CONTENTS

A SMALL ROOM WITH LARGE WINDOWS: FILM MAKING IN NEW ZEALAND

Roger Horrocks

See it if you can
See it (if this is it), half
earth, half heaven,
Half land, half water, what
you call a view …

—Allen Curnow, 'A Small Room with Large Windows', 1962

When growing up in the 1940s and 1950s, I was crazy about films, as almost all New Zealanders were in those pre-television, pre-internet, pre-PlayStation days. The riotous Saturday afternoon matinée, a major social event for kids, fed our hunger for Westerns, cartoons and serials, all from the United States. Occasionally we also saw a British 'quality film', a comedy (such as *The Lavender Hill Mob*, 1951), a wartime drama (*Dam Busters*, 1955), or a literary adaptation (*Richard III*, 1955). The cinema was one of the country's few indulgences in the earnest, work-hard atmosphere of the postwar period. Film maker Peter Wells has recalled the glamour and excitement created by US and British films during those years and the extent to which such films dominated our imagination: 'The very power of cinema comes from the fact that it provides the poetry that is essential to the human condition … [New Zealand's] world, by contrast, hardly existed … lacking, it seemed, poetry, magic, reason … Because we were not James Dean, we were nothing. I guess this is an experience of colonialism, as universal to a cinema-viewer in Bombay or Durban as much as in Auckland.'[1]

The opening scene of a 1984 feature film, *Constance*, set in 1948, shows the eponymous teenager devouring a Rita Hayworth film in Auckland's Civic 'picture palace'. Later, the

unit serving a government department could do great things if it tapped top creative people such as composer Benjamin Britten and poet WH Auden (also a favourite of New Zealand nationalists), and innovative film makers such as Len Lye and Robert Flaherty. Experiment gave an edge to the GPO's films, many of which became famous in film history. During his visit to New Zealand, Grierson was virtually a spokesman for the nationalist programme, insisting that he was interested not in 'scenery' but in the 'faces' of New Zealanders – 'the human factor, which is the Vitamin D of nationality'.[30]

The government took a more conservative view of the NFU's brief, and in 1950 it put the Tourist and Publicity Department in charge. The public service staffing environment was somewhat rigid. Nevertheless, in some respects the NFU was the only game in town, so it attracted some lively people. It called on the talents of Curnow, James K Baxter and Denis Glover at least once. Lilburn wrote music for several films, and photographer Brian Brake and writer Maurice Shadbolt became staff members. Aware of the conservatism of the New Zealand public, however, the organisation did not want its films to be seen as too arty.

Shadbolt wrote enthusiastically in *Landfall* about 'that period in the Unit's history which saw the emergence of a certain maturity – following the hesitancy and early fumblings of the now defunct *Weekly Review* – which was exemplified in such films as Margaret Thomson's *Railway Worker*, Cecil Holmes's *The Coaster* and Michael Forlong's *Journey for Three*'. But within a few years these and other talented directors were fed up with 'the dead hand of the Tourist and Publicity Department pressing on much of the Unit's work' (in Shadbolt's phrase) and had gone overseas.[31] After a scandal concerning his Communist Party membership, Holmes left to make films in Australia. Shadbolt was particularly distressed by the departure of John Feeney, whom he saw as the Unit's best director. (Feeney's films are described by Lawrence McDonald in Chapter 5.) Feeney and Brake went off to join the film unit that Grierson had established in Canada.

