist, Gordon Willis and Vilmos Zsigmond. Is it possible that Narbey will one day move back to 'art' films? He is interested in completing *Parallax*, but is still committed to working on films with social content. They seem to him the best way to combine his various concerns — on the one hand his interest in light, colour, structure and movement, and on the other hand his interest in politics and people.

## Leon Narbey : A Filmography

### 1968 ROOM ONE (as director and editor)

An experimental film based on one of Narbey's light installations at Elam.  
16mm B&W silent film, approx. 5 minutes. Camera: Rodney Charters.

### 1968 ROOM TWO (as director and editor)

Patterns of light, colour and motion, as people move through one of Narbey's installations at Elam.  
16mm colour (reversal), 7 minutes. Cameras: Rodney Charters and Robert Hutchins. Music: Philip Dadson. Purchased by the National Film Library. Screened at the Adelaide International Film Festival.

### 1971 A FILM OF REAL TIME: A LIGHT/SOUND ENVIRONMENT (as director and editor)

In 1970 Narbey designed the opening exhibition at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, a large installation involving plastic sheets, aluminium, fluorescent lights, etc. ("I wanted to disorientate the spectator or to amplify what was already there...to construct light forms that people could walk through.") He made this film not merely to record the exhibition but as a work of light/sound art in itself. It was shot and edited in 1970 but not screened until 1971.  
16mm colour (reversal), 10 minutes. Camera: Robert Hutchins. Assistance by the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council. Copies purchased by the National Film Library and the Department of Foreign Affairs. Discussed in *Freed* no.3 and *New Art*.

### 1972 EARTHWORKS (as contributor)

A film directed by Philip Dadson which included footage from around the world documenting the Equinox of 24 September 1971. The film was completed in the following year. Narbey assisted Dadson. Cameraman: Ib Heller.

### 1973 RALLY (as one of the cameramen)

A documentary about the Heatway Motor Rally, directed by Tony Williams.  
16mm colour (negative), 50 minutes. Feltex Award. Pacific Films for the NZBC.

### 1971-4 PARALLAX (as director and lighting cameraman)

An unfinished film about the cyclical nature of our encounter with particular places and spaces. A series of locations are filmed in a basically similar manner but with differences of speed, time of day, etc. Narbey shot footage in New Plymouth, Auckland and Christchurch; made a 15-minute rough cut; then shot extra material, but ran out of finance, and unfortunately has never completed this important film.  
16mm B&W (reversal).

### 1974 THE GAMES AFFAIR (as assistant cameraman and stills photographer)

A six-part children's television series, a comedy adventure filmed during the Commonwealth Games. Produced by John Barnett and directed by Bruce Clark, its crew included many people who were later to become well known in the New Zealand film industry (Paul Leach, Alun Bollinger, Kevin Hayward, Geoff Murphy, Mike Horton, Norman Elder, etc).  
16mm colour (reversal), 6x30 minutes. Endeavour Television Ltd.

### 1974 BLENHEIM (as lighting cameraman)

A documentary about Blenheim, directed by Bruce Morrison for the NZBC's Review series.  
16mm colour (reversal).

### 1974 MIXED BAG: SIX VIEWS OF CHRISTCHURCH (as co-ordinating director and lighting cameraman)

Narbey gave five creative people (writers, artists and a composer) an opportunity to present their view of Christchurch: Dorothy Buchanan, Glenn Busch, John Coley, Sue McCauley, and Mervyn Thompson. Gary Langford was also involved in the early stages. Narbey contributed the sixth segment himself.  
16mm colour (reversal), 26 minutes. Editor: Simon Sedgely. NZBC Television (Review series).

### 1974 FOCUS (as lighting cameraman)

Narbey shot four 15-minute episodes of the NZBC's Focus series, produced by Hanafi Hayes.  
16mm B&W (reversal).



- 1975 HANAFI HAYES LOOKS AT QUEENSTOWN (as assistant cameraman)**  
The pilot for the One Man's View series, directed by Hayes. 16mm colour (reversal). Principal cameraman: Hamdani Milas.
- 1975 TE MATAKITE O AOTEAROA (as lighting cameraman)**  
A documentary about the Maori land rights march from Te Hapua to Wellington. The crew, which travelled most of the way with the marchers, consisted of Geoff Steven (director), Philip Dadson (sound), Gil Scrine (camera assistant and editor) and Narbey. 16mm colour (reversal), 60 minutes.
- 1976 SIX RIVERS: THE LONGEST JET BOAT MARATHON IN THE WORLD (as one of three cameramen)**  
16mm colour (reversal), approx. 50 minutes. Director: Graham Veitch. TV2.
- 1976 SPANISH CIVIL WAR (as one of three cameramen)**  
A documentary about New Zealanders who were involved in the Spanish Civil War. 16mm colour (reversal), 30 minutes. Director: Paul Leach.
- 1976 MIKE GIBSON (as lighting cameraman)**  
A documentary shot while touring through New Zealand with the Irish Rugby Team. 16mm colour (reversal). Director: Brendon Telfer.
- 1976 THEY SAY WE LET THEM DOWN (as lighting cameraman)**  
A survey of Black African attitudes to New Zealand, regarding its sporting contacts with South Africa. This 30-minute documentary was shot in Africa (Tanzania, Kenya, Zambia and Zimbabwe). 16mm colour (reversal). Director: Derek Fox. TV2.
- 1976 COUNTDOWN ON ZIMBABWE (as lighting cameraman)**  
A documentary filmed by the same crew as *They Say We Let Them Down*, examining political conflicts in Zimbabwe. 16mm colour (reversal), 30 minutes. TV2.
- 1977 MAN AGAINST THE WORLD: PAWELKA (as assistant cameraman)**  
A drama based on the story of prison escaper Joseph Pawelka. 16mm colour (negative), 30 minutes. Director: Alan Lindsay. Lighting cameraman: Peter Read. Sponsored by TV1, the Department of Education, and the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council.
- 1977 LINK (as lighting cameraman and editor)**  
A documentary made by Seehear Ltd for New Zealand Railways, which has been widely used in schools and has received a television screening. 16mm colour (negative), 30 minutes. Director: Geoff Steven. Sound: Philip Dadson.
- 1977 No. 1 IN FREIGHT (as lighting cameraman and editor)**  
A staff training film for New Zealand Railways, made from the out-takes of *Link*. 16mm colour (negative), 15 minutes.
- 1978 SKIN DEEP (as director of photography)**  
A feature-length drama about the ways in which the residents of a small town respond to the establishment of a 'massage parlour'. *Skin Deep* was the first feature film in which the New Zealand Film Commission (then the Interim Commission) was a major investor. For accounts of the making of the film, see *Alternative Cinema*, February 1979, and *Voice Over*, April-May 1978. 35mm colour (Gevacolor 680 negative), 103 minutes. Director: Geoff Steven. Camera operator: Paul Leach. Producer: John Maynard. Cinema release. Screened TV1, 6 August 1981.
- 1979 GUNG HO: REWI ALLEY OF CHINA (as lighting cameraman)**  
A documentary about Rewi Alley, an expatriate New Zealander who has played an important part in China's industrial development. The film crew, which travelled 15,000 km around China, consisted of Geoff Steven (director), Graham Morris (sound), Geoff Chapple (co-scriptwriter) and Narbey. 16mm colour (negative), 50 minutes. Producer: John Maynard. Editor: Annie Collins. A co-production of Phase Three Films and the National Film Unit, with support from BCNZ and Air New Zealand. Screened TV1, 9 May 1980 (Lookout).
- 1979 THE HUMBLE FORCE (as lighting cameraman)**  
This wide-ranging documentary about China was made by the same crew as *Gung Ho*. 16mm colour (negative), 50 minutes. Screened TV1, 16 May 1980 (Lookout).
- 1979 CHINA'S PATRIOT ARMY (as lighting cameraman)**  
The last of the three documentaries about China was filmed mostly during a visit to a Liberation Army camp. 16mm colour (negative), 20 minutes. Screened on New Zealand television in the Foreign Correspondent series.
- 1979 IN SPRING ONE PLANTS ALONE (as one of the cameramen)**  
A documentary about an old Maori woman who lives in isolation with her dependent son. 16mm colour (negative), 45 minutes. Director: Vincent Ward. Principal cameraman: Alun Bollinger. Prizewinner, Chicago Film Festival, 1981, and Cinéma du Réel, 1982.
- 1979 KARANGA HOKIANGA (as lighting cameraman)**  
A documentary about a Festival of Faith organised by Catholic Maori communities in Hokianga. 16mm colour, 60 minutes. Director: Merata Mita.
- 1980 THE HAMMER AND THE ANVIL (as lighting cameraman)**  
A documentary about the history of the New Zealand trade union movement, shot during 1979-80. 16mm colour (negative), 50 minutes. Produced and directed by Merata Mita and Gerd Pohlmann. Executive Producer: George Andrews. Screened on SPTV and sold to the West German trade union movement.
- 1980 BASTION POINT: DAY 507 (as co-director and lighting cameraman)**  
A documentary about the occupation of Bastion Point in the struggle for Maori land rights. It concentrates on the day the protestors were forcibly removed. Although footage was shot in 1978, lack of money delayed the completion of the film. 16mm colour (reversal), 26 minutes. Co-directed by Merata Mita, Leon Narbey and Gerd Pohlmann. Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council assistance. Special Jury Prize at the Oberhausen Festival, and screened at the Moscow, Belgrade, Newcastle and Edinburgh Film Festivals.
- 1980 QUEEN STREET (as lighting cameraman)**  
A comedy drama about three young adults driving round the streets of Auckland at night. 16mm colour (reversal), 34 minutes. Director: Martin Blythe. Producer and editor: Stewart Main. Apex Films, with assistance from the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council and TVNZ. Screened TV2, 21 March 1981.
- 1980 THE FIRST STEP (as lighting cameraman)**  
A comedy drama about three young people travelling around New Zealand's railway system. 16mm colour (negative), 22 minutes. Director: Geoff Steven. Made by Seehear Films Ltd for New Zealand Railways.
- 1980 IN JOY (as lighting cameraman)**  
A documentary about Maggie Eyre and her remarkable dance and drama workshops. 16mm colour (negative), approx. 30 minutes. Director: Stephanie Beth.
- 1980 THE SINBAD VOYAGE (as one of several cameramen)**  
Narbey shot some footage in Oman for this documentary about the sailing of a 9th-century vessel to China. 16mm colour (negative).

**1981 MAN OF THE TREES (as director and lighting cameraman)**

A documentary about Richard St-Barbe Baker, a world-famous conservationist, who visited New Zealand in 1980 (in his 92nd year).

16mm colour (negative), 25 minutes. Producer: John Maynard. Editor: David Coulson. Sound: Hammond Peek. Leon Narbey Productions Ltd, produced with the assistance of BCNZ.

Television rights sold to 10 countries. Screened TV1 (Contact series), 24 September 1981. (See *New Zealand Listener*, 19 September 1981, pp.54ff.) Won Prince Rainier III Prize at Monte Carlo Television Festival, 1982.

**1981 STRANDED (as one of three cameramen)**

An Australian documentary about why whales get stranded.

16mm colour (negative), 50 minutes. Director: Tristram Mail. Golden Dolphin Films Ltd.

**1982 STRATA (as director of photography)**

A feature film about two groups of people moving through an extraordinary volcanic landscape (filmed in the Tongariro National Park and on White Island).

35mm colour (Eastman 5247 negative), 110 minutes. (There is also a 118-minute version.) Director: Geoff Steven. Producer: John Maynard. Editor: David Coulson. Camera operator: Alun Locke. Released in New Zealand in 1983. Asian Film Festival, 1984.

**1982 O.K. — LET'S WATCH (as one of three cameramen)**

A documentary about Playback Theatre, focusing on one of their spontaneous theatre performances.

16mm colour (negative), 47 minutes. Director: Mort Schreiber. Cameras: Lynton Diggle, Leon Narbey, Mort Schreiber. Frolic Films in association with TVNZ. Screened on TV2, 16 September 1984.

**1982 THE BRIDGE (as lighting cameraman)**

A documentary about the epic Mangere Bridge strike which lasted for 2½ years. This film grew out of *The Hammer and the Anvil*.

16mm colour (negative), 57 minutes. Directors: Merata Mita and Gerd Pohlmann. Wellington Film Festival, 1982.

**1983 TRESPASSES (as director of photography)**

A feature film about the conflict between a father with old-fashioned religious ideas and his daughter. Its working title was *Finding Katie*.

35mm colour (Eastman 5247 and 5293 negative), 118 minutes. Director: Peter Sharp. Producers: Tom Finlayson and Dean Hill. Camera operator: Barry Harbert. Editor: David Coulson. Released in New Zealand in 1984.

**1983 PATU! (as one of the cameramen)**

A documentary about the protests in New Zealand against the 1981 tour by the South African rugby team. Narbey did five days of filming (in Auckland and Napier).

16mm colour, 110 minutes. Producer and director: Merata Mita. Principal photographer: Barry Harbert. Screened at many film festivals.

**1984 OTHER HALVES (as director of photography)**

A feature film based on Sue McCauley's novel, *Other Halves*.

35mm colour (Eastman 5294 and 5247 negative). Director: John Laing. Producers: Tom Finlayson and Dean Hill. Script: Sue McCauley. Editor: Harley Oliver. Camera operator: Barry Harbert. Scheduled for New Zealand release in 1985.

**1984 TE HIKOI KI WAITANGI (as one of the cameramen)**

A documentary about the march to Waitangi and the meaning of the Treaty today.

16mm colour. Director: Merata Mita. Principal photography by Barry Harbert and Matthew Murphy.

**1984 THOROUGHbred (as one of the cameramen)**

A documentary directed by Chris Francis about the breeding of thoroughbred horses.

16mm colour (negative), approx. 80 minutes.

**1984 NAPIER (as lighting cameraman)**

A documentary now in production about the architecture of Napier and the change in styles after the Napier Earthquake. *Napier* is the working title only.

16mm colour (negative), approx. 25 minutes. Director: Peter Wells. Producer: Stewart Main.

Leon Narbey has also worked on television commercials (16mm, 35mm and video), since 1977 as assistant cameraman and since 1980 as lighting cameraman.

## Exhibitions

- 1965 Group Show, Hamilton.
- 1967, 1968, 1969 Group Shows, Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland.
- 1969 14 Stages of the Cross, as lighting designer for this event in the Auckland University Chapel by Jack Body and Ian Wedde.
- 1969 Auckland Sculptors, Manawatu Art Gallery.
- 1970 Real Time, a one-man show at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery.
- 1971 New Zealand Young Contemporaries, Auckland City Art Gallery.
- 1971 Group Show, Barry Lett Galleries.
- 1971 Small Centres Touring Show.
- 1972 Environment, a one-man show at the Auckland City Art Gallery during the Auckland Festival.
- 1972 Mezzanine Environment, in a Group Show at the CSA Gallery, Christchurch.
- 1973 Negative Space Reduction, in Eight Young Artists, New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts Gallery, Wellington.
- 1974 New Zealand Art, Group Show, Commonwealth Games Exhibition, CSA Gallery.
- 1975 Sonic II, as designer and director of lighting for this multi-media event in the Wellington Town Hall, co-ordinated by Jack Body.

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- John Daly-Peoples, 'Leon Narbey: Real Time', *The Word is Freed* no.3, 1970.
- Jim Allen and Wystan Curnow, *New Art* (Auckland: Heinemann, 1976).
- Karl Mutch, 'Focus on Leon Narbey', *Alternative Cinema* vol.9 no.2, Summer 1981, pp.7-8.

Catalogue researched and written by Roger Horrocks.

The Auckland City Art Gallery would like to thank the New Zealand Film Commission for its support of this 1984-5 series.

# NEW ZEALAND FILM MAKERS at the Auckland City Art Gallery

A series devised  
by Roger Horrocks: 5  
Wellesley Auditorium  
Thursday 1 November 1984  
7.30 pm

## GAYLENE PRESTON



### GAYLENE PRESTON

"I see my films not really as end products in themselves, but as part of a process of exploration between myself and my environment.

"We have been very fortunate in this country to forge a whole new film industry so much later than anyone else. It's still possible to enjoy making films here. I don't think we have fully appreciated our superior international position. New Zealand film makers are still in control of their own product. That is a luxury in most other, more established film communities. It is what makes our films unique. Unfortunately certain economic 'realities' make it only a matter of time before businessmen control film making in this country also. I can't help feeling that a certain cultural insecurity also contributes. I believe we should be consciously and purposefully doing our best to swim against the tide, remembering that small is beautiful.

"I believe that the basic responsibility of New Zealand film makers is

to make films principally for the New Zealand audience. If we don't, no-one else will. I believe it is the New Zealand distributor's responsibility to distribute New Zealand films widely throughout the country. That independent film makers rarely gain access to the television screens of the nation is a waste of personal resources. Some of our films will sell internationally, some will not. We need some kind of subsidy for the latter — they are by definition the truly indigenous films. The people of this country have for too long been subjected to cultural colonialism of the most pernicious kind."

"I make films that will stimulate as broad an audience as possible, otherwise I'd be painting pictures.

"I am an unashamed propagandist. You will always find within my movies a fairly definite message. I like movies to be inspirational — but if they get preachy it's a bad idea.

"I'll go out of my way to be entertaining, to get an audience to sit down, and hook them so they might think about things the next day. It's the next day that you want people to think about things. You want them to talk it over with their next-door neighbour."

[On one of her first films:] "I knew that the film would have no sales potential outside New Zealand. I thought, if I regard every second one as being something that might go on the international market, then I can keep myself in business — but I can also be a New Zealand film maker and address myself to particular things about this country. When I was a kid, that never happened — the only film I can remember that did so was a road safety film that John O'Shea made in the '50s. I remember this film vividly because the van in it was the same sort my dad had. I wasn't used to that when I was growing up in New Zealand in the '50s and '60s — everything came from everywhere else. So, I have a commitment to that."

## Biography

Gaylene Preston was born in 1947 in Greymouth, and attended Calenso High School in Napier from 1960 to 1965. From an early age she was involved in drama and music. Between 1966 and 1968 she attended Ilam School of Fine Arts at Canterbury University, studying painting with Rudi Gopas and Bill Sutton. She remarks: "I found the over-riding non-figurative ideology rather stultifying. It wasn't until I got to Cambridge in England in 1969 that I really blossomed. It was an interesting time. After jobs such as waitressing I eventually became assistant librarian at the local psychiatric hospital. I had already worked as a paid helper at Calvary Psychiatric Hospital in Christchurch and become interested in art and drama therapy. I found things less developed in England than they had been at Calvary. Fulbourn Hospital near Cambridge was in 1970 a progressive institution based on therapeutic community lines. I was involved in setting up its first art and drama therapy programme.

"Even the most progressive institutions in the U.K. at that time were geared to verbal communication only. If you couldn't talk then you were immediately relegated to the back wards. Among other projects I organised a weekly drama workshop for anyone to participate in. It was from this project that I made my first film, quite accidentally. Many highly institutionalised people had become involved in the drama therapy but some of them thought they were practising for a performance. A friend of mine called Suzanne from the drama group at Cambridge University said she could make an 8mm film for us. I was delighted. We made costumes and masks and shot the film. Then one day I returned from work to find a pile of yellow film cans on my kitchen table. Beside them was a film splicer and a little note: 'Have eloped. Gone to Devon with Tony. Love, Suzanne.'

"It was an absolute surprise to me to learn that you could cut out the bits that weren't so great and stick the best bits together with sellotape. (There had been a course at art school called 'Moving Image' but I hadn't realised it was a film course until I was in my second year and had already taken all the wrong options.) The 20-minute film *The Animals and the Lawnmower* went down a storm at its premiere. It seemed to accomplish in one viewing what some of us had been trying to achieve for years. Drama therapy and the value of non-verbal communication was accepted, 'patients' became 'stars', and our project attracted a great deal of interest — even the Royal College of Psychiatrists was forced to face up to the idea of therapy being 'play' not 'work'. I suddenly understood the power of the bright light on the wall and made films after that as an extension of my working life. Gradually they have become my working life.