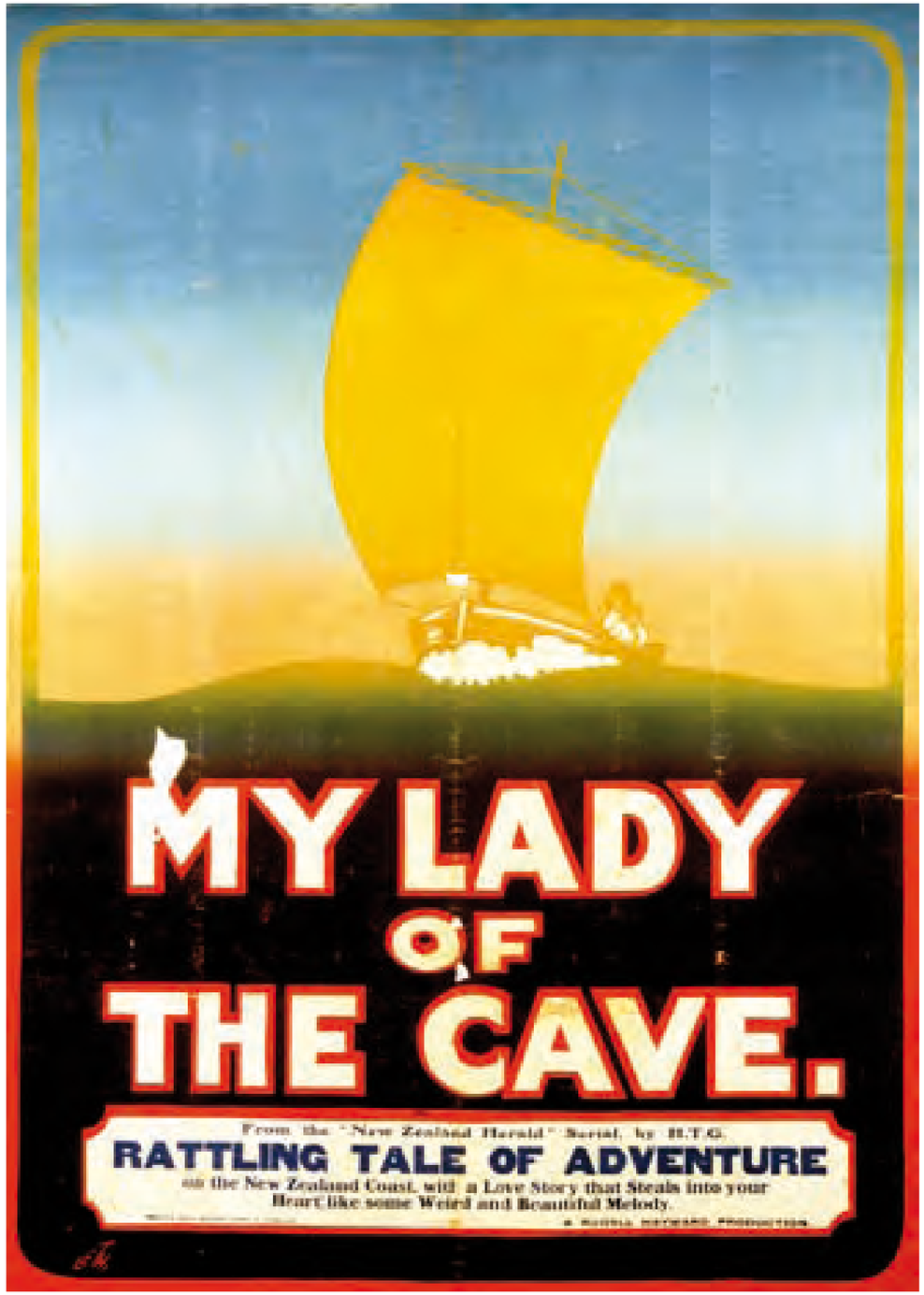
Pacific Films and the arrival of television

The full force of nationalism reached fiction film making through the work of Pacific Films. The company was founded in 1948 by Roger Mirams and Alun Falconer, but historian John O'Shea (who joined in 1952) became the leading figure. For the next thirty years, Pacific's ramshackle buildings in Kilbirnie, Wellington, would serve as a kind of revolutionary headquarters for the struggle to create an industry. On an everyday basis, 'commercials production was all that kept

[Image 0-6] *Periustrud er sustin venim del dit wis ea facinismolum dolore tem iriurer auguer summy nullute exercin ut diamconum vulla amcore dunt laortio conullaortis alis nibh*

[Image 0-7] *Periustrud er sustin venim del dit wis ea facinismolum dolore tem iriurer auguer summy nullute exercin ut diamconum vulla amcore dunt laortio conullaortis alis nibh*

[Image 0-5] *Periustrud er sustin venim del dit wis ea facinismolum dolore tem iriurer auguer summy nullute exercin ut diamconum vulla amcore dunt laortio conullaortis alis nibh*



CHAPTER 2

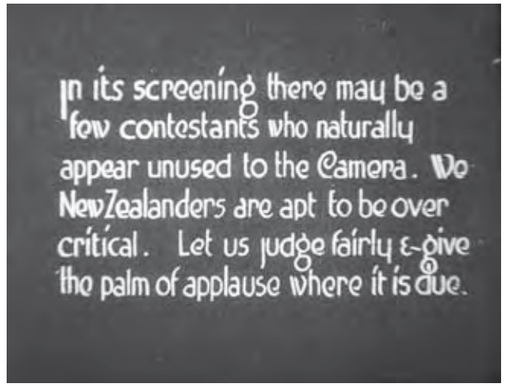
THE RISE OF FICTION: BETWEEN THE WARS

Diane Pivac

By the time of the First World War, New Zealanders had become captivated by film.
[Image 2-8]

At mid-1916, the *Evening Post* estimated that 320,000 New Zealanders (out of a population of nearly 1.15 million) attended the pictures weekly, with the observation that this was a 'very much bigger attendance than those who went to church'.[1] By August 1917, it was reported during a debate in parliament that 'no less than 550,000 people go to picture entertainments every week'.[2]

The alacrity with which New Zealanders had become regular movie-goers was not reflected, however, in any comparable growth in local film making. While audiences were generally supportive of local films, in the main they were drawn to the romanticism of Hollywood, and despite enthusiastic bursts of effort throughout the 1920s and early 1930s, an independent film industry would not take hold in New Zealand until the late 1970s. Nevertheless, there were a number of small-scale initiatives by local enthusiasts who showed ingenuity and determination in coming to terms with a medium that was complex and expensive. Operating with very little support – there were hardly any trained actors, writers or technicians at hand; nor were there labs to process film or equipment rental companies – these were true pioneers of the new medium, driven by an enthusiasm for film making rather than by any realistic hope of making their fortune.



[Image 3-23 & 3-24] *Periustrud er sustin venim del dit wis ea facinismolum dolore tem iriurer auguer summy nullute exercin ut diamconum vulla amcore dolore diamconum vulla amcore dolore*

[Image 3-40] *Periustrud er sustin venim del dit wis ea facinismolum dolore tem iriurer auguer summy nullute exercin ut diamconum vulla amcore dolore diamconum vulla amcore dolore*

Kodak sold short scenic films (reduction-printed from GPO negatives) in a series titled *Glimpses of New Zealand*.[80] Smaller film gauges – 8mm and 9.5mm, which came on the market between the wars – further reduced the cost of film making for the home-movie maker.

The transition to talkies [Image 3-32]

The first picture theatre to convert from silent films to 'talking pictures', the Paramount Theatre in Wellington, gave its first public presentation of talkies on 8 March 1929.[81] By the end of 1930, the talkies revolution was complete, with over 200 theatres and a number of country circuit exhibitors already equipped for sound.[82] Even vaudeville theatres converted to talkies as high-cost entertainments found they could not compete with the relatively low cost of movie admissions in a period of economic depression.[83]

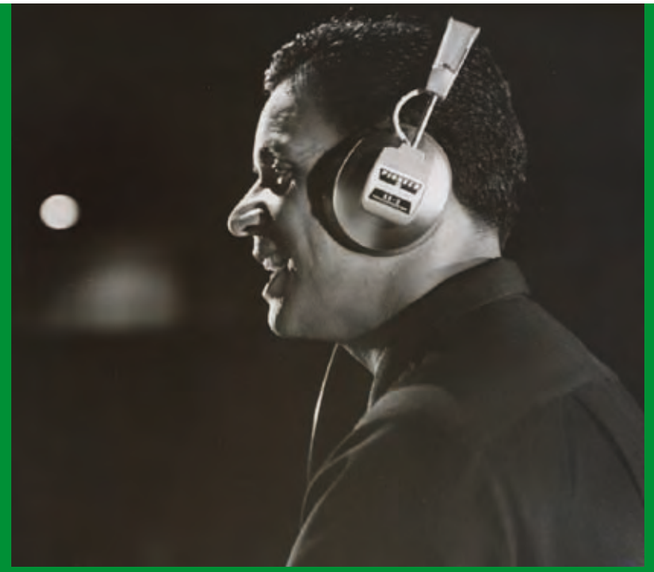
Once picture theatres had converted to talkies, exhibitors and their audiences lost interest in silent films. Film makers had to adjust to this changed market and find a way of producing films with a soundtrack. They could import sound-recording equipment at high cost, but as the prospect of any return on such investment was not good, a few local cameramen built their own sound-recording systems. One such was Ted Coubray (see pp.XX [in c.2]), whose equipment was successful enough to be used for a news film, *Coubray-Tone News* (1930), which screened at an Auckland picture theatre. Recognising the need for further development, Coubray entered into an arrangement with US producer Alexander Markey to film *Hei Tiki* (1935) (see page xx [Sidebar x]) while continuing to experiment with sound recording.[84] But when Coubray and Markey fell out, Markey took possession of Coubray's equipment, which he later sold to Jack Welsh of Dunedin. Welsh, with James Gault, had already developed a sound-on-film recording system, which he was able to perfect with the acquisition of Coubray's equipment.[85] The Welsh Sound System was, however, not used to any great extent until 1933.