"In 1973 I gained a study grant from the Cambridge local authority and gained a Diploma of Art Therapy at St Albans College of Art. I disliked the course intensely but was happy to work with the grand old man of British Art Therapy, Peter Adamson. Gradually he helped me get over having been to art school. While on the course I conducted a six-week pilot study on

art therapy at Grendon Underwood Prison in Oxfordshire. In 1974 I worked as art therapist at St Albans Hospital — it was called a 'subnormality' hospital. All of the patients I worked with were severely disabled. While there I made a film called *Draw Me A Circle* for the nurse training school.

"I was becoming more and more disillusioned with institutional psychiatry. I turned to a part-time job at Brixton College of Further Education, teaching the drama electives, 'O'-level art, and art and drama with deaf groups. I found the predominantly West Indian student population stimulating. I made another short film (*Mojak Kojak*) with one of the deaf groups, was involved with friends in several 'home movies', and used video in my drama work (though the gear was generally a problem).

"After six years away I began to feel homesick for New Zealand. I missed the hills. I returned in 1977. Everyone asked me, 'What are you going to do?' I thought it was a silly question because I was doing it. My sister introduced me to John O'Shea of Pacific Films. He directed me to Avalon but I declined — I had had enough of institutions. I travelled constantly with my camera and took several hundred colour slides over about three months. It was a necessary part of recovering from culture shock. I went to Auckland and secured work with the WEA making a video about the community use of Beresford Street Primary School. Before starting this project I thought I'd spend my remaining cash on a trip to Greymouth. I only got as far as Wellington, where John O'Shea offered me a job with Pacific Films. He wanted me to be Art Director. I wasn't sure, maintaining that I only knew about looney bins. He said, 'That's good training for the New Zealand film industry.' I said, 'John, I don't even know what an Art Director does.' He said, 'Don't worry about it. It's a secret profession. Nobody knows.' What I didn't realise at the time was that he wasn't joking.

"I did the titles and credits for many Pacific Film productions, including Barry Barclay's *Autumn Fires*; and directed three short episodes for *Shoreline*. Then I was made redundant. I earned my living doing cartoons, art directing and taking theatre photographs. John O'Shea gave me freelance graphic work whenever possible.

"Then Warrick Attewell rang me up and said, 'Look, a mate of mine's climbing up Ruapehu with this spastic friend of his — let's see if we can make a film on it.' So we raced around and co-produced that one together. He shot it and I directed it. Then we came back and immediately went off to crew on *Middle Age Spread*.

"We sold *All The Way Up There* to Encyclopaedia Britannica for a very good price. We had some money left over and suddenly I found that I could now be a full-time film maker. I was able to turn down art directing for commercials and think of a project that I wanted to do."

[Since 1978 Preston has gone on to direct a number of other outstanding documentaries and dramatic films, including her first feature film, *Mr Wrong*.]

The Auckland City Art Gallery would like to thank Gaylene Preston for her assistance (which included writing a great deal of new material for this catalogue). Several of the above quotations were taken from an interview with Gaylene Preston (by Julie Benjamin and Alison Maclean) which appeared in *Alternative Cinema* vol.11 no.4.

The Gallery would also like to thank the Audio-Visual Centre of the University of Auckland for technical assistance, and the New Zealand Film Commission for its support of this 1984-5 series.

## Documentation

- Lynn Bryan, 'Quietly Observing', *New Zealand Listener*, 22 January 1983, p.16.
- Julie Benjamin and Alison Maclean, 'Revolving Clotheslines and Morris Minors: A Discussion of New Zealand Film Making with Gaylene Preston', *Alternative Cinema* vol.11 no.4, Summer 1983-4, pp.21-4.
- Merrill Coke, 'Getting It Right with Mr Wrong', *Evening Post*, 1 September 1984.
- Diana Bagnall, 'Right Way to Film Mr Wrong', *New Zealand Herald*, 4 September 1984, S.2 p.1.

## Work as graphic artist

Preston has done titles and graphics work for a number of films; she has also designed posters and logos. Her cartoons and illustrations have been published in such periodicals as *Spare Rib*, *Bloody Women*, *Case Con*, and *Nalgo Action News* (England), and *Paperclip* and *Advance* (New Zealand).

## Photography

Her wide-ranging work in this area includes theatre photography for several Red Mole shows, and for *Middle Age Spread* and many other Circa productions.

## Art direction

Preston has worked as art director on various commercials (for Tony Williams Productions, Silver Screen, etc.)

## Gaylene Preston: A Filmography

- 1972 **The Animals and the Lawn Mower**  
The story of a wonderful place where everyone lives happily and the grass never needs cutting — until it's disrupted by a travelling lawnmower salesman. This film was part of a drama therapy programme with longstay patients at Fulbourn psychiatric hospital (near Cambridge, England).  
Standard 8mm colour (separate sound), 20 minutes.
- 1973 **Draw Me A Circle**  
A documentary about art therapy with severely handicapped patients, commissioned by the training school at Cell Barnes Hospital (London). Preston remarks: "I shot it, lit it, recorded sound, edited it, and ruined it with an overwritten commentary!"  
Standard 8mm colour (soundstripe), 30 minutes.
- 1975 **Mojak Kojak**  
"This was the end product of experimental drama with deaf students at Brixton College of Further Education. The simple 'cops-and-robbers' story was conceived by the kids themselves. I shot the film and edited it. My friend Nick Kavanagh helped."  
Super 8mm colour (soundstripe), 12 minutes. Funded by the British Film Institute.
- 1976 **Creeps on the Crescent**  
"Home movie horror — a young woman wanders into a house where a strange reality takes over."  
Super 8mm colour (soundstripe), 20 minutes. Funded by the British Film Institute.
- 1977 **[Beresford Street Primary School]**  
A video documentary, commissioned by the WEA, about the community's use of the Beresford Street Primary School, where parent classes were incorporated alongside primary school activities.  
1/2" high-density B&W videotape.
- 1977 **Toheroamania** (as director)  
The story of the local toheroa season, told from the toheroa's point of view. Preston did some paper animation for the start of the film.  
16mm colour reversal, 12 minutes. Camera: Rory O'Shea. Editor: John Kiley. A Pacific Films/TVNZ co-production (one of three items for 'Shoreline').
- 1977 **Dat's Show Biz** (as director)  
In the style of the 'Look at Life' documentaries of the 1950s, a lighthearted look at the animal hospital, Napier Marineland.  
16mm colour reversal, 10 minutes. Credits as for *Toheroamania*.
- 1977 **Water The Way You Want It** (as director)  
A documentary about water classification.  
16mm colour reversal, 10 minutes. Credits as for *Toheroamania*.
- 1978 **All The Way Up There** (as director and co-producer)  
Bruce Burgess, a 24-year-old, spastic since birth, and Graeme Dingle, a well-known mountaineer, climb Mt Ruapehu together.  
16mm Eastman colour negative, 27 minutes. Co-producer and lighting cameraman: Warrick Attewell. Editor: Dell King. Music: Wayne Mason. Produced by Valhalla Films. Funded by CIP and the Ministry of Recreation and Sport. (This was the first CIP-funded documentary.) Released in New Zealand cinemas as a supporting film to *Middle Age Spread* and later screened on television. Also shown on TV networks in the U.S.A., Britain, Holland, Sweden, Denmark, Malaysia and Switzerland. Distributed in the U.S.A. by Encyclopaedia Britannica. The film has won special jury prizes at the Banff Festival of Mountain Films (1980) and the Festival International du Film Alpine, Les Diablerets (1980).
- 1979 **Middle Age Spread** (as art director)  
Preston was art director and set dresser for John Reid's feature film based on a play by Roger Hall. The production period was September to October 1978.
- 1980 **The Monster's Christmas** (as art director)  
A children's film, produced by Gibson Films and directed by Yvonne Mackay.
- 1981 **Learning Fast** (as producer and director)  
A documentary (without voice-over commentary) about growing up in New Zealand. Students at a Masterton school were interviewed about their lives and ambitions; then a year or so later, they were interviewed again, having left school and found the outside world different from what they had expected. The film was made between 1979 and 1981.  
16mm Eastman colour negative, 48 minutes. (30-minute version also available.) Lighting cameramen: Alun Bollinger and Ian Paul. Editor: Dell King. Gaylene Preston Productions. Funded by CIP, the Department of Education, and the Ministry of Sport and Recreation. Screened on New Zealand television.
- 1981 **Holdup** (as director and co-scriptwriter)  
A parable designed to question community attitudes to the disabled. A blind man, a deaf woman, and a spastic film critic witness the robbery of a cinema. In the ensuing panic their information is ignored because people can not see past their disabilities. The second part of the film consists of an interview with the lead actors who are themselves blind, deaf, and spastic. Preston remarks: "This

film grew out of the Rehabilitation Film Festival I attended in New York. The International Year of the Disabled [in New Zealand] wished to commission a film but I wanted to remain independent. The New Zealand Film Commission funded initial script development which was then approved by the I.Y.D.P. I took it to Gibson Films to provide a production-house base for the film." (See *Auckland Star*, 10 December 1980, p.33 and *New Zealand Listener*, 30 October 1982, p.24.)

16mm Eastman colour negative, 24 minutes. Screenplay: Gaylene Preston and Michael Anthony Noonan. Lighting cameraman: Ian Paul. Music: Jan Preston. Editor: Jamie Selkirk. Cast: Chris Orr, Lorraine Schriener, George Theobald. Producer: Dave Gibson. Distributed in the U.S.A. by Learning Corporation. Screened TV1, 4 November 1982. The film was voted Best Overseas Film by ATOM (Australian Teachers of Media) in 1983; Best Overseas Film for under-12-year-olds in the Rehabilitation Film Festival (New York) in 1983; and won First Prize in the Dramatisation category at the Rehabilitation International World Congress in Lisbon, 1984.

**1981 How I Threw Art Out The Window** (as producer, director and writer)

An experimental video for the Women's Gallery exhibition on sexuality. "A young woman hitchhiker is picked up by a rather strange man (call him Art) who talks art-talk so obsessively she has to throw him out the window and drive to Taihape herself."

Funded by the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council of New Zealand.

**1982 Making Utu** (as producer and director)

A documentary about the making of Geoff Murphy's feature-film *Utu* which looks at some of the issues involved in exploring New Zealand's racial past. Preston describes it as "a non-narrative documentary that went down surprisingly well with the general population, who, as it turns out, don't mind if there isn't an actual linear story".

16mm Fuji colour negative, 48 minutes. Cameras: Alun Bollinger, John Toon and Murray Milne. Editor: Simon Reece. Music: Jonathan Crayford. For Scrubbs & Co. Screened on New Zealand television, 25 January 1983.

**1982 Taking Over** (as co-producer and co-director)

Twenty-five 16-year-old girls who know nothing about the sea, ships or one another, get a chance to take over the 'Spirit of Adventure', a 100-ton square-rigged schooner, sailing her under their own elected captain. Preston says of this television film: "I consider this project rather more Dell King's than my own." (See *New Zealand Listener*, 19 February 1983, p.70.)

16mm Eastman colour negative, 24 minutes. Lighting cameraman: Rory O'Shea. Co-producer, co-director, editor: Dell King. Screened TV1, 22 February 1983.

**1983 Patu!** (as one of the co-ordinators)

Preston was 'middle New Zealand co-ordinator' for Merata Mita's feature-length documentary about the protests against the Springbok tour of New Zealand, 1981.

**1983 The Only One You Need** (as producer and director)

"A gripping story of love gone sour, of robberies and rescues and the long arm of the law." Three music clips for the New Zealand band The Neighbours were linked up as a ten-minute film. Preston comments: "It was shot on various locations very familiar to me, in Blackball and Greymouth. The entire crew worked for free and the people of Blackball contributed heaps."

16mm colour reversal (finished on video), 10 minutes. Lighting cameraman: Alun Bollinger. Editor: Simon Reece. Blackball Films. Funded by the Arts Council Film Fund and TVNZ. Music by The Neighbours. Screened on Radio

with Pictures. Distributed in the U.S.A. by Jo Jones and King. Purchased by the Entertainment Network in the U.K., and also screened there in pubs via large-screen videos.

**1983 Angel Of The Junk Heap** (as director)

A music clip for the Sydney-based group Tribe, shot on location in various Sydney rubbish dumps. For CBS records.

16mm colour negative, 3 minutes. Camera: John Whitteron.

**1984 Mindout** (as producer and director)

A drama designed for use in schools (particularly fourth forms) to encourage discussion about decision making. "Four 14-year-olds enter the interview room of Mr Big (an Orwellian 'Big Brother') and discover that achieving their dreams is not so simple."

¾" Hiband video, 24 minutes. Script: Simon O'Connor. Lighting cameraman: Warrick Attewell. Music: Jonathan Crayford. Editor: Simon Reece. Cast: Bruno Lawrence, Ian Fraser, Tim Diamantis, Jane Wright, Clayton Brown, and Sophie Siers. For the New Zealand Health Education Resources Project.

**1984 Imagine** (in progress)

A documentary covering the visit of anti-nuclear campaigner Dr Helen Caldicott to Wellington. Sponsored by the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War.

16mm Eastman colour negative. Lighting cameraman and producer: Graeme Cowley. Director: Gaylene Preston.

**1984 Mr Wrong** (in progress)

Preston is the director, co-scriptwriter and co-producer of this feature film based on a short story by Elizabeth Jane Howard. A young woman buys a car that is haunted by the ghost of a woman previously murdered in it. As she tries to unravel the mystery of the haunting, the owner has to find new ways to cope. Preston comments: "It's best described as a whimsical thriller — a ripping yarn. No sex, no violence — it's basically about fear and the victim/predator relationship." The film was shot on location in Wellington: proposed length 90 minutes, budget approximately \$550,000.

16mm Eastman colour negative (94) for 35mm blow up. The cast includes Heather Bolton and David Letch. Screenplay: Gaylene Preston, with Geoff Murphy and Graeme Tetley. DOP: Thom Burstin. Operator: Alun Bollinger. Editor: Simon Reece. Music: Jonathan Crayford. Producers: Gaylene Preston and Robin Laing.

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# NEW ZEALAND FILM MAKERS

## at the Auckland City Art Gallery

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A series devised by Roger Horrocks: 6  
Wellesley Auditorium Thursday 6 December 1984 7.30 pm

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### BARRY BARCLAY



Barry Barclay on location in Peru, April 1984

### BARRY BARCLAY

Throughout his career, Barry Barclay (b. 1944) has worked to develop new approaches to film making based on a deep respect for community values. His special aim has been to convey 'minority' points of view, to adapt the technology and routines of film making so they become more responsive to local values and needs. The community emphasis has been present in Barclay's work from the beginning. In 1974, in association with writer Michael King and producer John O'Shea, Barclay directed *Tangata Whenua*, a television series about Maori life and traditions. Maori communities were able to discuss each part of the project in detail. Building up a richly detailed 'inside view' of its subject, *Tangata Whenua* set new standards for New Zealand television. In subsequent films made in many parts of the world, Barclay and his dedicated collaborators have continued to experiment with the process of film making. In

response to our request for autobiographical details, Barclay supplied the following account:

Brought up in the hill country of the Wairarapa behind Martinborough, one of six children. Father managed hill country farms.

*Memories:* As kids, knowing every eeling hole in the river, and being able to walk for hours on scrub-covered hills without being lost; but also learning the realities of farming, like picking up 500 lambs killed in a late storm and tossing them onto the back of a trailer for carting off to a hastily scraped-out mass grave.

*First taste of class divisions:* We were patronized by the farm

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owners (not consciously probably, and usually not in an unkind way) when, after all, my father was running their very large properties.

*First taste of racism:* My mother was the only Maori I saw as a kid, apart from those who came around with the gangs at shearing time. It was not easy for her in such a Pakeha world just after the war.

That background gave me a touchstone for every single major film I have made. It gave me a deep respect for rural people. My one rule in making any film, no matter how complex or seemingly remote the issue, is whether I can take it back to my home town and show it there with pride.

I hate the phrase — it used to be fashionable — that one must make films for the 'lowest common denominator'. I grew up with the so-called 'lowest common denominator', and I believe that if I cannot take any film I am involved with back to those people, and engage and entertain them, then I have failed in my job. Of course they want songs sung and films made.

I remember very vividly as a kid of nine passing on the school bus the shack of a recluse who had a small piece of land on which he grew potatoes. The only time we saw this man was when the potatoes needed tending and harvesting. His potatoes were the biggest in the district and people in the district measured their potatoes against his. One day, we passed his shack and noticed the potatoes were all dead from a blight. A couple of days later he died. The whole district knew there was a connection, something they knew very well deep down, but could not or were not prepared to articulate. But they would have appreciated somebody coming, some time later, and standing in the town square and singing a song called 'The Potato Grower'. This singer would have to realise that the community, right from the youngsters to the very old people, knew the resonances in much more depth than the singer. So humility would be involved. But the town, in a way, was crying out for such a song. So my golden rule for any single film: To make films with and for such people.

*Early 1960s:* I trained for the Roman Catholic priesthood in a semi-enclosed order, the Redemptorists, in Australia. This was a privilege, because I met and worked with people who had the capacity to dedicate themselves to a community ideal without putting themselves first. I learned much of this later on a marae. It is a quality that is probably needed for a longterm commitment to a craft.

*Mid/Late 1960s:* Having left the monastery, I felt disorientated. I had fiddled with writing poetry and short stories, acting and directing drama, painting (even joined an art group) and meddling with clay sculpture, but, for some crazy reason I could not put my finger on, all I wanted to do was to make films. A small company began making trade films in Masterton — agricultural promotions especially. They were friends. I was working in radio in Masterton at the time. When I knew they were planning to set up the company, I left radio and worked in factories and orchards and wharves around the country, waiting for the telephone call they promised. One fine day the call came, asking whether I could shoot a half-hour factory film in seven days' time. I could not even use a light meter and did not know what a wide-angled lens was. So it was an intensive week's training. I worked with the company for four years until it collapsed. I was chiefly working as a cameraman with a Bolex. We shot on almost every conceivable location up and down the country. It was invaluable experience. It taught me to *look*.

Sometimes, I think, one of the terrible things we do to new people coming into the business is that the production and the technical hype stunt the ability to look.

*Early 1970s:* I worked with Pacific Films as a director doing a string of trade films, television commercials (Maggi Soup, Harpic, Coca Cola, Air New Zealand — the whole shebang), and television documentaries. Much credit must go to John O'Shea who stimulated and made steps for many newcomers like myself in the days when cutters and spun glass (for example) were startling innovations.

The *Tangata Whenua* series was a major milestone for me, both personally and professionally. It took me back to one part of my roots. It also disciplined us to search for ways to make the technology of film making subordinate to what people had an urgency to say. At the same time, I became involved with Nga Tamatoa. I was a very poor member, being completely green in this kind of politics. I am doubly indebted to the people who put up with me, for most of us in those times were just learning words like 'institutionalised racism' and of people like Malcolm X. The politics of the day being what they were, my membership of Nga Tamatoa, except for those directly involved in the movement, was a nicely-kept secret. It would have been difficult to maintain funding for *Tangata Whenua* if the television hierarchy had had any inkling that Nga Tamatoa was involved behind the scenes.

The film about Mrs Gandhi was another major turning point. Although I had spent six years in Australia, I had not really been hit by the wider world. In those first two or three days in Delhi, I clung to the hotel, poking my nose out an hour or two at a time. I have since come to love and respect India and other so-called 'Third World' countries with their so-called 'problems'.

*Mid/Late 1970s:* I left New Zealand partly to explore something of the world. It was going to be a six-month trip, but it turned out to be six years. It was partly O.E., but was also prompted by an angry dissatisfaction with the shape that the documentary film format was being pummelled into. In Sri Lanka I became intrigued by a major development project (the Mahaweli River Project), in which half a million farming families were being shifted from one part of the island to another. I became involved in trying to depict the upturn in the lives of poor farmers inherent in the scheme. I scripted a 90-minute feature film portraying the people, and thus ensued a two-year struggle to raise funding on both the international and Sri Lankan front. We obtained the funds to shoot one third of the film, and filming was undertaken in 1979. Subsequently, the production collapsed because of political shifts both locally and in the U.N. system.

The eighteen months I spent in Sri Lanka were a very valuable experience for me. I was introduced to the subtleties of village life in all its harshness — dispensaries with no drugs, villages of 1,000 people with no midwife, walking five miles for water to make a cup of tea. It also taught me the enormous resilience of the extended family, the depth of perception of a culture that stretches back some thousands of years. Oddly enough, much of what I experienced was for me very like those early days in farming communities in the Wairarapa.

*Early 1980s:* This period was largely spent in London, Paris and Amsterdam, with brief trips to Kenya, East Germany and Scandinavia, working on publications and being involved with lobby and research movements concerning themselves with development issues. The experience sharpened my mind, not



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only to Western European cultures, but to the political and economic forces which profoundly affect blocs (like New Zealand) which lie outside the wealthy centres.

*Current Project, 'The Neglected Miracle'*: During this period I developed a major film project: the politics of the control of plant genetic resources, or (in other words) who owns our seeds. This is a seemingly abstract subject, but we have been able to find a formula to present this major international issue where others previously have failed, because we have been able to bring to bear the experiences that have stretched from a back-country farm in the Wairarapa and various marae in Aotearoa to the hill-country hamlets of Sri Lanka, and the potato fields of Holland. On all locations, I have tried to apply the rules of 'The Potato Grower'.

The Auckland City Art Gallery would like to thank Barry Barclay for his co-operation, the Audio-Visual Centre of the University of Auckland for technical assistance, and the New Zealand Film Commission for its support of this 1984-5 series.

Catalogue compiled by Roger Horrocks.

## Barry Barclay : A Filmography

### 1972 THE TOWN THAT LOST A MIRACLE (as director)

Memories of people who were in Opononi during the magical days when Opo the dolphin visited the harbour. (See *Christchurch Star*, 20 May 1972, p.8, and *New Zealand Listener*, 5 June 1972, pp.8-9, and 3 July 1972, p.41.)

16mm colour, 30 minutes. Camera: Graeme Wisken. Script and frontperson: James McNeish. Editor: Ian John.

Producer: John O'Shea. Executive producer for NZBC: Michael Scott-Smith. Pacific Films, for the NZBC Survey series. Televised 7 June 1972.

### 1973 ALL THAT WE NEED (as director)

A film on energy conservation which uses the devices of fairy tale. A mask-maker and an actor help a city to learn the wise use of energy.

35mm colour, 24 minutes. Camera: Keith Hawke. Main actor: Bill Stalker. Producer: John O'Shea. Pacific Films, for Alex Harvey Industries.

### 1974 TANGATA WHENUA (as director)

A television series about Maori life. It was researched and filmed over a period of 18 months (1973-4). The six programmes were: *Spirits and the Times Will Teach* (televised 10 November 1974), *The Great Trees* (17 November), *Waikato* (24 November), *The Prophets* (1 December), *Turangawaewae - A Place To Stand* (8 December), and *The Carving Cries* (15 December). The National Film Library has circulated shortened versions under the following titles: *He Powhiri*, *He Wawata*, *Kuia*, *Mauri*, *Moko*, *The Mountain - The River - The Land*, *Parihaka*, *Piko Piko*, *Pou Kai*, *Rongopai*, *The Sheltering Branches*, *Tokomaru Bay*, *Tuhoe Ringatu*, *Turangawaewae Marae*, and *Wananga*. (See *N.F.L. Catalogue* (1979-80) for individual descriptions of the main programmes.) The series is discussed in the *Evening Post*, 6 November 1974, *Auckland Star*, 9 November, the *New Zealand Listener*, 9 November, p.2, and the article by Michael King in *Landfall* no.121.

16mm colour, 6 x 50 minutes (approximately). Script, and frontperson: Michael King. Camera: Keith Hawke, with Rory O'Shea and Michael Hardcastle. Editors: Ian John, Rick Spurway. Producer: John O'Shea. Executive producer for NZBC: Michael Scott-Smith. Pacific Films, for NZBC.

### 1975 ASHES (as director and scriptwriter)

A portrait of the lives of three women and a priest, based on the theme of resignation, using T.S. Eliot's poem 'Ash Wednesday' as a linking device. (See *New Zealand Listener*, 12 April 1975, p.41.)

16mm colour, 50 minutes. Camera: Rory O'Shea. Editor: Rick Spurway. Actors: Mere Lodge, Dierdre O'Connor, Val Brooke-White, Sam Neill. Producer: John O'Shea. Executive producer for NZBC: Michael Scott-Smith. Pacific Films, for NZBC. Televised 17 March 1975.

### 1976 INDIRA GANDHI (as director)

A profile of Mrs Gandhi, with reflections on her childhood and introduction to political life, and her role as leader of one of the world's most populous nations. Filmed during the 'emergency', *Indira Gandhi* was the pilot for a series (*Women in Power*) which has not been completed.

16mm colour, 50 minutes. Concept, research and interviews: Diarne Shanahan. Camera: Keith Hawke. Editor: Rick Spurway. Producers: John O'Shea, John Barnett, Des Monaghan. Sponsors: TV1, Endeavour Productions, Pacific Films.

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### Documentation

Michael King. 'Tangata Whenua: Origins and Conclusions', *Landfall* no.121, March 1977.

Sue May, 'No More White-Wash' (interview with Barry Barclay), *On Film*, February 1984, pp.13-15.

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**1976 HUNTING HORNS (as director)**

James Bertram recalls his early life in New Zealand, his experiences with the Red Army in China in the 1930s, and his time as a Japanese prisoner of war.

16mm colour, 6 x 30 minutes. Script and interviews: James McNeish. Camera: Rory O'Shea. Editor: Rick Spurway. Producers: John O'Shea, Michael Scott-Smith. Pacific Films, for TV1.

**1977 AUTUMN FIRES (as director)**

An old woman (Olive Bracey) recounts to her nephew (Marty Sanderson) memories of her life in Hokianga, including a late romance.

16mm colour, 50 minutes. Camera: Rory O'Shea. Editor: Dell King. Producer: John O'Shea. Executive producer for TV1: Richard Thomas. Pacific Films and TV1. Screened in the 'Scene' series (TV1) on 31 October 1977 under the title 'In Search of Pakehatanga – Autumn Fires'.

**1977 AKU MAHI WHATU MAORI (as director and scriptwriter)**

*Aku Mahi Whatu Maori* ('My Art of Maori Weaving') is a portrait of the lives and work of two master cloak-weavers, Rangimarie Hetet and Digger Te Kanawa.

16mm colour, 40 minutes. Camera: Rory O'Shea. Editor: Dell King. Producer: John O'Shea. Support from the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council of New Zealand.

**1979 MAHAWELI (as co-director and co-scriptwriter)**

A feature film (unfinished) set in Sri Lanka, depicting the lives of farming families being resettled under the Mahaweli Development Scheme.

16mm colour, 90 minutes. Directors: Barry Barclay, Tissa Abesekera. Script: Suimale Karunaratena, Tissa Abesekera, Barry Barclay. Camera: Rory O'Shea. Producers: John O'Shea, Nimal Karunaratena, B.H. Hemapriya. Sponsors: the Government of Sri Lanka, and the western agencies and governments financing the Mahaweli Development Project.

**1984 THE NEGLECTED MIRACLE (as director and scriptwriter)**

A documentary exploring the politics of the control of plant genetic resources. Filmed in New Zealand, Australia, Holland, Belgium, France, Italy, Peru, Costa Rica and Nicaragua.

16mm colour, with a completed 95-minute Spanish version, and a 180-minute English conference version now in post-production. Principal cameraman: Rory O'Shea. Editor: Annie Collins. Interviews: Peter Hawes. Producer: John O'Shea. Finance: UNESCO, EEC Commission, Threshold Foundation (London), Irish Commission for Justice and Peace, and Challenge Corporate Services.

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# NEW ZEALAND FILM MAKERS

## at the Auckland City Art Gallery

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A series devised by Roger Horrocks: 7  
Wellesley Auditorium Thursday 7 February 1985 7.30 pm

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### IAN MUNE



Ian Mune (right) with camera-operator Paul Leach, on location for *Came a Hot Friday*.

#### Ian Mune

As actor, director and scriptwriter, Ian Mune is one of New Zealand's most experienced film makers. He has 12 screen credits as director and 20 as scriptwriter (including four feature films). He is as much at home on the television screen as the cinema screen, having acted in a number of major series and won seven Feltex Awards. To this must be added his work in radio drama, and his wide-ranging involvement with the theatre as actor, dramatist, director, mask-maker and set designer. It's been an extraordinary 20-year career. Mune has always kept himself under pressure, being drawn to what's new and difficult.

Mune was born in 1941 in Auckland but grew up mainly in Tauranga. At school he studied agriculture but his favourite subjects were English and Art. (Incidentally, his art teacher was Ted Bullmore, the subject of a film screened earlier in this series.) At Victoria University Mune found that he was more interested in the student drama club than in passing units. He began training as a teacher but left at the end of 1964 to join the new professional theatre company, Downstage. During 1965 he was involved in a number of productions as actor or set designer. Then Mune received an invitation to join the Welsh Theatre Company from its director, Gareth Morgan, who had toured New Zealand.

With the help of an Arts Council grant Mune travelled to Wales. Over the next three years (1966-8) in Wales and other parts of Great Britain, he enlarged his drama experience in such areas as improvisation and the use of masks. But it was a difficult period. Money was scarce for Ian, his wife Josie, and their two children; and in the theatre there was constant pressure on him to shed his 'over-bullient' and 'crude' New Zealand style. Turning down a job offer from the Royal Shakespeare Company, he returned with his family to New Zealand at the end of 1968:

"I thought, I'm going back to New Zealand where I can talk my own language. I don't have to pretend to be someone else. We can do it

the other way — whatever that is. Well, the fireworks started going off as soon as I saw Wellington — all the perceptions I didn't know I'd been developing."

Mune worked with Raymond Boyce as design assistant, then re-joined Downstage — which persuaded him to try his hand at directing. Later in 1969 Tony Richardson offer Mune a job at Auckland's Mercury Theatre where he spent the next few years directing or acting in a number of productions ranging from Shakespeare and *Lysistrata* to contemporary work such as *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, *Marat/Sade*, *The Ruling Class*, *Narrow Road to the Deep North*, and *Earth and Sky* (by New Zealand composer Jenny McLeod).

In the early 1970s Mune began to act and write for television. His involvement grew until he took the lead role in the 17-part dramatic series *Moynihan*. By the end of it, says Mune, "I think I had become what I set out to be — a television acting technician — the best hitter of marks and learner of lines and cheater of camera angles in the business — but I also knew it was destroying me. I was getting bad at what I really wanted to do." Mune has always been critical of the tendency for New Zealand television to play safe, to be nervous about upsetting the audience by presenting too many challenges. Independent film making offered an alternative. Mune had always been interested in films, but at the time he began his acting career not many local films were being made. Also, film makers were suspicious of the theatre tradition. To quote Mune: "I remember asking one director, 'Why don't you use real actors instead of those funny people you pick up off the street?' and he said 'We can't use actors on film, we have to use real people'. I thought, 'I'll show you one day, you bastard.'" (Today he adds: "I don't know if I've done it yet but I'm working on it!")

The turning point for Mune was meeting film cameraman Roger Donaldson. Together they formed Aardvark/Mune Productions.

After doing some commercial work they launched out with the 40-minute film *Derek* (in collaboration with their friend David Mitchell, now a well-known architect). This raunchy comedy-drama about the anxieties of turning 30 was almost refused a television screening, but went on to win two Feltex Awards. "*Derek* was a big loud yell that there's somebody in the country who's going to do it differently. That's what we intended."

The next Donaldson/Mune project was a film adaptation of Katherine Mansfield's story *The Woman at the Store*. In Mune's words: "If *Derek* was to say we're here, *The Woman at the Store* was to say it so that even officialdom had to notice. There was a lot of flak over *Derek* and nobody in any position of authority would admit to liking it (except for Bill Sheat). But at least it made us visible and we managed to raise enough money for *The Woman at the Store*. At the same time, *Derek* won Feltex awards and once again we got great press. So then it was hard for the institutions not to give us money for *Winners and Losers*."

*Winners and Losers* (a series of six short-story adaptations) was a milestone in the growth of the local film industry. It introduced new methods of finance, new kinds of sophisticated film making, and a more professional approach to marketing films overseas. For example, Mune and Donaldson were the first to organize New Zealand representation at the Cannes Television Fair, setting a precedent which TVNZ and other groups have since followed. The *Winners and Losers* series also became a popular part of English teaching in New Zealand schools, giving many students their first taste of local film making.

Mune and Donaldson planned the series so that each film involved a different kind of collaboration. On the first film they shared all the decisions, then they played complementary roles, and finally they made a film separately, "working our way from a partnership to independence, by mutual agreement". The week in which the series began its television screening was one of the best displays of Mune's many talents, bringing together *The God Boy* (Mune as scriptwriter), *Shining with the Shiner* (as actor and co-director), *Moynihān* (as lead actor), plus a talk show, on consecutive nights.

What next? "If Roger (Donaldson) couldn't do a feature-film," said Mune, "he was going to explode. Finally he did it — by sheer force of will." *Sleeping Dogs* was the first full-scale feature film made in New Zealand for 11 years. Mune wrote the script with Arthur Baysting, and acted one of the two main roles. Today, having written other feature scripts and "formulated some theories", Mune is very aware of the weaknesses of the *Sleeping Dogs* script; but this film clearly played an essential part in creating today's feature-film industry. "Many people did a magnificent job — Roger in particular, because he had the eye and the intelligence to give that film a very strong look. He's a director who responds well to having scope."

Today Donaldson is working in Hollywood. Mune sampled that way of life while writing early script versions of *Conan the Barbarian (II)* and assisting Donaldson with *The Bounty*. After a year of it Mune decided once again to return to New Zealand. One thing he learned from working in Hollywood is that "different cultures see stories in different things. The Americans wanted me to tell their stories, stories with their myths behind them."

Since returning to New Zealand he has directed his first feature film, *Came a Hot Friday*. He has formed a fruitful alliance with producer Larry Parr and the two are about to make another feature, *Bridge to Nowhere*. After that Mune hopes to film his script *Miss Ulysses from Pukapuka*. He has many other 'stories' to tell — including a script based on Bruce Mason's *The End of the Golden Weather* — but like other New Zealand film makers his desire to go on making features in this country will depend on the changing financial situation and the extent of local support.

Summing up Mune's career it is clear that his down-to-earth style has often been underrated. "Mune's vowels have never been more rounded than the average bloke's," remarked Karen Jackaman in the *Listener*; "Mune's image is that of the good Kiwi joker who does a spot of acting now and then." Behind the casual style stands a skilled professional (as Jackaman also observed). Behind the wide range of his activities can be seen clear values and coherent interests. And behind the famous ebullience ("I shout and jump

around a lot") is a director interested above all in relationships, in "delicate moments of contact between actors", in carefully structured scenes and well-paced editing.

## Documentation

- 'Television One — Putting on the Style', *New Zealand Listener*, 3 April 1976, p.25  
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## Ian Mune : A Filmography

- 1971 PUKEMANU (as actor and scriptwriter)**  
 Mune took the part of Rod in 'A Soft Answer', the fifth episode of *Pukemanu*, a television drama series centred on a New Zealand mining town. This performance aroused so much interest that Mune was given the opportunity to write an episode in the second series (1972) featuring the same character.  
 16mm and video, 50 minutes. Six episodes in each series. Script of No. 5 by Hamish Keith; directed by Donald Hope Evans. NZBC.
- 1971 PINNOCHIO TRAVELLING CIRCUS (as scriptwriter)**  
 This began as a children's play which Mune wrote for Francis Batten and the Theatre Action troupe. Mune directed the first season at the New Independent Theatre, then directed other productions (with a new cast) at Downstage in Wellington and the Mercury in Auckland. Donald Hope Evans directed the subsequent NZBC television version.  
 Video, 50 minutes.
- 1972 SECTION 7 (as actor)**  
 Mune played one of the lead roles in this NZBC television series about the probation service.  
 16mm and video, 27 minutes. Series writer: Hamish Keith. Producer: Douglas Drury, NZBC.
- 1973 RANGI'S CATCH (as actor)**  
 This children's film, directed and scripted by Mike Forlong, was made in 1972 for the Children's Film Foundation. It was premiered in 1973 as the Foundation's 25th Royal Command Performance film.
- 1974 DEREK (as actor, co-writer, and co-director)**  
 A comedy drama about a frustrated man who realises, at the age of 30, that his life is going nowhere. The film was a close collaboration between Mune, Roger Donaldson, and David Mitchell who share the credits for script, direction and editing. Donaldson found the money (approximately \$5,000) and shot the film. It won two Feltex awards in 1974, for best drama and best actor (Mune).  
 16mm colour, approximately 40 minutes.
- 1974 MATLOCK (as scriptwriter)**  
 Mune wrote a script for *Matlock*, an Australian television series (produced by Crawfords).
- 1974 HOMICIDE (as actor)**  
 Mune also took part in this, another of Crawfords' series.

- 1974 CARNIVAL COAST (as actor)**  
A partly dramatized documentary about the use of coastal lands.  
35mm colour, 27 minutes. Made by the National Film Unit for the Ministry of Works.
- 1974 BUCK HOUSE (as scriptwriter)**  
Mune wrote several scripts for this television comedy series, but feels like disowning them because of the changes made.  
Video, 26 minutes. NZBC.
- 1974 THE WOMAN AT THE STORE (as actor, co-writer and co-director)**  
This adaptation of a short story by Katherine Mansfield, set in New Zealand at the turn of the century, focuses on a tragic family situation in an isolated country store. The film served as a pilot for the *Winners and Losers* series, with which it was later grouped. The \$25,000 budget was put up equally by the Education Department, the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council, the NZBC, the NFU, and Aardvark/Mune. *The Woman at the Store* won two 1975 Feltex awards for best actress (Ilona Rogers) and best script (Ian Mune and Peter Hansard).  
16mm colour, 28 minutes. Co-directed by Mune and Roger Donaldson. An Aardvark/Mune production.
- 1975 TAGGART (as actor)**  
Mune appeared as Detective Denby in this pilot for a television series (which did not eventuate). It was the last drama programme made by the NZBC and the first to be shot entirely using ENG equipment.  
50 minutes. Script: Keith Aberdein. Director: Donald Hope Evans. Post-production: Hamish Keith.
- 1976 PLAYERS TO THE GALLERY (as actor)**  
Mune played the family friend in this three-part Australian drama series about a divorce.  
Three one-hour programmes. Script: Roger Simpson. Director: Brian Bell. ABC Television.
- 1976 BLERTA (as actor)**  
While Mune was at Avalon editing *Big Brother Little Sister*, Geoff Murphy and the *Blerta* group were in an adjoining studio making their television series. Mune was persuaded to join the fun occasionally. And the *Blerta* group provided the music for Mune's film.  
16mm and video, six programmes, each approximately 30 minutes.
- 1976 MOYNIHAN (as actor)**  
This television drama series centred on the political and domestic life of Leo Moynihan, Secretary of the Central Carpenters Union. Mune played the title role. A pilot programme was screened in 1975 and the first series of seven episodes began on 6 April 1976. A second series followed in 1977, bringing the total number of episodes to 17.  
16mm and video, 50 minutes per episode. Director: Eric Price. TV1.
- 1976 HUNTER'S GOLD (as actor)**  
A children's drama series set in the 1860s during the Otago gold rush. Mune played Marvello, an itinerant magician. This 13-part series, written by Roger Simpson, was screened on TV2 (beginning on 26 September 1976).  
16mm colour, approximately 27 minutes.
- 1976 THE GOD BOY (as scriptwriter)**  
Mune won a 1976 Feltex Award for his script, which was based on a novel by Ian Cross about a Catholic schoolboy deeply disturbed by the hostility between his parents.  
16mm colour, approximately 88 minutes. Director: Murray Reece. TV1 screening 4 April 1976.
- 1976 SHINING WITH THE SHINER (as actor and co-director)**  
*Shining with the Shiner* was one of the six films based on
- the work of New Zealand writers that made up the *Winners and Losers* series. The films were shot in and around Auckland during 1975. Mune was involved in all of them except *After the Depression*. The series set out "to illustrate the ways various characters overcome or submit to the problems they face". Each film was made for approximately \$20,000, with finance coming from the same sponsors as *The Woman at the Store*. Bill Sheat (then Chairman of the Arts Council) was instrumental in arranging the finance. *Winners and Losers* was the first New Zealand series to be sold widely overseas. It has been used extensively in New Zealand schools (via the National Film Library), and booklets containing the original shooting script for each film were published in 1977 by the Education Department. Some of the films are now distributed on video by Gibson Films. *Shining with the Shiner*, set in 1900, was a comedy about a legendary swagman (the Shiner), based on part of a book by John A. Lee.  
16mm colour, approximately 27 minutes (the standard format for the series). Co-directed by Mune and Roger Donaldson. Screened on TV1, 5 April 1976.
- 1976 BIG BROTHER LITTLE SISTER (as director)**  
This was an adaptation of a short story by Witi Ihimaera about two children trying to cope with the collapse of their family life and the violence of the city.  
Director: Ian Mune. Screened on TV1, 12 April 1976.
- 1976 BLUES FOR MISS LAVERTY (as co-director)**  
A music teacher, no longer young, tries to deal with two bored students and with her own loneliness. The film is based on a short story by Maurice Duggan.  
Co-directed by Mune and Donaldson. TV1, 19 April 1976.
- 1976 A LAWFUL EXCUSE (as actor)**  
A comedy about two ex-convicts starting a business, based on a short story by Barry Crump.  
Director: Roger Donaldson. TV1, 26 April 1976.
- 1976 A GREAT DAY (as actor and director)**  
Two men go fishing but there is an undercurrent of hostility. Based on a short story by Frank Sargeson.  
Director: Ian Mune. TV1, 3 May 1976.
- 1977 SLEEPING DOGS (as actor and co-writer)**  
*Sleeping Dogs*, based on C.K. Stead's novel *Smith's Dream*, presents a vision of New Zealand as a dictatorship challenged by a small guerilla movement. The film explores the tug-of-war between political and personal loyalties. As the first 35mm feature film made in New Zealand for many years, *Sleeping Dogs* had a special historical importance. Mune wrote the script with Arthur Baysting, and acted the part of Bullen.  
35mm colour, 107 minutes. Director: Roger Donaldson. An Aardvark Films production, in association with Broadbank, the D.F.C., and TV One.
- 1977 CASTAWAYS (as actor)**  
Mune was involved in one episode of this SPTV series. *The Bounty Mutineers* was a docu-drama about the attempts of the Bounty crew to settle in the Pitcairn Islands. It was filmed in Rarotonga.  
16mm colour, 50 minutes (one of five programmes in the series). Director: Mike Gibbon. Producer: Edwin Morrisby. Screened by SPTV in 1978.
- 1978 THE MAD DOG GANG MEETS ROTTEN FRED AND RATSGUTS (as co-writer)**  
A children's adventure about two city children moved to the country. *The Mad Dog Gang* won the 1979 Feltex Award for best drama, and also a special Monitor award for children's entertainment. A book version was published by Collins.  
16mm colour, 75 minutes (or three episodes of 30 minutes). Script: Ian Mune and Arthur Baysting (from an idea by Mune). Director: Ross Jennings. TVNZ.

- 1978 HEALTH 78 (as scriptwriter and director)**  
Commissioned by the Health Department to make two health education films, Mune decided that a comic approach would have more impact. The films became *The Auntie Natal Show* and *The Postie Natal Show*. The result was heated public controversy and a lot of useful discussion. 16mm colour, two 15-minute films.
- 1980 HEALTH 80 (as co-writer and director)**  
This sequel won a 1980 Feltex Award for best script (a collaboration between Mune and John Banas).
- 1980 THE MAD DOG GANG SPOOKS WILKIE, WINK WINK, AND THE WOBBLER (as scriptwriter)**  
Further adventures of the Mad Dog Gang, joined by a new member named Pickle. 16mm colour, 75 minutes. Script: Ian Mune. Director: Ross Jennings. TVNZ.
- 1980 GOODBYE PORK PIE (as co-writer)**  
*Goodbye Pork Pie*, commercially the most successful New Zealand film to date, traces the adventures of two men who steal a car and drive the length of the country. Geoff Murphy provided the original ideas which Mune then developed into a script. Mune was scheduled to direct it, but because of another project *The End of the Golden Weather*, he handed this one back to Murphy. 35mm colour, 105 minutes. Script: Ian Mune and Geoff Murphy. Director: Geoff Murphy. Producers: Geoff Murphy and Nigel Hutchinson. An AMA Production in association with NZUC and the New Zealand Film Commission.
- 1980 BIG HEARTED BARNEY BLACKFOOT (as scriptwriter)**  
The challenge for Mune in scripting this children's film (based on a story by Jack Lazenby) was to present the narrative through music and movement rather than words. 16mm colour, 12 minutes. Director: Yvonne Mackay. Producer: Dave Gibson. A Gibson Films Production.
- 1980 NUTCASE (as actor and co-writer)**  
A children's comedy adventure in which an attempt by a gang of villains to activate Auckland's volcanoes is foiled. 16mm colour, 50 minutes. Script: Ian Mune and Keith Aberdein. Producer: John Barnett. Director: Roger Donaldson. Family Fare Production.
- 1981 LABOUR PARTY COMMERCIALS (as director and co-writer)**  
Mune has made many commercials over the years. One of his most important jobs was making the commercials for the 1981 Labour Party Campaign. He scripted them with John Banas, and then directed them.
- 1981 JOCKO (as actor)**  
Mune played Ralphie in the first episode of this TVNZ series about an itinerant farm worker. Bruce Allpress took the title role; Roger Donaldson directed this episode, which was screened on 22 October 1981.
- 1983 ONE OF THOSE BLIGHTERS (as actors)**  
Mune took the role of an undertaker in this dramatised documentary about novelist Ronald Hugh Morrieson and his friends. The film was made over a period of several years. Director: Lynton Butler. Producer: Larry Parr. Mirage Films.
- 1984 THE SILENT ONE (as scriptwriter)**  
*The Silent One*, based on a novel by Joy Cowley, focuses on Jonasi, a boy growing up in an isolated Pacific village, who befriends a white turtle. 35mm colour, 95 minutes. Director: Yvonne Mackay. Producer: Dave Gibson. A Gibson Films Production. Made with the assistance of the New Zealand Film Commission.

- 1984 THE BOUNTY (as advisor to the director)**  
Mune has been interested in the Bounty story for many years, and was an actor in one film version (*Castaways*). When Roger Donaldson was directing *The Bounty*, his first 'Hollywood' film, he wanted Mune to come on location as an advisor.
- 1984 CAME A HOT FRIDAY (as director and co-writer)**  
A comedy about two conmen operating a horse-racing scam in New Zealand in 1949. The film is based on a novel by Ronald Hugh Morrieson. It is now awaiting release. 35mm colour, 102 minutes. Script: Ian Mune and Dean Parker. Producer: Larry Parr. A Mirage Films Production. Made with the assistance of the New Zealand Film Commission.
- 1984 BRIDGE TO NOWHERE (as director)**  
Five teenagers journey into the bush and get involved in some violent trouble. This feature film is scheduled to go into production in February. Screenplay: Bill Baer, from a story by Larry Parr.
- 1984 MISS ULYSSES FROM PUKAPUKA (script in progress)**  
Mune is currently writing a script about the life of 'Johnny Frisbee', a remarkable woman who wrote the story *Miss Ulysses from Pukapuka* when she was 14.

#### Other Film Work

Mune wrote the script for a film version of *The End of the Golden Weather* in close association with Bruce Mason. Unfortunately it has not been possible to finance the film (See *Celluloid Strip*, Winter 1979, p.30, for details of the project).

Perhaps Mune's best-known commercial is the one he calls 'Murrays' cows', a milk promotion that starred Norm Keesing as Murray the Farmer exchanging dialogue with his cows. The script was written by Ian and his wife Josie. The commercial came in for some fierce criticism, but some of its catch-phrases 'caught on' all over the country.

#### Theatre Work

Mune's professional work in the theatre includes the following productions for Downstage Theatre (Wellington):

As director: *America Hurrah*, *Pinnocchio Travelling Circus*, *Luv*, *Narrow Road to the Deep North*.

As actor: *Lady Audley's Secret*, *The Bed Settee*, *The Dumb Waiter*, *Hedda Gabler*, *Oh! What a Lovely War*, *Wind in the Branches of the Sassafras Tree*.

As set designer: *The Waters of Silence*, *Dock Brief*, *To Russia With Love*. Special set construction: *Happy Days* (with Pat Hanly).

For the Mercury Theatre (Auckland):

As director: *The Crucible*, *Lysistrata*, *Marat/Sade*, *Narrow Road to the Deep North*, *The Ruling Class*, *Rocking Cave*, *Pinnocchio Travelling Circus*, *Earth and Sky*, *Moby Dick*, *Enemy of the People*, *Fifty-Fifty*, *Dracula*,  
As writer: *Dracula*, *Pinnocchio Travelling Circus*.

As actor: *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, *Under Milk Wood*, *Marat/Sade*, *Narrow Road to the Deep North*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Wind in the Branches of the Sassafras Tree*, *The Misanthrope*, *Bodies*.

Also, Mune has directed a play for the New Independent Theatre (Auckland), been a member of the Welsh Theatre Company and, in radio drama, written and acted in a number of plays for Radio New Zealand.

The Auckland City Art Gallery would like to thank Ian Mune for his co-operation, the Audio-Visual Centre of the University of Auckland for technical co-operation, and the New Zealand Film Commission for its support of this 1984-5 series. Telecine service (35mm film to videotape) kindly provided by Perspective Video, Auckland.

All catalogues in this series written and researched by Roger Horrocks.

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# NEW ZEALAND FILM MAKERS

## at the Auckland City Art Gallery

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A series devised by Roger Horrocks: 8  
Wellesley Auditorium Thursday 7 March 1985 7.30pm

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### MELANIE READ



photograph by Judith Gibson

#### Melanie Read

*Melanie Read has directed eight films, including the recent feature-film **Trial Run** which has achieved both critical and commercial success. An expert editor, she has edited dozens of films, television programmes, and commercials. She is also well known in the film industry for her work as President of the Academy of Motion Pictures in Wellington in 1982, and Vice-President of the Auckland branch in 1983.*

*She was born in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in 1955. Her mother was Eurasian, her father British. In 1961 the family moved to Sydney, Australia, where Melanie completed her schooling in 1972. After attending a Film Summer School at Sydney*

*Technical College, she travelled to London to enrol in the Ravensbourne College of Art and Design (Film and Television School). Back in Sydney in 1974 she began working for television. In 1977 she moved to New Zealand where she has lived since (apart from a four-month return visit to Australia to complete the film **Witches and Faggots**).*

*The films that Melanie Read has directed have always been informed by her political questioning. She discussed this and other aspects of her film-making in a recent interview, from which the following quotes are taken:*

At film school, there were only 3 women out of 24 in the course. One of the women dropped out after the first year basically because of sexual harassment. I stuck it out longer but all the time I was being groomed for the position of production assistant, and that was the first job I took. I realised I was in danger of ending up behind a typewriter.

Then I managed to get into editing. Making my own film *Curiosities* showed that I was already interested in directing. But there was always the stumbling block of having to earn my living, and editing was my trade — I didn't have time and couldn't afford to direct films.

The chance came after I moved to New Zealand in 1977. It was exciting because the hierarchies weren't as intricate and well-defined as in Australia. Australia had been in the business longer. I was able to arrive in New Zealand with the confidence of having had a few years in a professional situation. So I was able to spread my wings further than if I'd started out in New Zealand. I made a lot of professional friends, people higher up than me, who were willing to help. I was lucky to get involved with television's *Perspective* which allowed me to learn about New Zealand politics. And the series had a lot of really good people working on it.

The situation for women film makers seems to have been different in New Zealand because the industry developed later. When the new wave of political awareness came in Australia, the industry was already entrenched. So, it was harder for women to make themselves heard. In New Zealand, the feminist awareness was there before the industry developed so they were able to have more impact. Women film makers here tend to be political — for example, Merata Mita, Gaylene Preston, and myself — or the current crop, Shereen Maloney, Alison Maclean, Bridget Ikin, Eloise McAllister, and Dianne Cadwallader, for example — whereas in Australia the political women film makers have tended to be shunted off into the alternative, underground, low budget area. Here we seem able to make a mark on the mainstream.

I made *Trial Run* deliberately to be accessible on a mainstream level as well as a political level. *Question of Silence* is the overseas precedent I always mention because to me that was a film where the film makers didn't compromise yet they still came up with a hard-hitting but entertaining film. I know that a lot of men found it totally inaccessible, and I don't want to make films that are inaccessible to men. But I do admire *Question of Silence* a lot. Then there's *My Brilliant Career* which had a lot of commercial acceptance. And *9 to 5*. That's one area I'd like to explore, political comedy. It can be very effective. That's why I went out of my way to make *Trial Run* humorous in places.

Women's films cover such a wide spectrum. A lot of people would like to think they don't, that they can conveniently be put into one category, which is radical and inaccessible. But even 'feminist' films have a vast range.

Some women have said to me, "You're not going to make another film about sisters, or about mother-daughter relationships, are you?" I say, "Just look at the number of films about war, for example — hundreds of them — and we haven't seen hundreds of films that deal with relationships between women yet." The balance to be redressed is still huge.

One of the things I like about women's films is the way they deal with what mainstream films have considered too ordinary, boring and mundane — day to day things, like doing the washing, which to us are tremendously important. But for me the challenge is also to create a new film language. If you start questioning a film genre you also have to start questioning the language of that genre, which comes down to shot construction and editing points and the use of music. When you get down to the details it can become very difficult. Sometimes it's blatantly obvious — like what's sexist about some of the shots

of Prudence in *The Scarecrow* — but other problems are more subtle. It's disappointing that the mainstream reviewers of *Trial Run* have been willing to explore the feminist issues only to a certain level. They don't want to go deeper than the fact that the supporting roles were women or that the film was about a woman.

Role reversal certainly isn't enough! I don't like seeing women on television just perpetuating the same nasty things that the men have been doing on television all these years.

The need to make *New Zealand* films is something that I take absolutely for granted. I wouldn't go so far as to say it was a nationalistic aim because I think there are a lot of negative things about nationalism. But in terms of creating cultural identity, yes. I just think it's a pity that in mainstream New Zealand films we are getting a white cultural identity. The Maori voice has to be heard. For me, the big three problems are sexism, classism, and racism, and they're all inter-related. We have to present them as part of our national identity because they are. Most New Zealand feature films to me are still sexist, classist and racist, even though on some levels they may try to deal with these issues. It reminds me of my days in television when journalists liked to see themselves as unbiased, objective, and all the rest of it. By the time you make films or television programmes you have 25 or 30 years of social conditioning to overcome. You've learned to talk in a particular language — the issues you choose to deal with and the images you present. Most media people have a white middle class perspective. And I get the impression that most male film makers and producers are basically just not prepared to question this way of seeing things.

If I had to label my own political perspective, I would say: radical lesbian feminist. Many people are not prepared to recognise this as a valid political viewpoint. It's like the way the media treat Maori activists — occasionally they need a token black radical opinion, but generally they do not accept such a viewpoint as legitimate.

I didn't market *Trial Run* as a radical lesbian film because it wasn't made from that view, it was made from the feminist part of me. What I'm aiming towards eventually are films that deal with homosexual and lesbian issues as well. It's part of my 5-year plan! I'm aware that an outspoken lesbian will be quickly and eagerly silenced, so I'm taking it slowly. I have to establish a track record before I'm allowed to make those sorts of films. If you're into mainstream cinema, as I am, there are unfortunately certain rules you have to obey.

The oppression of homosexuals is such a huge subject. When I say sexism I mean hetero-sexism — the 'heterosexual norm' viewpoint. Its negative stereotyping oppresses not only women but homosexuals. Like putting poofter jokes in films. Or if a film has a homosexual relationship, inevitably the couple will be portrayed as 'effeminate' and neurotic, pandering to all the stereotypes. Traditional stereotypes of homosexuals and lesbians are just so outdated and negative, and yet most film makers won't go out of their way to create more positive images when they're given a chance. It would be too hard for them. They can't be bothered, basically, to question their roles as oppressors.

(From an interview with Roger Horrocks, 18 February 1985.)



## Interviews with Melanie Read

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The Auckland City Art Gallery would like to thank Melanie Read for her co-operation, the Audio Visual Centre of the University of Auckland for technical assistance, and the New Zealand Film Commission for its support of this 1984-5 series.

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## Melanie Read: A Filmography

### 1974 UNISEXERS

(as producer's assistant)

Read's first professional job was as producer's assistant on a teenage soap opera, made by Cash Harmon, with five half-hour programmes each week.

### 1974 BEN HALL

(as assistant film editor)

A series of 12 one-hour programmes about the life of the bushranger Ben Hall. A BBC/20th Century Fox/Australian Broadcasting Corporation co-production. Read started working on the series as an assistant to the production manager, but later in the year she became an assistant film editor.

### 1976

Read worked as an assistant film editor for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation on *Face Australia* (50-minute documentaries), *Scan* (25-minute educational programmes), *This Day Tonight* (current affairs programmes), etc. In 1977 she was film editor for the *Chemistry* series and *This Day Tonight*.

### 1976 CURIOSITIES

(as writer, director and editor)

An experimental drama about a wealthy businessman visited by an angel of death who attempts to persuade him to give up his fortune. Read got permission from ABC to shoot the film on one of the *Ben Hall* sets. Dissatisfied with the film Read later destroyed the negative.  
16mm colour, 25 minutes. Funded by the Australian Film Commission.

### 1977 TINKER, TAYLOR, SOLDIER, SAILOR (as editor)

This documentary in South Pacific Television's 'Perspective' series traced the experiences of a boy who decided to join the Navy after failing a school examination. One unusual feature of the documentary was the absence of voice-over narration.  
16mm colour, approximately 30 minutes. Directed and produced by George Andrews.

### 1977 THE MAN WHO BROKE THE BANK (as editor)

A 'Perspective' documentary about the collapse of Securitibank, interviewing both creditors and bank employees.  
16mm colour, approx. 30 minutes. Director: Malcolm Hall. SPTV. Nominated for a Feltex Award.

### 1977 TEENAGE UNEMPLOYMENT (as writer and co-director)

A 'Perspective' documentary about school leavers and the problem of youth unemployment in Whangarei.  
16mm colour, approx. 30 minutes. Directed by Malcolm Hall and Melanie Read. SPTV.

### 1978 A FAMILY OF OURS (as editor)

A documentary about a family in crisis.  
16mm colour, 27 minutes. Director: Sam Pillsbury. Sam Pillsbury Film Productions for the Mental Health Foundation.  
Screened TV2 on 2 April 1978. Feltex Award finalist.

### 1978 AGAINST THE LIGHTS (as production manager and editor)

A drama based on Witi Ihimaera's short story 'The Truth of the Matter', about the motive for an attack on a taxi driver.  
16mm colour, 27 minutes. Produced, written and directed by Sam Pillsbury. Screened on Kaleidoscope, 8 September 1980, and at the Auckland Film Festival. Sam Pillsbury Film Productions for BCNZ Television.

1978 Read edited various commercials for Heller Films and for Foliage, and industrial and medical promotional films for Merck Sharp and Dohme.

### 1979 WITCHES AND FAGGOTS, DYKES AND POOFTERS (as editor)

A documentary about the oppression of homosexual men and women, from the Middle Ages in Europe to contemporary Australia. It included a number of Australian interviews and footage of Mardi Gras riots in Sydney. The film was made over a three-year period by a large collective group. The core group of film makers included Digby Duncan as producer, Melanie Read as editor, Wendy Freecloud and Leigh Simms. Completed in 1979, the film was screened at the Mannheim, Oberhausen, San Francisco and Wellington Film Festivals.  
16mm colour, 50 minutes. Made with the assistance of the Australian Film Commission.

### 1980 WILD SOUTH (as editor)

*Wild South* was a series of six half-hour programmes made by television's Natural History Unit. Read worked as editor in 1979-80 on such programmes as *Island of Strange Noises* (which won a Silver Award at the 1980 New York

- Film and Television Festival) and *Black Robin* (a Feltex Awards finalist).  
16mm colour. Producer: Michael Steadman. Director: Neil Harraway. Script: Peter Hayden. Cameraman: Robert Brown. TV1.
- 1980 SPOT ON SPECIAL — DANNY IN FIORDLAND (as editor)**  
A programme about Fiordland, with Danny Watson as frontperson.  
16mm colour, 25 minutes. TVNZ.
- 1980 THE ALPINE SYSTEM (as editor)**  
A documentary about the methods used to capture wild animals alive.  
16mm colour, 25 minutes. Director: Bruce Morrison. Cameraman: Hamdani Milas. Anson Associates.
- 1980** Read edited various commercials for The Film Business and Heller Films.
- 1981 SWORD OF DAMOCLES (as editor)**  
A documentary produced for the Year of the Disabled.  
16mm colour, 50 minutes. Director, producer, and cameraman: Ib Heller. Script: Marcia Russell. Heller Films for TVNZ.
- 1981 THEY SHOOT COMMERCIALS, DON'T THEY? (as editor)**  
A 25-minute television documentary about the making of New Zealand's most expensive commercial, a commercial for Crunchie Bars.
- 1981 SECOND SIGHT (as writer, producer, director and editor)**  
25-minute documentary about actors Deborah Hunt and Sally Rodwell.  
16mm colour. Music by Jan Preston. Camerawork by James Bartle and Ib Heller. Made with the assistance of the Committee on Women and the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council.
- 1981 THEM'S THE BREAKS (as writer, producer, director and editor)**  
A documentary about street kids, made for TVNZ but not yet screened.  
16mm colour, 25 minutes. Cameraman: Ib Heller. A CIP project.
- 1981** Read edited various commercials for Motion Pictures and Silver Screen.
- 1982 SURFACING (as producer, director and editor)**  
A documentary about artist Carole Shephard. It was filmed over a period of three years in order to follow the artist's development.  
16mm colour, 25 minutes. Camerawork by Robert Brown and Ib Heller.
- 1982 CIRCUS (as editor)**  
A documentary about a boy who wants to be a lion tamer.  
16mm colour, 25 minutes. Director, producer and cameraman: Ib Heller. Heller Films/TVNZ.
- 1982 ROBIN'S RETURN (as editor)**  
A natural history documentary, sequel to *Black Robin*, and also a Feltex finalist.  
16mm colour, 25 minutes. Director: Peter Hayden.
- 1982 HOOKS AND FEELERS (as writer and director)**  
A 50-minute adaptation of Keri Hulme's short story. Funded by the Film Commission, it was made on the modest budget of \$12,000. Screened on television in 1984.  
16mm colour. Producer: Don Reynolds. Editor: Dell King. Sound editor: Annie Collins. Produced by Matrix Film and Valley Films.
- 1983 PROFILES (as series editor and post-production supervisor)**  
A series of six 25-minute programmes about New Zealand artists: Philip Clairmont, Neil Dawson, Tony Fomison, Jeffrey Harris, Richard Killeen and Greer Twiss. The first two programmes (Clairmont and Fomison) were made in 1981.
- 1983 TRIAL RUN (as writer and director)**  
A feature-length thriller about Rosemary, a photographer and runner. Living in an isolated beach cottage to work on a photographic project, she finds herself at the centre of increasingly threatening events.  
16mm colour (35mm blowup), 90 minutes. Budget approximately \$650,000. Producer: Don Reynolds. Associate producer: Dianne Cadwallader. Cast includes: Annie Whittle, Judith Gibson, Martyn Sanderson. Music by Jan Preston. Designed by Judith Crozier. Photographed by Allen Guildford. Edited by Finola Dwyer. Cinema and Television Productions. Made with the assistance of the New Zealand Film Commission. Released in New Zealand cinemas in 1984.  
Selected for the Montreal Festival.
- 1984 THE MINDERS (as director and editor)**  
A 50-minute drama for television, on the theme 'Is there death after life?'  
16mm colour. Producer: Eloise McAllister. Script: Val Murphy. Cast includes Judith Gibson and Alison Bruce. Camera: James Bartle. E.E. McAllister Productions. Distributed with another 50-minute drama, *Just Passing Through*, scripted by Sandi Hall and directed by Judy Rymer.
- 1985 MANDARIN SUMMER (in progress)**  
Read is currently writing the script for a feature film based on Fiona Kidman's novel *Mandarin Summer*. Don Reynolds is producing the film, which Read will direct.

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# NEW ZEALAND FILM MAKERS

## at the Auckland City Art Gallery

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A series devised by Roger Horrocks: 9  
Wellesley Auditorium Thursday 4 April 1985 7.30 pm

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### VINCENT WARD



#### Vincent Ward

On the strength of three films Vincent Ward has already established his reputation as a film maker of great originality. *A State of Siege* won two major film festival prizes in the United States, and *In Spring One Plants Alone* became Grand Prix winner of the 1982 Cinéma du Réel Festival. *Vigil* was the first New Zealand film to be selected for the Competition Section at Cannes. Everyone who has worked with Ward has stories about his remarkable energy and determination. For many young film makers Ward's approach is exemplary and his films represent an important new direction in local film making.

Born in 1956, Vincent Ward grew up in the Wairarapa. His father was a third-generation New Zealand farmer. His mother grew up

in Hamburg, leaving Germany in 1932 (at the age of 11) to live in Israel. When the war began she joined the British army and eventually came to meet the New Zealand soldier whom she married at the end of the war. In New Zealand, the couple bought land near Greytown but had to struggle for years to break it in — a hard way of life that is reflected in *Vigil*. Vincent, the youngest of four children, grew up on the farm, attended Greytown Primary School then became a boarder at St Patrick's College (Silverstream). He transferred to Kuranui College for two years so he could major in art.

In 1974 he enrolled at Ilam, the School of Fine Arts at Canterbury University. At first he studied painting and sculpture but by the

end of the first year he had transferred his attention to film making. Ilam offered (and still offers today) one of the very few film-making courses in New Zealand. Between 1975 and 1977 Ward made a number of films and experiments (many of them shot by the same cameraman, John McWilliams); but they were screened only in the art school and today he regards them merely as training for his first 'public' film, *A State of Siege*. Nevertheless his earliest film, *The Cave*, did serve to announce one of his central themes. As he remarked recently: "We're all trying to understand the world we're in, but actually there's no one view of it, though we imagine there is. My way of trying to understand the world is by looking at a number of different points of view — particularly people on the extremes, people who are isolated, people who have a particularly individual way of seeing."

As Birdie, a character in *Vigil*, remarks: "I got to thinking about Justin and the hawks — how he saw them, what they looked like in his head... What you see depends on who you are."

From Malfred Signal's attempt to paint the sea, to Birdie's visual 'bullets', to Toss's dreams, Ward has continued to discover vivid ways to dramatize this theme. It's interesting that his first film was based on Plato's famous image of the cave where human beings live in a world of shadows instead of facing the direct sunlight; knowing nothing else, they see and think in terms of shadows. (A similar contrast is suggested by the amazing last sequence of *A State of Siege*.)

After six years at Ilam, Ward graduated in 1979 with a Diploma in Fine Arts (Honours). During these years he took a wide range of part-time and vacation jobs, including farm labouring work and two months as an editing assistant at the National Film Unit. It was *A State of Siege*, a film version of Janet Frame's novel, that established Ward's reputation as a director. Made on a shoe-string budget, with many people pitching in to help, the film earned an enthusiastic reception. Frame approved of it. The film had a successful cinema release in the main cities, despite the fact that it was not feature length. Albert Johnson, the director of the San Francisco Film Festival who was visiting New Zealand at the time, described the film as "a work of genius" and he helped to set up screenings in the United States.

Ward devoted much of his time over the next two years to the documentary *In Spring One Plants Alone*. He drew upon some of the techniques of *cinéma vérité* of the 1960s and tried to give them new form: "By spending a great deal of time getting to know the people, I was able to observe their behaviour and this meant that much later while filming I was able to anticipate their actions and reactions." This produced a cinematically disciplined film while preserving a sense of immediacy, an immediacy that is conspicuous by its absence in documentaries that exploit the short-cut method of re-enactment. By such 'disciplines' Ward was able to "respect the truth that was in the material" and still end up with a carefully structured film.

Most documentaries concentrate on articulate people or dramatic situations. Ward selected as his subject two people with an apparently minimal, uneventful style of life. By close observation over a long period of time he was able to bring out the richness of the situation, the delicate relationship between the two people and a kind of ritual in everyday actions that reflected the *kuia's* spiritual sense of life. In *Spring One Plants Alone* is, among other things, an opportunity for viewers to "look more closely, to focus, to tune in to a different wavelength".

This film narrowly escaped destruction when Ward's house burnt down in April 1980. Later that year, he travelled to the United States on an Arts Council study grant, in time to attend

the film's screening at the San Francisco Festival. During nine months overseas he visited film libraries and archives, where he was able to follow up his interest in the 'visual storytelling' methods and aesthetics of certain films made at the end of the silent period — such as Murnau's *Sunrise*, von Sternberg's *Docks of New York*, Sjostrom's *The Wind* and Reisner's *Steamboat Bill Junior* (starring Buster Keaton). During a three-month stay in New York, Ward spent time with friends at the Actors' Studio, and wrote the first draft of *Vigil*. He also made a brief trip to South America.

*Vigil* finally went into production in 1983, following an 18,000-mile search for the best location. A farm was built especially for the film. Also typical of Ward's perfectionism were the months he spent looking for someone to play the part of the 12-year-old girl, Toss. (Fiona Kay was certainly a wonderful discovery.) In John Maynard (who also has a background in the visual arts), Ward found an exceptional producer who could solve the practical problems involved in raising money for an unusual film and organizing a long shoot in an isolated part of the country. *Vigil* provides another brilliant example of what Ward calls "a narrative style based on the primacy of the image". At the same time it has an unusually imaginative soundtrack (discussed by Ward in an interview in *Art New Zealand*, Autumn 1984).

Like other New Zealand film makers, Ward is finding it extremely difficult now to finance films in this country. As yet, the Labour government has not been willing to reverse the serious damage done to the industry by the previous government. In recent months Ward has been working on a script in New York. Asked whether he regards himself as 'a New Zealand film maker' he explains: "That's always a hard question because it seems to ask for a simple answer. If you said that my films 'aren't New Zealand', I'd say, 'By Jesus they are!' and stamp my foot. But if you said, 'They aren't universal' then I'd say 'By Jesus they are!' and stamp my foot again. I'm interested less in objective or social realities than in private realities, so it's a special kind of landscape I'm exploring, an interior landscape. In some respects these are New Zealand interior landscapes, because they're the people I know. But I don't see myself as a 'New Zealand film maker' in any absolute sense."

Looking back over his last three films Ward remarks: "I feel they are one exploration, like a triptych. I'd like to explore other directions now." Although he is developing another original script (which has the working title, 'The Navigator of Bangor Iscoed'), he is also keeping his eye out for interesting novels. He explains that he is "not a purist" on this point because "there are novels that a film maker can bring something to, contribute something to, by extending that story into a film".

## Sample Reviews

On *State of Siege*:  
*Christchurch Press*, 17 July 1978 ('Overflow Showing for Exciting N.Z. Film').

*Evening Post*, 22 July 1978.

*Craccum*, 31 July 1978, p 11.

*New Zealand Listener*, 2 September 1978, p 26.

On *In Spring One Plants Alone*:

*Dominion*, 21 July 1980.

*Los Angeles Times*, 27 July 1980 ('The Film Biz of N.Z.')

*San Francisco Chronicle*, 11 February 1981, p 61.

*Los Angeles Times*, 14 March 1981 ('N.Z. Women — Two Portraits')

*Sonovision* (France), April 1982 ('Cinéma du Réel')

On *Vigil*:

*Variety*, 2 May 1984.

*Los Angeles Weekly*, 6-12 July 1984, p16.

*La Presse* (Montreal), 19 August 1984.

*Kolner Stadt-Anzeiger* (Cologne), nr 284/21, 6 December 1984 ('Kultur').

*New Musical Express*, 2 February 1985.

*Cinema* (Paris), June 1984.

*Le Monde* (Paris), 18 May 1984.

*City Limits* (London), 25-31 January and 1-7 February 1985.

*The Times* (London), 25 January 1985.

*The Guardian*, 24 January 1985.

*The Guardian Weekly*, 3 February 1985.

*Time Out* (London), 24-30 January 1985.

## Interviews and other documentation

Vincent Ward, 'A documented account of the making of *In Spring One Plants Alone*', a 24-page report written for the Diploma in Fine Arts (Honours) at the University of Canterbury, 1979. (A similar report — on production aspects of *A State of Siege* — was written by Timothy White, circa 1978.)

Gordon Campbell, 'Vincent Ward: Living on Celluloid', *New Zealand Listener*, 29 September 1979, cover story.

'Movie Escapes Thorndon Blaze', *Evening Post*, 10 April 1980.

Louise Chunn, 'Ward: Happy in a Restless Way', *Auckland Star*, 3 October 1980.

Diana Ward, 'That Personal Quality', *Photo and Audio* (New Zealand), 1980.

Nancy Scott, 'Writing Poetry for the Screen', *San Francisco Examiner*, 10 February 1981.

Megan McChesney, *Taranaki Herald*, 4 June 1983, Weekender p.8.

Philip Tremewan, 'Vincent Ward', *Onfilm* no.1, December 1983, pp 13-15.

Tony Mitchell, 'Vincent Ward: The Eloquence of Isolation', *Art New Zealand*, Autumn 1984, pp 36-9

Merrill Coke, *Evening Post*, 8 March 1984, p 15.

'Vigil', *Onfilm* no.3, April/May 1984, p 21.

Vincent Ward issue of *Alternative Cinema*, Spring/Summer 1984/5, articles by Helen Martin.

Nick Roddick, 'Kiwi Polish', *Stills* (England), July 1984.

## Vincent Ward: A Filmography

### 1975 THE CAVE (as scriptwriter and director)

A story based on the 'cave' metaphor in Plato's *Republic*, raising questions about how people perceive the world. 30 minutes, 16mm colour and B&W. About one quarter of the film is stills animation. Camera: John McWilliams. Incomplete; exists only in a double-head form.

### 1976 BONED (as director)

A film of stills animation, about life on an isolated sheep station. The film, an unusual view of its subject, focuses on the casual violence and conflict between people and animals (including a long sequence showing horses being broken in). 6 minutes, 16mm B&W. Camera: Vincent Ward. Exists only in a double-head form.

1976 Ward made other animation experiments (with stills, scratching directly on film, and orthodox animation) as part of the film course at Ilam School of Fine Arts.

### 1976 VOID (as director, actor, and scriptwriter)

This 20-minute videotape is described by Ward as "an introspective story about someone who plans to set up a camera and commit suicide on film, but fails in the attempt". The part was played by Ward. The soundtrack carries various interviews with the wives of men who committed suicide (taken from a book of actual interviews, re-enacted for the soundtrack of *Void*). The 'investigative' style of cinematography looks forward to the style of *A State of Siege*. Half-inch video. Camera: John McWilliams.

### 1977 MA OLSEN (as director)

A documentary about a remarkable elderly woman living in the country outside Greytown. With a great love of animals and an intuitive understanding of their health, she lives with numerous cats, roosters, hens, sheep and others. 15 minutes, 16mm colour. Camera: Euan Frizzell, Vincent Ward. Made with the assistance of the Education Department and TV1.

### 1977 SAMIR (as cameraman)

A film directed by Timothy White, about a four-year old child. 6 minutes, 16mm colour. Double-head copy only.

### 1978 A STATE OF SIEGE (as director and co-scriptwriter)

Based on a novel by Janet Frame, *A State of Siege* concerns Malfred Signal, a retired art teacher, who moves north after her mother dies, in the hope of starting a new life. Alone in her new house, she is threatened by a wind-storm and a mysterious prowler. The film was shot in Plimmerton and on the southern coast of Wairarapa, plus some interior scenes in Wellington, during the winter of 1977. It was premiered at the Wellington Film Festival on 15 July 1978, then given a cinema release in Wellington (at the Paramount), Auckland (the Classic), Christchurch (the Academy), and Dunedin. In 1980 it was screened (with *In Spring One Plants Alone*) at repertory cinemas in various parts of the USA, distributed by Bauer International Pictures. It won the Golden Hugo Award (for best student film) at the Chicago Film Festival and a Gold Medal Special Jury Prize at the Miami Festival, both in 1978. It was included in the New Directors Section of the San Francisco Film Festival in 1980. Screened by TV1 on 14 October 1979. Purchased by the National Film Library. 52 minutes, 16mm colour. Producer: Timothy White. Script: Ward and White. Cast includes Anne Flannery (as Malfred Signal). Music: John Cousins. Camera: Alun Bollinger. Editor: Chris King. Made on a budget of \$22,000 (provided by Ward and White, the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council, the Education Department, and the Interim Film Commission).

**1980 SONS FOR THE RETURN HOME (as art director)**

Ward worked on art direction and props for this feature film, based on Albert Wendt's novel about the relationship between a Samoan man and a New Zealand woman. The film was shot in Samoa and New Zealand early in 1979. 117 minutes, 35mm colour. Director: Paul Maunder. Distributed by the New Zealand Film Commission.

**1980 IN SPRING ONE PLANTS ALONE (as researcher, director and producer)**

A remarkable documentary about an 82-year-old Maori woman who lives in an isolated part of the Uraweras with her wholly dependant 40-year-old son. The film was 27 months in the making, with shooting spread over 18 months. It won a Silver Hugo Award at the 1980 Chicago Film Festival and was Grand Prix Winner at the 1982 Cinéma du Réel Festival. In 1980 it toured the USA with *A State of Siege*: this included a San Francisco Film Festival screening. In New Zealand, copies are held by the National Film Library. 45 minutes, 16mm colour. Camera: Alun Bollinger, Leon Narbey. Editor: Chris Lancaster. Music: Jack Body. Made with the assistance of the Education Department, the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council, and the New Zealand Film Commission.

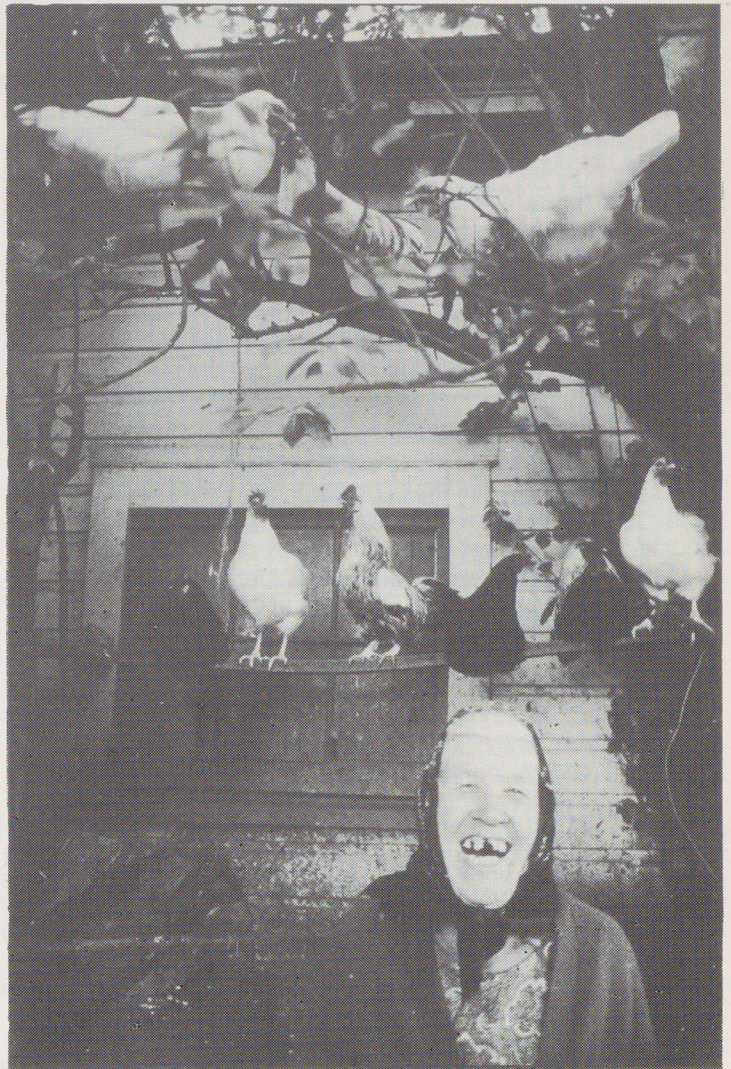
**1982** Ward did two weeks of visual research for Geoff Murphy's feature-film *Utū*, which went into production in 1982.

**1984 VIGIL (as director and co-scriptwriter)**

A feature film, about which Ward has said: "As a child growing up on a farm, you are alone for long periods of time. You invent imaginary worlds. *Vigil* is precisely that: the story of a solitary child who watches, fantasizes and dreams. The fragments of reality she perceives are put together according to her own logic." The film was shot at Uruti in Taranaki during the winter and spring of 1983. (16 weeks were spent on location, including a 10-week shoot. It became the first New Zealand film to be selected for Competition at the Cannes Film Festival. In the same year (1984) it was chosen as Best Film at the Prades Film Festival by popular choice. It was released in New Zealand in March 1985. 90 minutes, 35mm colour. Producer: John Maynard. Script: Vincent Ward and Graeme Tetley. Camera: Alun Bollinger. Editor: Simon Reece. Music: Jack Body. Cast: Fiona Kay, Bill Kerr, Penelope Stewart, Frank Whitten. John Maynard Productions. With the assistance of the New Zealand Film Commission.

**1985 THE NAVIGATOR OF BANGOR ISCOED (in progress)**

This is the working title of Ward's current feature film project, which he is co-scripting.



*Ma Olsen*

*The Auckland City Art Gallery would like to thank Vincent Ward for his co-operation and the New Zealand Film Commission for its support of this 1984-5 series.*

*All catalogues in this series researched and written by Roger Horrocks.*

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# NEW ZEALAND FILM MAKERS

## at the Auckland City Art Gallery

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A series devised by Roger Horrocks: 10  
Wellesley Auditorium Thursday 2 May 1985 7.30pm

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### BRUCE MORRISON



#### Bruce Morrison

Bruce Morrison is one of New Zealand's most experienced directors. He has done innovative work in many areas of film and television, including feature films, documentaries, current affairs programmes, drama series, and rock videos.

He was born in 1944 in Dunedin, growing up in a "very comfortable, straight, middle-class environment" that he would later recall ironically in some scenes of *Constance*. From Kings High School he went to Otago University to do an arts degree but found that his interests "didn't mesh too well with the academic system." He found a part-time job in the Dunedin television studio more exciting and in 1967 he left his studies so that he could work there full-time. Television in Dunedin was still in the formative stage: "Everyone made their mistakes on air. We were given a pretty free hand and we learned as we went along. From that point of view it was a good time to be in television — I was able to experiment." Within 18 months of starting work as a floor manager, Morrison was directing programmes. "I'd become fascinated by the whole business of film and television, how

images went together. My first programme was *The Home Gardener*. The basic rules for making a film about rose pruning are pretty much the same as for any subject! So, that's how I got my training — gardening, current affairs, and making some of New Zealand's first rock clips." Each week Morrison would select a record from the hit parade and make a film to accompany it, which was then used as an insert for *Five Live* (a programme for older children).

Outside television, there seemed to be little happening in the film industry, now that John O'Shea's brave attempt to create feature films had run out of steam. Dunedin was a city with almost no 'film culture'. There was, however, a small literary and arts scene. Morrison remembers the "duffle-coat days" of the early 1960s, when debate centred around various 'underground' figures such as Ferlinghetti, Kerouac, the writers of *Evergreen Review* and *Paris Review*, and the French Existentialists — heady arguments to a background of jazz music. He also remembers the impact of the new European films reaching Dune-

din at the State Cinema (since demolished). They included Fellini's *La Dolce Vita*, Visconti's *Rocco and his Brothers*, and Truffaut's *Jules and Jim*. They demonstrated that films could be 'realistic', could explore serious social themes and intense personal relationships, and at the same time display an interesting style and form. "The use of the camera or the way images were juxtaposed was an integral part of what the movie was about. The style wasn't flaunted, but it was apparent." (Later, in *Constance*, Morrison was to include a 1950s scene in which Constance visited the Hollywood Cinema to see an Italian neo-realist film, in sharp contrast to her earlier film-going).

In Dunedin, Morrison knew two other people with a serious interest in films — Bruce Clark (who did some 16mm filming with Morrison when they were students, then later made *The Games Affair* and went off to the UCLA film school) and Chris Thomson (who is today in Australia directing television programmes such as *1915*). But film-going and friends did not prevent Morrison from feeling that he had "got into a rut" in his work in Dunedin, so in 1969 he left his job and went overseas.

After some work as production assistant on feature films in Ireland (including Roger Corman's *The Red Baron*), he became a director for the BBC in London and Birmingham. He was impressed by the high degree of professionalism throughout the BBC. This was reflected in the thorough planning, and the speed and precision with which everyone responded to accidents and other problems.

In 1972 Morrison returned to New Zealand, partly for family reasons and partly because of his old interest in the possibility of making feature films here. At first the only job available was in Dunedin, where he went back to producing current affairs programmes for television. Two years later he moved to Auckland for *Review*, an arts programme which enabled Morrison and his fellow directors, Hamish Keith and Keith Hunter, to create one of the liveliest and most adventurous series yet seen on New Zealand television. In 1975-6 he was involved in another innovative documentary series, *Encounter*, organised for SPTV by Edwin Morrisby. This Australian producer had come to New Zealand primarily to find sponsorship for *Castaways*, a drama series based on the history of the South Pacific. When SPTV accepted the project, Morrisby asked Morrison to direct three of the programmes. This ambitious series, filmed on location, served to extend Morrison's skills as a drama director and scriptwriter.

He left television in 1977, before the end of the series, but continued working as a contract director. He had already produced and directed some projects independently — for example, *Red Deer*, a film made in 1976-7 which attracted worldwide interest. Morrison's main aim now was to mount a feature film, but this proved to be a slow process. The New Zealand feature industry was only just beginning. Meanwhile, he supported himself through contract jobs which included a number of excellent documentaries such as *Pacific People* (shot in Fiji, Samoa and the Solomon Islands in 1978) and 'Kaleidoscope' programmes (such as the profiles of Frank Sargeson and Witi Ihimaera).

The feature-film *Constance*, which was planned over a period of four years (1980-4), vividly conjures up the claustrophobic aspects of New Zealand life during the late 1940s and '50s. It also displays Morrison's sophisticated skills as a film maker. Strong themes (such as the seductive power of Hollywood, and a woman's attempt to escape social restrictions) are explored through a highly-developed visual style. *Shaker Run*, Morrison's second feature, is less elaborate in its camerawork, but its wealth of fast action and fast editing create other kinds of visual interest.

In recent years Morrison has become one of the most experienced directors of music videos in this country. It's a genre he finds particularly compatible with directing and writing feature films. Music videos give him the opportunity to experiment, to try out techniques and locations that he may one day use in another project. They also have the advantage of being quick to make — a typical schedule involves two days preparation, two days shooting, and two days editing. The term 'music video' is a simplification since the item is often shot on film before being transferred to video\* for some or all of its post-production. The completed videos are often distributed widely overseas as well as in New Zealand.

Morrison has continued to develop his documentary skills, for example in the important series of *Profiles* of New Zealand painters and sculptors which he directed in 1983 (working with Hamish Keith as his art advisor). Morrison's method was to begin with 'saturation interviewing' of the person being profiled, using sound tape only. The aim was a wide-ranging discussion not structured by the interviewer's preconceptions. Next, there was a long editing process during which the tapes were transcribed: the most interesting comments were selected, and those pieces were arranged and re-arranged by Morrison until he had created a clear overall shape. Then the film crew went to the artist to obtain some 'sync sound' footage, expanding on certain points in the previous interview. The crew also shot examples of the artist's work and particular scenes to accompany the pieces of sound-only interview that would be used in the film. This approach ensured that the documentary began in an open-minded way yet ended up with a coherent form. The sound-only interviews produced material that would probably not have emerged in the presence of a film crew. When the documentary had been edited it was shown to the artist for his final O.K. In his dealings with the subjects of his documentaries Morrison has always tried to be conscientious: "I've seen too many film crews adopting a sort of scorched earth policy to the people and locations they use."

Among the film makers with whom Morrison has enjoyed a close working relationship over the years are Keith Hunter (director and writer), Kevin Hayward (D.O.P.), and Philip Howe and Michael Hacking (editors). During the last three years he has often worked in partnership with Mirage Films.

Morrison is married to the actress and singer Annie Whittle who has collaborated with him on several film and television projects. They share the company 'Anson Associates.'

## DOCUMENTATION

The many newspaper and magazine items on *Constance* include: 'Old Civic to Become a 10-Second Star', *Auckland Star*, 9 May 1983, p.A2.

'Behind the Making of *Constance*', *Auckland Star*, 2 June 1983, pB1.

'A Celluloid World', *Signature*, June/July 1983, pp.40-1.

'Turning Back the Auckland Clock', *Auto Age*, November/December 1983, pp.64-5.

'All Eyes on *Constance*', *Auckland Star*, 27 February 1984, pB1.

'Freda's Daring Days', *Auckland Star*, 22 March 1984, pB1.

'Director Brings the Job Down to Earth', *N.Z. Herald*, 23 March 1984.

'Donogh Reached for the Sky', *New Zealand Women's Weekly*, 7 May 1984, pp.40-3.

The most detailed interview with Morrison was that conducted by William Kedell for *ChaCha*, no. 7, November 1983.

For other items on Morrison's work see *OnFilm* magazine and the New Zealand Film Commission's Newsletter.



## Bruce Morrison : A Filmography

- 1966** Beginning in 1966, Morrison worked in television in Dunedin. He became a producer/director of 16mm insert material for the regional current affairs programme. He was also responsible for a series on gardening, and created some of New Zealand's first rock music clips (as film inserts for *Five Live*).
- 1968 THE MAKING OF A PRIEST (as director and scriptwriter)**  
Morrison's first documentary film focused on the Mosgiel Seminary.  
15 minutes, 16mm B&W. NZBC television.
- 1968 THE LODGER (as director and scriptwriter)**  
An experimental drama incorporating poetry and music, made during a television production course. Though it never received a television screening it was important to Morrison as his first experimental work.  
15 minutes, 16mm B&W (sep-mag only).
- 1968-69** Continued to work as a television producer/director in Dunedin, responsible for studio-based light-entertainment and talk shows, and outdoor broadcasts of orchestral concerts and various public events. Also directed film inserts for children's programmes, and a semi-dramatized documentary (produced by Robert Lapresle) about a Maori boy moving to Wellington from the country.
- 1969 THE MUTTONBIRDERS and THE MEAT HAWKS (as director)**  
These documentaries were produced for television's *Landfall* series by Peach Wemyss Astor Ltd (Wellington). *The Muttonbirders* (which is now held by the National Film Library) looked at Maori methods of catching and preserving muttonbirds. *The Meat Hawks* was a study of deer culling. Approximately 30 minutes, 16mm B&W. Producer Robert Lapresle. NZBC.
- 1970** After leaving his television job in 1969, Morrison travelled to Ireland. Based at Ardmore Studios (south of Dublin), he worked on various films as production assistant. Among them was *The Red Baron* (released in 1971), a Roger Corman production on which Morrison worked as Third Assistant.
- 1970-72** Employed by the BBC as a director (in London and Birmingham). Involved in current affairs programmes such as '24 Hours', 'Nationwide' and 'This Week in Britain', working usually with a small (five-person) film crew and a journalist. Also directed some studio programmes.
- 1972-73 THE SOUTH TONIGHT (as producer/director)**  
Returning to New Zealand in 1972, Morrison took a television job in Dunedin, working for 18 months on this regional current affairs programme.  
30 minutes each programme, studio-based, with film inserts (colour).
- 1974 REVIEW (as producer/director)**  
Early in 1974 Morrison moved to Auckland to work on this arts programme (a forerunner of 'Kaleidoscope'). He had to produce one programme every three weeks, as did Hamish Keith and Keith Hunter. He was also the overall producer of the series.  
30 minutes each programme, 16mm colour.
- 1974 RUN (as producer/director)**  
*Run* is a good example of the experimental nature of some of the *Review* programmes. It was based on a piece of music by John Cousins, specially commissioned for the programme. *Run* begins in documentary style (with Cousins going for a run on the Port Hills) but grows increasingly abstract.  
30 minutes, 2" videotape (a mix of 16mm film and video effects). *Review* series, BCNZ.
- 1975-76 ENCOUNTER (as producer/director)**  
A wide-ranging documentary series created for SPTV by Edwin Morrisby. The series enabled four directors (Keith Hunter, George Andrews, Paul Leach, and Morrison) to produce an independent 30-minute documentary every four weeks. Morrison made six, including *The Obese New Zealander* (widely used as an educational film), *Meat* (which follows the complete process by which an animal ends up as a packet in a supermarket), and *The Burnt Ones* (a profile of Brian Bell, writer and raconteur, who describes how difficult it was for political non-conformists to survive the 1950s).  
30 minutes each programme, 16mm colour (plus some studio video material).
- 1976 SADDLEBACK (as co-director and co-writer)**  
This documentary provides "a textbook study of how a rare bird can be saved from extinction". The bird is the saddleback, resident on one of the remote Muttonbird Islands, where the Wildlife Department is mounting a rescue operation.  
50 minutes, 16mm colour. (There is also a 25-minute version.) Camera: Robert Brown. Editor: Philip Howe. Directed and scripted by Morrison and Keith Hunter. Produced by Sprocket Films (a company formed at the end of 1975 by Morrison, Hunter and Keith Ballantyne).
- 1976 THE BOY CHIEF OF TONGA (as director)**  
South Pacific Television was persuaded by Edwin Morrisby to sponsor 'Castaways', a series of five dramas based on real-life events. *The Boy Chief of Tonga* traced the experiences of a 15-year-old English boy who became a Tongan prisoner in 1806. Morrison has described this programme — the first of the series — as a combination of his ideas with Morrisby's. (He worked in a more independent way on the next two programmes.) The series went into production in February 1976.  
50 minutes, 16mm colour. Screened by TVNZ in 1978.
- 1977 CASTAWAYS OF THE GENERAL GRANT (as director and scriptwriter)**  
The second programme that Morrison made for *Castaways* told an epic story of survival involving 15 people who were shipwrecked in the Auckland Islands. It was filmed on location in those islands and on Stewart Island.  
75 minutes, 16mm colour. Camera: Kevin Hayward. Editor: Philip Howe. Executive Producer: Edwin Morrisby. Screened by SPTV in 1978.
- 1977 RED DEER (as co-director and co-writer)**  
A study of what happens to an animal introduced into a foreign ecosystem — the red deer, brought to New Zealand during the last century. The original 75-minute film was re-edited (at Bristol) to a 50-minute version entitled *Deer at any Price*, for the BBC and other television buyers. Also, a 25-minute version (*Red Deer*) was made for the American market. *Red Deer* won a Blue Ribband award as Best Education Film at the New York Television Festival, and the 75-minute version was invited to Filmex (Los Angeles). *Deer at any Price* was screened on BBC Television in February 1980.  
16mm colour. Camera: Hamdani Milas and Robert Brown. Editor: Philip Howe. Directed and scripted by Morrison and Keith Hunter. Sprocket Films.
- 1977 MRS THOMPSON AND THE CONVICT KING (as director and scriptwriter)**  
The history of Barbara Thompson, who was shipwrecked on an island in the Torres Strait, where she lived for four years.  
50 minutes, 16mm colour. Executive Producer: Edwin Morrisby. Screened by SPTV (*Castaways* series) in 1978.

**1977** Morrison left television. He made the last of his *Castaways* programmes as a contract director.

**1978 PACIFIC PEOPLE (as director)**

As a contract director Morrison made three documentaries about "change and change-makers in the Pacific". The topics were (1) a community worker concerned with the health and welfare of women in the Solomon Islands; (2) a Fijian M.P. setting up work schemes in his home village; and (3) a young fisherman involved in a training scheme funded by the Samoan government.

25 minutes each programme, 16mm colour. Reporter: Ian Johnstone. Editor: Michael Hacking. TVNZ

**1979 ANNIE (as director and producer)**

This entertainment special, including music and drama, showcased the talents of Annie Whittle.

50 minutes, 16mm colour. Editor: Michael Hacking. Anson Associates.

**1979 SHORTY FROM SHOTOVER (as director and producer)**

A documentary about a goldminer in his 80s who lived on a bus in a motor camp near Cromwell. (This was a 'one-off' programme for TVNZ.)

25 minutes, 16mm colour. Camerawork and editing: Hamdani Milas.

**1979 RADIO WITH PICTURES (as producer)**

Morrison produced this weekly television series — a showcase for rock-music videos — for six months, while he was editing *Annie*.

**1980** Morrison travelled widely in the United States and Europe marketing his film *Red Deer*.

**1980 THE SEA CHILD (as director and scriptwriter)**

A "modern fairy story" set in the Maori coastal community of Miti-Miti. The Sea Child is played by 9-year-old Rozanna Tahana.

25 minutes, 16mm colour. Camera: Kevin Hayward. Sound: Michael Westgate. Editing: Michael Hacking. Music: Annie Whittle. Anson Associates.

**1981 -82** Morrison worked as a contract director for *Kaleidoscope*, making half-hour documentaries on Witi Ihmaera, Frank Sargeson, the New Zealand Ballet Company, and other subjects.

**1983 PROFILES (as director)**

A series of six documentaries featuring New Zealand artists: Philip Clairmont, Neil Dawson, Tony Fomison, Jeffrey Harris, Richard Killeen, and Greer Twiss. The series grew out of Morrison's concern that television was failing to put leading artists and their work on record. Each 'profile' places the artist's work in the context of his life, working situation, and ideas.

25 minutes, 16mm colour. (A 35mm blowup of the Fomison 'profile' was screened with *Constance*.) Technical advisor: Hamish Keith. Interviews by Morrison and Keith. Camera: Kevin Hayward. Series editor: Melanie Reid. Produced by Anson Associates. Copies have been purchased by the National Film Library, the Department of Foreign Affairs, and various New Zealand art galleries. All source tapes and film off-cuts have been given to the National Art Gallery to be made available to those doing research on the artist's work.

**1984 CONSTANCE (as director and co-writer)**

A feature film about a restless young woman who feels stifled by the provincial atmosphere of New Zealand in the late 1940s. She dreams of a more stylish way of life, closer to that presented on cinema screens. The original idea came from Morrison himself who submitted it to CIP as a television drama proposal. CIP commissioned a script; but after Morrison had written a 75-minute version CIP decided that

television could not sponsor such a large project. Morrison then turned to producer Larry Parr. The story was rethought by Jonathan Hardy who wrote a feature film script in 1981. There were several more versions and the final script credit was shared by Hardy and Morrison. The film was shot between March and May 1983 (on a ratio of 5:1). *Constance* was premiered at the Wintergarden in March 1984. It has screened at a number of overseas film festivals, and won the Bronze Charybidis Award at the 1984 Taormina Festival. 105 minutes, 35mm colour. (The original version of 115 minutes has never been screened publically.) With Donogh Rees as Constance. D.O.P.: Kevin Hayward. Editor: Philip Howe. Production Supervisor: Dorthe Scheffman. Producer: Larry Parr. Mirage Films, with the assistance of the New Zealand Film Commission.

**1985 SHAKER RUN (as director)**

An action adventure feature film centred around the theft of biological warfare material and the pursuit of a car by the New Zealand Security Service, from Dunedin via Central Otago to Wellington. The film was shot in eight weeks in July-August 1984, then completed to the double-head fine-cut stage in the following month. (Like many New Zealand feature films made at this time, *Shaker Run* had to be rushed through pre and post-production so as to be completed before the cut-off date for the old film tax regulations.) The final sound mix was completed in January 1985.

91 minutes, 35mm colour. Cast includes Leif Garrett, Lisa Harrow, Cliff Robertson. Script: James Kouf Jr. Producers: Larry Parr, Henry Fownes, Igo Kantor. D.O.P.: Kevin Hayward. Editor: Ken Zemke. Mirage Films. Not yet released in New Zealand.

**1982 -85** In recent years Morrison has made many films and videos of rock music. The usual format is three to four minutes in length, shot on 16mm colour film then transferred to video. Morrison has generally worked as a contract director for the television series '*Radio with Pictures*' but videos have also been sponsored by record companies (produced under the aegis of Mirage Films or Anson Associates). Morrison's usual cameraman is Chris White (TVNZ) or Craig Howard or Bob Richardson (for jobs not sponsored by TVNZ). The videos have been screened on television in New Zealand and used by record companies to promote their products in Australia, England, the U.S.A., etc.

Titles include:

Dave McCartney, 'Dance On' and 'I'm in Heaven'; Lee Connolly, 'Voodoo Groove'; Hip Singles, 'After the Party'; Narcs, 'Look the Other Way'; Sinclair Brothers, 'The Way It Will Be'; Danse Macabre, 'Between the Lines'; Graham Brazier, 'No Mystery' and 'Billy Bold'; Techtones, 'You're Never Alone'; Midge Marsden, 'Carry My Blues Away'; Screaming Meemees, 'Fear is the Key' and 'Days Go By'; Instigators, 'Hope She's Alright'; Josie Rika, 'Custom Made'; Narcs, 'Missing in Action'; Penknife Glides, 'Nervous'; Blind Date, 'Apache' and 'Local Dance'; Neons, 'Time of the Season'; Tom Sharplin, 'Sweet Lolita'; Herbs, 'French Letter'; Monte Video, 'Sheeba Shishashu'. 'I'm In Heaven' won an award for Best New Zealand Video of the Year.

**1985** Morrison is currently working on two feature scripts, *Queen Street Rockers* (produced by Larry Parr) and *Electric Hands* (produced by himself).

*The Auckland City Art Gallery would like to thank Bruce Morrison for his co-operation, the Audio Visual Centre of the University of Auckland for technical assistance and the New Zealand Film Commission for its support of this 1984-5 series.*

All catalogues in this series written and researched by Roger Horrocks.

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## NEW ZEALAND FILM MAKERS at the Auckland City Art Gallery

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A series devised by Roger Horrocks: 11  
Wellesley Auditorium Thursday 6 June 1985 7.30pm

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### DAVID BLYTH



photograph by Derek Henderson

#### David Blyth

David Blyth (born in Auckland in 1956) has opened up some new directions for New Zealand film making. Turning away from naturalistic styles, he concentrated at first on experimental films ('psychodramas' such as *Circadian Rhythms* and *Angelmine*), then shifted his attention to B-movies (such as *Death Warmed Up*, a feature film combining horror and black comedy, which has enjoyed considerable success overseas). Blyth comments: "I've tried to take my bearings from the main body of film art, not from provincial ideas of realism." His work has always been controversial, triggering off arguments about censorship and the correct path for local film making to follow. He believes strongly that New Zealand feature films have neglected the young adult audience, and that low-budget films able to operate on several levels — exploring serious themes within the framework of popular entertainment genres — offer the best opportunity for local film makers to stay in business.

Among favourite directors he cites Luis Buñuel as someone who has managed to incorporate visual experiment and social satire within commercial formats.

Educated at St Paul's Collegiate and Auckland Grammar School, Blyth studied for his Law Intermediate at Auckland University before deciding that films interested him more than law. With Paul Oremland he formed a film-making group at the University, each using a Students' Association grant to make an ultra-low-budget experimental film. Blyth's project, *Circadian Rhythms*, was scripted by Richard von Sturmer, a poet involved in street theatre and subsequently in music groups such as The Humanimals and Vegetation. Von Sturmer and Blyth "pooled their dreams" in the way that Buñuel and Dali had done in 1928 for the Surrealist film *Un Chien Andalou*. Blyth, who was currently studying silent films in a university course, was so impressed by *Un Chien Andalou* that he

screened it dozens of times. He later commented: "That film has never been rivalled in originality. The visual surprise element is still there. I see film as quite magical. I like to pull rabbits out of hats to surprise people." *Circadian Rhythms* attempted "to slip past the conscious mind, to explore subconscious areas." This sort of 'underground' film making was something new to New Zealand, although there had been partial precedents such as *Aard* and *Threshold*. *Circadian Rhythms* was completed for \$750 using outdated film-stock purchased from a government department. For the soundtrack the sounds of a baby being born were recorded at National Women's Hospital, and composer Ross Harris gave permission for his electronic work *Horizons* to be included. The film was screened by film festivals and student groups and reviewed in the *New Zealand Listener*, generating interest and controversy out of all proportion to its tiny budget.

A visit to Sydney (November 1976-February 1977) gave Blyth access for the first time to a wide range of unusual films, although he could find few Australians working in the areas that interested him. Mostly he was impressed by classic films (such as Maya Deren's *Meshes of the Afternoon*). Returning to New Zealand he resumed his university studies, though he took time out to work in Rotorua on Tony Williams's feature film *Solo*. In 1978 he pulled off another remarkable coup — making a feature film that was accepted for cinema release on the incredibly low budget of \$39,000. This was *Angelmine*, as dreamlike and experimental as *Circadian Rhythms* (but with rock music and explicit sex scenes that increased its commercial potential). The posters described it as "New Zealand's own erotic fantasy that's far too close to home!" Blyth had come to the conclusion that "the strongest tensions in New Zealand life are in the area of sexuality". He contrasted "anxious, tight-lipped local attitudes" with the fact that "this sort of stuff is already out in the open overseas". The censor was sufficiently puzzled by *Angelmine* to invent a new certificate for the occasion, which warned potential customers that the film "contained Punk Cult Material". This special R18 certificate fuelled public discussion, but Blyth disputed the relevance of the label. The word 'punk' tended to turn away older viewers. Meanwhile, morals campaigner Patricia Bartlett raised a public outcry over the fact that the Interim Film Commission and the Arts Council had both made grants to the film. Internal Affairs Minister Alan Highet said that he too was "disturbed by some of the scenes". But Arts Council Chairman Hamish Keith welcomed the film enthusiastically in a *Listener* article entitled 'Where Angel Treads'. "It is amazing black comedy cut from the cloth of New Zealand suburban life ... rather than some moving myth about the land. ... Unhappily we are blinded by the sacred cliché ... and just might not see that one film, at least, has made a genuinely original ... comment about the real world."

Unfortunately it was four years before Blyth had the opportunity to direct another film. *Angelmine* had aroused such violent reactions that local investors were nervous about him. In 1980, with the help of a Film Commission grant, Blyth went to Europe where he spent time with three extraordinary film makers — Jim Sharman (*Shock Treatment*), Derek Jarman (*The Tempest*) and Alejandro Jodorowsky (*El Topo*). Sharman was impressed by *Angelmine* but advised Blyth to adapt his ideas to a more commercial format. Blyth accepted Sharman's invitation to work in a London studio on his film *Shock Treatment*.

During this period Blyth got to know Elizabeth Gowans who had written a film script about a young woman coming to New Zealand during pioneer days. In 1981-2, back in New Zealand, Blyth directed this script as a television drama under the title *A Woman of Good Character*. The film stressed the unromantic

aspects of this period of history — "people suffered incredible poverty and hardship". Once again Blyth focused particularly on sexual tensions, "exploring the male settler mentality in this harsh male environment". The film was shot in the Moke Valley in Central Otago in a situation as primitive as pioneering days. There were particularly vivid performances from Bruno Lawrence, as the retarded son, and Sarah Peirse, as the housekeeper (a role which won her a Feltex award).

Later in 1982 Blyth worked as a television director on New Zealand's longest-running drama programme, *Close to Home*. Like many other New Zealand directors (and actors) he found the series valuable as an opportunity to practise and develop his skills. The routine involved working simultaneously on two 25-minute episodes, with a three-week turnaround. The first week was spent reading and timing the scripts; the second week involved meetings with various television departments to organise the production; and in the third week the director worked with the actors. On Monday of this final week Blyth and his cast read through the scripts; on Tuesday they blocked them out; on Wednesday they tightened performances and had a complete runthrough; and on Thursday and Friday Blyth directed the videotaping of the programmes. Each episode had to be precisely timed ("within ten seconds of the standard 24-minute-50-seconds length").

In 1984 Blyth's horror film *Death Warmed Up* was given a stormy critical reception in New Zealand. Its extreme B-movie style was interpreted by reviewers as a rejection of seriousness and local 'relevance'. The New Zealand film industry had not previously produced an over-the-top movie of this kind (as Australia had done). Local box-office returns were disappointing. Overseas, however, the film has been very successful commercially. European reviewers have been impressed by such aspects as the visual style (the "violence of movement and image"), the Oedipal scene at the beginning (where a boy guns down his parents), and the general mood of "convulsive fantasy". *Death Warmed Up* won the Grand Prix of the 1984 International Festival of Fantasy and Science Fiction Films in Paris.

Blyth is today working on several scripts, collaborating once again with Michael Heath. Heath is an important figure in our film industry, having scripted or co-scripted three features (*Next of Kin*, *The Scarecrow*, *Death Warmed Up*) and various documentaries, in addition to writing a number of radio plays and plays for the theatre (produced by Theatre Corporate, Circa, and other companies). His film work extends back to 1970. For the last five years he has been working full-time as a film scriptwriter.

Blyth has also worked closely with Murray Newey who became a producer after many years of experience as a First Assistant Director in Australia and New Zealand. Blyth, Newey and Heath have formed their own company, Tucker Productions.

Asked to sum up his work over the past ten years, Blyth remarks: "Film has been a vehicle for experimenting with emotions and exploring taboos, while also trying slowly to build my film-making experience. My main conflict has been the desire to break new ground, personally and artistically, while acknowledging the financial realities involved in surviving as a film maker. I've realised that low-budget films stand the best chance of returning their costs, and all my films have had low budgets even by New Zealand standards. At the same time, I feel that the themes of my projects have continued to relate to my own personal interests and growth. There has been no tradition of horror films in New Zealand, but, through this genre, *Death Warmed Up* enabled me once again to investigate themes of death and sexuality."

**From a discussion of *Death Warmed Up*  
by Alejandro Jodorowsky  
(a well-known European film director, and an authority  
on Tarot cards)**

"I didn't know David Blyth until he called me in Paris to ask me to read the Tarots for him. I told him to come over and we spent three hours together reading Tarots. At the time he was having very serious emotional problems which were tending to drive him back either to England or to the United States. I consulted the Tarots and advised him to put aside his problems and go back to New Zealand and make films. He listened to the message and left. When he got home he sent me a book to say thank you. A few years later, when I hadn't had any further news of him, I was asked to serve on the jury of the Paris Festival of Fantasy and Science Fiction Films, and what do you know — he was there with his film, and it so happened that that was the film I liked best....

"I think the cinema should not only provide rhythm, a story, and technique, but most of all a new way of seeing. A good film should transform our vision of reality. As for Blyth, I feel he is a director who has an eye. And then the film appealed to me because of its irrational side. Blyth creates an unexplained atmosphere from which we have to draw conclusions, and, in passing, he settles scores with his paternal archetype and with his sexual vision of the world....

"This can be said to be a personal film, made with very little money, but one which multiplies its resources. I divide directors into those who need several million dollars, and those who love the cinema so much that they make miracles on small budgets and multiply the loaves by putting all their efforts into the image."

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## David Blyth : A Filmography

- 1975 CANCELLED (as cameraman and editor)**  
An experimental drama about a ventriloquist who commits a murder. The murder is exposed by the ventriloquist's own dummy.  
16mm B&W, 20 minutes. Director: Paul Oremland. Made with a grant from the Auckland University Students' Association.
- 1976 CIRCADIAN RHYTHMS (as director, cameraman and co-editor)**  
A cyclic progression, through images and emotions, in the mind of a man who has had a car crash. The film ends with the sounds of a baby being born (the recording of an actual delivery).  
16mm B&W, 14 minutes. Magnetic soundtrack. Script and intertitles: Richard von Sturmer. Production, lighting and co-editing: Philip Montrowe. Music: *Horizons* by Ross Harris. Actor: Derek Ward. Film festival screenings include Auckland, Wellington and Sydney; also the Hiroshima Amateur Film Festival, the Wellington Students' Arts Festival and the Sydney Film Makers' Co-op.
- 1977 SOLO (as third assistant director)**  
*Solo* was one of the first of the new wave of New Zealand feature films, directed by Tony Williams. Working on *Solo* gave Blyth his first experience in the mainstream film industry.
- 1978 ANGELMINE (as writer, producer and director)**  
A feature-length experimental drama which examines the relationship of a suburban couple. Commercials and other media images ("which deprive us of our own fantasies") are re-worked in this dreamlike study of the inner tensions in their relationship and in the surrounding culture. The film was made for approximately \$13,000, plus \$26,000 for the 35mm blow-up.  
35mm (blow-up from 16mm) colour, 79 minutes. Available as 1/2" video cassette. Cast: Derek Ward, Jennifer Redford, Myra De Groot, Mike Wilson. Co-producers: Larry Parr, Warren Sellers, Jennifer Jakich. Music by Mike Nicholas, the Suburban Reptiles ('Razorblade Rosie' and 'Saturday Night Stay at Home'), and the Auckland Youth Orchestra. ILA Productions. Funded by the Interim Film Commission, the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council, Montana Wines, and Mr Kean. Released in New Zealand cinemas (from November 1978) and Australian cinemas (via the Valhalla chain), and included in festivals of New Zealand films in London and Paris. The 'Saturday Night Stay at Home' sequence was screened on television's Radio with Pictures on 24 October 1978.
- 1978 HORROR SCOPE MOTEL (as co-scriptwriter)**  
During 1978-9, Blyth collaborated with Ian Watkin and Derek Payne in scripting "an astrologically-tinged horror comedy". The script went through three drafts but did not reach the production stage.
- 1979 NOW IS THE HOUR (as scriptwriter)**  
A script for a feature film about a Japanese terrorist involved in a political drama in Rotorua. Blyth has continued to develop this script.
- 1979** Since 1979 Blyth has directed various commercials and band clips. The band clips (for Toy Love, Street Talk and other groups) were screened on Radio with Pictures. Their format was 16mm double-system.

**1980 SHOCK TREATMENT (as director's assistant)**

Set in a television studio, this feature film (a follow up to *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*) made satirical use of media images. Its director, Jim Sharman, had seen *Angelmine* and was struck by its similarity to parts of his first film (*Shirley Thompson versus the Aliens*). He invited Blyth to work as an assistant on *Shock Treatment*.

**1981 SMALL FARMS (script development)**

Blyth was preparing to direct this script by Kevin Smith (about "love and property in a small town") when the project ran into production problems. A version of the script has since been filmed by Graham McLean as *The Lie of the Land*.

**1982 CLOSE TO HOME (as director)**

Blyth spent nine months working as a director on this New Zealand drama series, alternating with directors Anderson, McDonald and McCurdy. Colour video was used for location as well as studio shooting. Blyth directed scenes for a number of episodes but was completely responsible for directing 12 episodes, including those associated with Gail and Gavin's wedding.

**1982 A WOMAN OF GOOD CHARACTER (as director)**

In this 19th-century drama, a young woman emigrates from England to become a housekeeper in New Zealand. She goes to work in an isolated household of strange men, finally triumphing through a series of crises. The original version of this film was 75 minutes long, but it was cut to 50 minutes for New Zealand television. Sarah Peirse won a Feltex award for her performance. 16mm colour, 50 or 75 minutes. (The longer version was marketed overseas as *Lizzie*.) Cast: Sarah Peirse, Bruno Lawrence, Ian Watkin, Martyn Sanderson, Derek Hardwick, Jeremy Stephens. Script and original idea: Elizabeth Gowans. Producer: Graham McLean. Funded by CIP, the New Zealand Film Commission, and private investors. Filmed in February and edited in March 1982. Screened by TV One on 28 July 1982 as part of a Festival of Television Arts. Sold to various countries including the USA (cable channels).

**1983 WHOLESAL HEAVEN (as co-scriptwriter)**

Since 1983 Blyth and Grant Morris have been developing (with producer Don Reynolds) this feature script about two stepbrothers whose father owns a 24-hour gas station. After the father dies, the sons learn that he left everything to a sinister religious organisation, but they are determined to get it back.

**1984 DEATH WARMED UP (as director)**

This "celebration of the B-movie genre" includes a mad brain surgeon named Dr Howell who succeeds in programming a young man — Michael Tucker — to kill his parents. Released after seven years in a psychiatric ward, Tucker is determined to have his revenge. With three friends, he tracks the mad doctor to an island where he runs a hospital full of patients transformed into murderous zombies.

Made on a budget of \$860,000, *Death Warmed Up* was filmed over six weeks (November-December 1983) around Auckland City and on Waiheke Island. The film won a Grand Prix at the 1984 International Festival of Fantasy and Science Fiction Films, Paris. In its first six months of release it has been sold to 20 territories (including a ten-print release in the UK via Medusa Films, a similar release in New York via Skouras, and a 40-print release in France). It has been screened at the London, Paris and Seattle film festivals.

35mm Eastman colour, 81 minutes. Cast includes: Michael Hurst, Margaret Umbers, William Upjohn, Norelle Scott, David Letch, Gary Day, and Bruno Lawrence. Producer: Murray Newey. Screenplay: Michael Heath. Photography: James Bartle. Production Designer: Michael Glock. Music: Mark Nicholas. Sound (Dolby stereo): Michael Westgate. The Tucker Production Company, in association with the New Zealand Film Commission. Released in New Zealand cinemas in August 1984.

**1984 EAT YOUR HEART OUT (as co-scriptwriter)**

Over the past year Blyth and Neil Illingworth have been developing this script for an action romance. Set in Auckland's waterfront area during the 1950s the story revolves around a young jazz musician. It recreates some bizarre and colourful aspects of night life during that period.

**1984 BLACKBIRD (as co-scriptwriter)**

A script for a post-apocalypse film, about an alien intelligence who holds the key to future survival. Blyth and Michael Heath have been developing this script.

**1984 SWEETHEARTS (as co-scriptwriter)**

A stylised 'screwball comedy' about two women and their attempts to escape from the influence of an evil nightclub owner. This film, by Blyth and Heath, is scheduled to go into production this year. The producer is Murray Newey.

*The Auckland City Art Gallery would like to thank David Blyth for his co-operation, the Audio Visual Centre of the University of Auckland for technical assistance and the New Zealand Film Commission for its support of this 1984-5 series.*

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# NEW ZEALAND FILM MAKERS

## at the Auckland City Art Gallery

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A series devised by Roger Horrocks: 12  
Wellesley Auditorium Thursday 4 July 1985 7.30pm

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### JOHN LAING



Photo by Geoff Mason

#### John Laing

John Laing (born in Dunedin in 1948) is the director of three feature-films — *Beyond Reasonable Doubt*, *The Lost Tribe*, and *Other Halves* — and a number of documentaries and television dramas. His interest in filmmaking goes back to his last year at King's High School when he and some friends made 8mm comic fantasies in the style of *The Running Jumping Standing Still Film*. In 1966 he enrolled at Otago University, majoring in English and History. He completed a B.A. degree in 1968, commenced an M.A. but then decided to take up a job at a local newspaper, *The Evening Star*. His longterm aim was a career in film but there were few opportunities in New Zealand at this time. At Otago University he was cameraman for a 'chaotic' 16mm film based on a sciencefiction story by Theodore Sturgeon. He also spent many hours at The State, a Dunedin cinema that screened European films. ('It was a great theatre — a real fleapit, full of people in dufflecoats who'd read Dostoevsky at half- time!') Laing wrote to the National Film Unit for a job, and on his second attempt was successful in obtaining an interview. Accepted as a production trainee he left *The Evening Star* after two months to begin his career as a filmmaker.

The Film Unit had no systematic training programme but provided newcomers with remarkable opportunities to learn by practice. 'To start with, I hung around a Unit director for four months. I didn't get much from that. Then I was given a 20 minute 35mm tourist film to direct. They threw me in at the deep end — I had to learn everything very fast. There was a deadline on the film and I knew it was going to be widely distributed. I did it, but it was a baptism by fire — I dreamt about it for months afterwards!' Laing directed four other films for the Unit, including *Kariotahi Beach*, a striking documentary about three old men 'balloonfishing', which was apparently the first documentary by the Unit to have no voiceover narration. At the time (1970) this avoidance seemed very strange and there were fierce arguments before Laing was allowed his experiment. Though grateful to the Unit for the opportunities it provided, Laing was not happy with the general atmosphere. People didn't want to be seen to take their work too seriously. But there were exceptions — for example, Paul Maunder, John King and Philip McDonald who 'weren't afraid of seriousness.' McDonald was later to work with Laing again as editor of *The Lost Tribe*.

In 1972 Laing collaborated with Rupert Glover on a film about his father Denis Glover, an important New Zealand poet. The filmmakers went to Banks Peninsula for a week to find images that corresponded to those of Glover's poem about an old man of the sea named Mick Stimson. This was an independent project, though Laing and Glover's title 'Ripoff Productions' may acknowledge a little help from their friends at the Unit.

In the same year Laing gained his first and last acting experience by learning to ride a unicycle for Paul Maunder's extraordinary production of *Hamlet* (as acted by a circus troupe) at Unity Theatre.

Accompanied by his wife Robin, who works today as a film producer, John Laing left his job and went overseas. After four months in Asia they arrived in London (at the end of 1972). John pounded the streets looking for a film job but the industry was in a recession. He worked as a truckdriver until gaining a relieving job as assistant editor with the BBC in Bristol. He also worked for the BBC in London but found it 'a depressing place because there was so little chance of promotion.' In 1973 he obtained an interesting job as assistant editor on a film about Charles Chaplin which incorporated many examples of Chaplin's work including sequences from his 'home movies' which had never had a public screening before. From that project he moved on to a television documentary produced by Ringo Starr and edited in the basement of Apple, the business headquarters of the Beatles.

In 1975 the Laings moved to Canada where John soon achieved his aim of getting contract work with the National Film Board. He found the NFB an extraordinary place: 'There was such a rich group of filmmakers there. It was the first time I'd been in an environment where I was genuinely encouraged to do good work.' The NFB was a centre for sophisticated documentary film-making. Its older members included some of John Grierson's protégés — 'They weren't on an ego trip, they were looking for young people with talent, and they encouraged them and gave them the chance to try things out.' The NFB's risktaking produced some disasters but also some outstanding work. Laing edited documentaries such as *Sword of the Lord* about a downhill ski racer who was convinced that God had decided to make him world champion. The film traced his gradual change of attitude as he kept losing races. *Flash William* chronicled an eccentric old man who lived in a ghost town in the Rockies where he made movies in which he himself played all the parts. *Mother of Many Children* exposed the appalling living conditions for many Indian women in Canada. It was directed by an Indian woman, Alanis Obomsawin.

Jobs outside the NFB included such unusual documentaries as *If Brains Were Dynamite You Wouldn't Have Enough To Blow Your Nose* (about a controversial Canadian sculptor) and a 16mm feature, *The Rubber Gun*, which won fame in several American and Canadian cities as a cult film. It was a story about 'a bunch of desperate and largely gay Montreal junkies (refugees from the hippie era) who plan to rip off a cocaine deal. Their plans are unwittingly foiled by an innocent sociologist who develops a crush on one of them.' The film had been initiated by Alan Moyle who had completed many scenes but was having trouble assembling them into a coherent whole. Laing helped to script additional scenes (amounting to one third of the final film) then edited all the footage. Getting the actors together to film the new scenes after a two-year delay was an epic task. For example, one actor had to be allowed out of prison for his scenes. The NFB once again demonstrated its willingness to help unusual projects by giving some support to *The Rubber Gun*.

At the end of 1978 when Laing returned to New Zealand for a holiday, he was impressed by the energy of the new featurefilm industry. ('We used to talk about making features, but it had seemed impossible then. That was one reason why I had gone overseas.') John Barnett approached Laing during his visit to invite him to direct *Beyond Reasonable Doubt*, a feature-length drama based on the Arthur Thomas case. Laing returned to Canada but when an expected job did not eventuate he came back to New Zealand in the middle of 1979 to take up Barnett's offer. Up to this point he had edited two feature-films but had had little experience of directing actors. In this respect, he found it helpful for the film to be based on actual people and events. A great effort was made to be authentic because obviously there were local viewers ready to pounce on incorrect details. But Laing was also aware that many overseas viewers would not know the background and would expect the film to have the same sort of shape and impact as any dramatic featurefilm. His task was to satisfy both types of viewer. In fact, the film succeeded in creating a great deal of interest in New Zealand and also earned good reviews and sales overseas, as well as winning the Grand Prize of the First International Festival of Thriller Films at Cognac.

Arthur Thomas was still in prison when the film was in pre-production. He was released a few weeks before filming began, so that the script required a new ending. An enquiry was announced during the shoot (on the day after the Minister of Justice visited the set). The Royal Commission of Inquiry began sitting just before the film was released, and Thomas was awarded compensation shortly after, a piece of information that was added to the prints of the film sent overseas. Thomas was present for some of the filming, and members of his family were extras in a courtroom scene. The family is said to have been stunned by the film's authenticity, and also very appreciative.

Laing's next job was editing David Hemmings's featurefilm *Race for the Yankee Zephyr*, a two-month assignment that expanded to eight because of the need for reshoots. Laing remembers how much he 'enjoyed editing Donald Pleasance — such a good actor.' In his spare time Laing worked on the script for his second feature, *The Lost Tribe* which he had begun to write in Canada. This was 'a bizarre tale of a brother searching for his twin who was lost in a wild area of Fiordland'. Both twins were played by the same actor, John Bach, who has spoken warmly of Laing's skills as a director: 'there was one man capable of manipulating and controlling both (twins) — John Laing. One day I changed characters five times and he enabled me to do it' (*OnFilm* Vol.2 No.2).

Thom Burstyn who had worked with Laing in Canada was Director of Photography on *The Lost Tribe*. Basically, however, the film was a local project. It was thus ironic that it should become the film associated with the closingdown of the tax concessions so important to New Zealand's feature-film industry. It appears that the Inland Revenue Department had become increasingly unhappy with the way overseas productions filmed in New Zealand had taken advantage of the local rules. When *The Lost Tribe* applied for the usual conditions, Inland Revenue announced that it was doing away with those conditions for all films.

It was an unlucky accident for Laing that his project should signal the end of an era. Not only *The Lost Tribe* but many other local feature-film projects screeched to a stop. But a few months later the Budget granted a reprieve to projects that had been started before the closure date, and it was thus possible to raise money and complete the film.



More recently, Laing has made a third feature-film, *Other Halves*, based on the bestselling New Zealand novel by Sue McCauley. It would be more precise to say 'based on a script by Sue McCauley' since Laing preferred not to read the original novel. 'It was a superb screenplay. But it was a tremendous challenge to make it work as a film — so much was subtext, so much was in the details and the settings.' Laing adds that his task was 'not only to coordinate action and dialogue but to make Auckland into a character, so that everything would come together as one huge image.' This required some heightening of effect. 'The city has been slightly futurized. But Auckland will get more like the film. In some respects it already has.' In many ways *Other Halves* has opened up new territory for New Zealand filmmaking — for example, by its close look at a wide range of urban problems.

When discussing the future of the industry, Laing is particularly concerned about the cost and problems involved in releasing films in this country. It is not easy for a local film to compete with Hollywood films that New Zealanders hear so much about, before they arrive, in overseas magazines and television programmes. Many New Zealand filmmakers are critical of the way their films have been handled by the local cinema chains. And many viewers are not interested in a local film unless it has been successful overseas. Laing sees a day coming when some films made here will not even attempt a local release. Yet Laing still thinks of himself as a New Zealand filmmaker. 'I feel most comfortable working with New Zealand stories. I've lived in Canada and Britain but still don't understand them to the same extent.' Local film-makers may concentrate on the overseas market (as economic pressures are forcing them to do) but their work will still be informed by the New Zealand context. This is less likely, however, if the trend to slickness continues: 'We have to beware of the kind of Hollywood thinking which assumes that if you run into a problem you can "fix it with folding" — by money rather than ingenuity. Our best films achieve a lowbudget vitality. People have to make a living but we mustn't let our films become slick and lifeless like so many films from overseas.'

## John Laing: A Filmography

- 1970 AND NOW NEW ZEALAND (as director)**  
The first film Laing directed for the National Film Unit was made for use by trade missions to the U.S.A. 'It includes at least one shot of everything any tourist would ever want to see in New Zealand!' 20 minutes, 35mm colour.
- 1970 KARIOTAHU BEACH (as director)**  
A cinema short about three old men engaged in 'balloon-fishing' off Kariotahi Beach in the Waikato. 10 minutes, 35mm B&W. National Film Unit.
- 1971 PICNIC (as director)**  
A satirical look at New Zealanders 'enjoying themselves' at the beach on a Sunday afternoon. 20 minutes, 16mm B&W. National Film Unit.
- 1971 BANANAS FOR MARKET (as director)**  
An educational documentary for Pacific Islanders, showing them what happens to their bananas after they reach New Zealand. 23 minutes, 16mm colour. National Film Unit.
- 1972 TROTTING (as director)**  
A cinema short about breeding, training and racing light-harness horses. 20 minutes, 35mm colour. National Film Unit.
- 1972 MICK STIMSON (as co-director)**  
Denis Glover reads his poem about the Irish recluse of Port Levy ('Towards Banks Peninsula'). The film also includes interviews with Glover and shots of Banks Peninsula. 7 minutes, 16mm B&W. Co-directed by Laing and Rupert Glover. Ripoff Productions.
- 1973** Laing worked for the BBC as an editor of *Collector's World* and other magazine and documentary programmes.
- 1973 THE GENTLEMEN TRAMP, THE LIFE AND TIMES OF CHARLES CHAPLIN (as assistant editor)**  
This feature-length documentary for cinema release provides a biography of Chaplin, using newsreels, home movies, and clips from his films. 90 minutes, 35mm colour and B&W. Directed and edited by Richard Patterson. Produced by Bert Sneider. Narrated by Walter Matthau. BBS Productions (Los Angeles).
- 1974 CHAIN OF THE SUN (as editor)**  
A television documentary about the burial of the last king of the Toraga people of Sulawesi in Indonesia — a culture which until that time had been based on slavery. 50 minutes, 16mm colour. Director: Lorne Blair. Producer: Ringo Starr. Apple Films (London).
- 1975 NO WAY THEY WANT TO SLOW DOWN (as editor and writer)**  
A television documentary about the Canadian ski team and its trip to Chile and Argentina to train during the northern hemisphere summer. 28 minutes, 16mm colour. Director: Giles Walker. Producers: Tom Daly and Colin Low. National Film Board of Canada.
- 1975 DESCENT / LA DESCENTE (as editor and writer)**  
A cinema short about David Murray, Canadian downhill ski racer, and his buildup through training to the European Cup racing season. 10 minutes, 35mm colour (16mm blowup). Director: Giles Walker. Producers: Tom Daly and Colin Low. National Film Board of Canada.
- 1976 SWORD OF THE LORD (as editor)**  
Jim Hunter, a Canadian downhill ski racer, believes he has God on his side. This television documentary follows him through a season of striving and failure on the European cup circuit. 58 minutes, 16mm colour. Director: Giles Walker. Producers: Tom Daly and Colin Low. National Film Board of Canada.
- 1976 IF BRAINS WERE DYNAMITE YOU WOULDN'T HAVE ENOUGH TO BLOW YOUR NOSE (as editor and writer)**  
A television documentary about a controversial Canadian sculptor, Mark Prent, whose exhibitions had twice been closed by the police on the grounds of obscenity. At each exhibition, the police left only one piece behind — a replica of a man dying in the electric chair. 28 minutes, 16mm colour. Directors: Thom Burstyn and Peter Bors. St.Cloud Films (Montreal). Awards at the San Francisco Film Festival (1976 Special Jury Prize), Chicago Film Festival (1976 Gold Plaque), Ann Arbor Film Festival (1977), and Sydney Film Festival (1977).
- 1976 THE RUBBER GUN (as editor and co-writer)**  
A bunch of desperate and largely gay Montreal junkies plans to rip off a cocaine deal. Their plans are unwittingly foiled by an innocent sociologist who develops a crush on one of them. 90 minutes, 16mm colour. Director: Alan Moyle. Saint Lawrence Film Productions (Montreal).

- 1976 THE MACKAY EXPERIMENT (as editor, writer and co-director)**  
An educational documentary about a factory to train handicapped people to work outside sheltered workshops in other job situations.  
30 minutes, 16mm colour. Directors: Laing and Thom Burstyn. Ibis Films (Montreal).
- 1976 MOTHER OF MANY CHILDREN (as editor)**  
The problems faced by women of the many native tribes of North America.  
58 minutes, 16mm colour. Director: Alanis Obomsawin. National Film Board of Canada.
- 1977 I WASN'T SCARED (as editor)**  
A drama about a child who finds an unexploded bomb and decides to take it home.  
20 minutes, 16mm colour. Director: Giles Walker. National Film Board of Canada.
- 1977 THE HOTTEST SHOW ON EARTH (as editor)**  
An animated documentary for television about how heat loss is related to personal and national economy in a world where fuel is becoming expensive and scarce.  
28 minutes, 16mm colour. Directors: Wolf Koenig and Derk Lamb. National Film Board of Canada. Best Documentary at the Canadian Film Awards, 1977.
- 1977 THEATRE FOR STRANGERS (as editor)**  
A documentary film about a woman and her job as a stripper. She shrouds herself in fantasy so as not to feel naked but it doesn't work.  
35 minutes, 16mm colour. Director: Janet Walczewski. Daro Productions (Montreal).
- 1977 YOU NEVER LOSE UNTIL YOU QUIT (as editor)**  
A documentary about intellectually handicapped children struggling to gain a foothold in the education system of the 'real world'.  
35 minutes, 35mm colour. Director: Philip Desjardins. Desjardins Productions.
- 1977 FLASH WILLIAM (as editor and co-director)**  
A documentary about William Shochuck who had been making films for 30 years. Until a visit to a Vancouver library told him otherwise, he believed he had invented many modern film techniques.  
30 minutes, 16mm colour. Directed by Laing and Thom Burstyn. National Film Board of Canada.
- 1977 THREE RIVER DAM (as editor)**  
A documentary about a conflict between cattlemen and sharecroppers who both need the same water. Who decides and how?  
23 minutes, 16mm colour. Director: Harold Tichenor. National Film Board of Canada (Edmonton).
- 1978 DAVID MANZUR, BOGATA, COLOMBIA (as editor)**  
A documentary about Colombian surrealist artist David Manzur and his insulated fantasy world.  
18 minutes, 16mm colour. Director: Janet Walczewski. Daro Productions.
- 1978 ONE HUNDRED YEARS (as editor)**  
Prince Charles is made an honorary member of an Indian tribe in Western Canada.  
20 minutes, 35mm colour. Director: John Spotton. Producer: Tom Daly. National Film Board of Canada (cinema short).
- 1978 CHILDREN'S TELECAST SERIES (as editor)**  
A series of television programmes made especially for native children in Northern Canada.  
4 programmes, each 30 minutes, 16mm colour. Director and producer: Alanis Obomsawin. National Film Board of Canada.
- 1978 KINGS AND DESPERATE MEN (as editor)**  
A talkshow host and his wife (played by Patrick McGoohan and Margaret Trudeau) are held for ransom by a band of desperate urban terrorists.  
110 minutes, 35mm colour. Director and producer: Alexis Kanner.
- 1980 BEYOND REASONABLE DOUBT (as director)**  
A dramatization of Arthur Thomas's conviction for a double murder and the ten-year fight which eventually brought him justice.  
104 minutes, 35mm colour. Producer: John Barnett. Writer: David Yallop. Endeavour Productions (Wellington). Documented in *Cinema Papers* May-June 1980. Grand Prix at the First International Festival of Thriller Films (Cognac, 1980). New Zealand and overseas cinema release.
- 1981 THE RACE TO THE YANKEE ZEPHYR (as editor)**  
A deerstalker stumbles on a World War II aeroplane packed with gold. He and his friends try to hang onto it while various bad guys try to relieve them of the gold.  
100 minutes, 35mm colour. Director: David Hemmings. Producer: Anthony I. Ginnane. Endeavour Productions. New Zealand and overseas cinema release.
- 1982 THE LOST TRIBE (as writer, director and co-producer)**  
A psychological thriller about a brother searching for his twin in the wilds of Fiordland.  
94 minutes, 35mm colour. Producers: Laing and Gary Hannam. Meridian Film Productions. 1984 Special Jury Prizes, Festival International de Cinéma Fantastique de Sitges, and Les Rencontres du Jeune Cinéma d'Orléans. Cinema release overseas and in New Zealand (1985).
- 1983 STANDUP COMIC (as director)**  
In this episode of the television drama *Inside Straight*, Steve Keenan and his friend Brian try to hijack a dope deal. Things come unstuck and they drag Steve's mates down with them.  
54 minutes, 16mm colour. Writer: Grant Morris. TVNZ (Avalon).
- 1984 REPOSSESSION (as director)**  
In another *Inside Straight* episode, Steve Keenan and his workmate Niklos repossess the wrong fridge and get mixed up in some dodgy business with some dangerous people.  
54 minutes, 16mm colour. Writer: Jack Klein. TVNZ (Avalon).
- 1984 OTHER HALVES (as director)**  
A love story of opposites — a middle-class white 'housewife' and a polynesian 'street kid'. The film traces their struggle to come to terms with each other and with their situations.  
104 minutes, 35mm colour. Producers: Tom Finlayson and Dean Hill. Writer: Sue McCauley. Finlayson-Hill Productions (Auckland). New Zealand and overseas cinema release.
- 1984 SONS AND FATHERS (as director)**  
In this episode of the television drama *Roche*, three generations of irascible Roches slug it out to something bordering on mutual understanding and respect.  
54 minutes, 16mm colour. Writer: Dean Parker. TVNZ (Avalon).
- 1985 MATES (as director)**  
In another *Roche* episode, Tony Roche who is always in search of the mythical 'good time' comes face to face with it. For the first time, he gets a glimpse of the grisly reality of its reverse side.  
54 minutes, 16mm colour. Writer: Simon O'Connor. TVNZ (Avalon).

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was a collaboration between Steven, Michael Havas, and the Czech writer Ester Krumbachova. *Strata* was shot early in 1982. 35mm colour, 110 minutes. (There is also a version of 118 minutes). Actors include Nigel Davenport, Judy Morris, John Banas, Tom Brennan, Roy Billing, Peter Nicoll, Mary Regan, Ctibor Turba. Camera: Leon Narbey. Music: Mike Nock. Editor: David Coulson. First New Zealand screening: Academy Cinema (Auckland), 8 October 1983. Asian Film Festival, 1984.

**1982 A SENSUOUS CELEBRATION: EDWARD BULLMORE (as director)**

A documentary, made for Kaleidoscope, about a New Zealand painter who had a good deal of international success yet remained little known in his own country. Because of lab problems and other accidents it was necessary to reshoot half the footage (October 1982). The *New Zealand Listener* ran a background story on Bullmore on 13 November 1982 (p.40).

16mm colour, 28 minutes. Reporter: Angela D'Audney. Camera: Dave Caldwell and Graham Orbell. Sound: Andy Ennever. Producer: Jillian Ewart. Screened TV1, 19 November 1982.

**1983 TICKY TACKY TIKIS (as director)**

Peter Bromhead was the presenter of this tongue-in-cheek documentary about tourist souvenirs as 'New Zealand folk art'. 16mm colour, approx. 20 minutes. Producer: Jillian Ewart. Screened TV1, 27 May 1983.

**1984 SIGNATURES OF THE SOUL (as director, producer, scriptwriter)**

This documentary, hosted and narrated by the American actor Peter Fonda, surveys the art of body tattooing in New Zealand, Samoa, Japan, and the United States (San Francisco and Los Angeles). There was a one-month shoot (September 1983). The film's working title was *Pacific Tattoo*. It considers tattooing at its best as "the art of putting the inner person onto the outer skin, the art that shows the signatures of the soul". Premiered 24 August at the Auckland Tattoo Parlour.

16mm colour, 60 minutes. (There is also a 50-minute TV version.) Researcher and production manager: Julianne Stretton. Camera: Graham Smith. Sound: Mike Fitzgerald. Editor: Alf West. Music Director: Wayne Laird. Title music by From Scratch. A Seehear film in co-production with BCNZ. 50-minute version screened on TV2, 4 September 1984.

**1984 AN ANGEL IN NEW YORK (as D.O.P. and associate-producer)**

A documentary about the life of Nola Luxford, a notable New Zealand expatriate. Shot in May 1984 in New York and Los Angeles, the film is now in post-production.

16mm colour. Director: Julianne Stretton. Director of photography: Geoff Steven. Bluestockings Production Company (with C.I.P. support).