With the arrival of talkies, the government film makers lost their principal market for silent films. This came at a time of enforced government economies during the Depression, and the amalgamation of the GPO with the Department of Tourist and Health Resorts in 1930 (thereafter known as the Department of Tourist and Health Resorts and Publicity) led to the dismissal of all film staff other than Cyril Morton, who was kept on as 'government film supervisor' (effectively a caretaker role).[86] The curtailing of government film spending deprived processing contractor Filmcraft Ltd of its principal

[Image 3-32] *Periustrud er sustin venim del dit wis ea facinismolum dolore tem iriurer auguer summy nullute exercin ut diamconum vulla amcore dolore diamconum vulla amcore dolore*

KIRI TE KANAWA AND HOWARD MORRISON

by Lawrence McDonald



Kiri Te Kanawa (1944–) and the late Howard Morrison (1935–2009) are both singers of Māori descent who have enjoyed wide popularity with New Zealand audiences. For a period in the mid-1960s, they also enjoyed brief careers as actors in the two local feature films made at that time by Pacific Films: *Runaway* (1964) and *Don't Let it Get You* (1966), both directed by John O'Shea. In the first film, Te Kanawa played the role of Isobel Wharewera, sister of Joe Wharewera and David Manning's fleeting love interest. But she enjoyed neither the experience of acting in the film nor seeing herself on screen at the premiere. In the second film, she simply appeared as herself in a brief scene inside a meeting house, where she sat beside a tape recorder that delivered her version of Rossini's 'Una Voce Poco Fa' to a group of surrounding children.

Morrison, in contrast, appeared very much at home on the screen. He began his brief career in film by crossing the Tasman to appear alongside the fifteen-year-old Olivia Newton-John in *Funny Things Happen Down Under* (1965), a Pacific Films Australia production directed by Roger Mirams. A year later, and this time playing himself, Morrison starred in *Don't Let it Get You*, in which he sang several songs and acted as an intermediary between the other main characters. 'As an experience,' wrote Morrison in his autobiography, '*Don't Let it Get You* was very enjoyable. As an investment, it was disastrous! But … along with the Aussie movie, it helped my transition into a solo act. But no more financing movies, thank you.'[1] And no more followed. It was left to his nephew Temuera, who made his screen debut as an eleven-year-old in *Rangi's Catch* (1973), to keep the Morrison name alive in New Zealand film.

[Sidebar 5B-1, 5B-2] La facinim vel eliquatum vel ea feum exerat, coreet dolor si bla feuisi blandre ea con euis nonsequis et lore.

AMATEURS FILM THE ROYAL VISIT, 1954

by Virgina Callanan

Issues of the English magazine *Amateur Cine World* from the years 1953 and 1954 contain frequent comment about New Zealand amateur film makers. In the February 1954 issue, a letter to the editor from Mr David Woodcock, general storekeeper at Russell, states: 'I get considerable pleasure from showing films to other people. For local shows I pack projector and programme into a picnic basket and travel by push bike. I usually rely on wallpaper or a sheet to serve as a screen …'. One night Woodcock was 'entertaining three Londoners with a film show' when he heard that his store was on fire. He rescued his camera from the office and, when the blaze became uncontrollable, stood back and ran off a roll of film – still faithfully documenting the local history.

Woodcock went on to say, 'My present cine hopes centre around filming the Queen on her visit here.'[1] He was one of thousands. As *Amateur Cine World* noted, 'The royal tour is one of the finest subjects in years for our fellow cine enthusiasts overseas.'[2] Another letter referred to a photograph of Queen Elizabeth II aboard the *Gothic* with her own cine camera beside her. The writer stated: 'We should be proud to know that she shares our hobby with us.'[3]

For three days in late January 1954, fifteen members of the Otago Cine Club co-operatively filmed Her Majesty's Dunedin visit. The resulting narrative film, titled *The Royal Visit to Dunedin*, was screened publicly to over 6000 local citizens.

Amateur film was essentially the last stronghold of the art of silent film. For the serious hobbyist, there were how-to-do-it books on post-recording sound: appropriate music and respectful voice-over duly accompanied *The Royal Visit to Dunedin*. The Club also produced a 16mm scenic film of Otago and Dunedin, which was presented officially to the Queen as a memento of her visit.

[Sidebar 5C, 5C Gap] La facinim vel eliquatum vel ea feum exerat, coreet dolor si bla feuisi blandre ea con euis nonsequis et lore.

to become not only a hot property but also 'Exhibit A' in an argument for a film industry that had been gaining in force over a number of years.

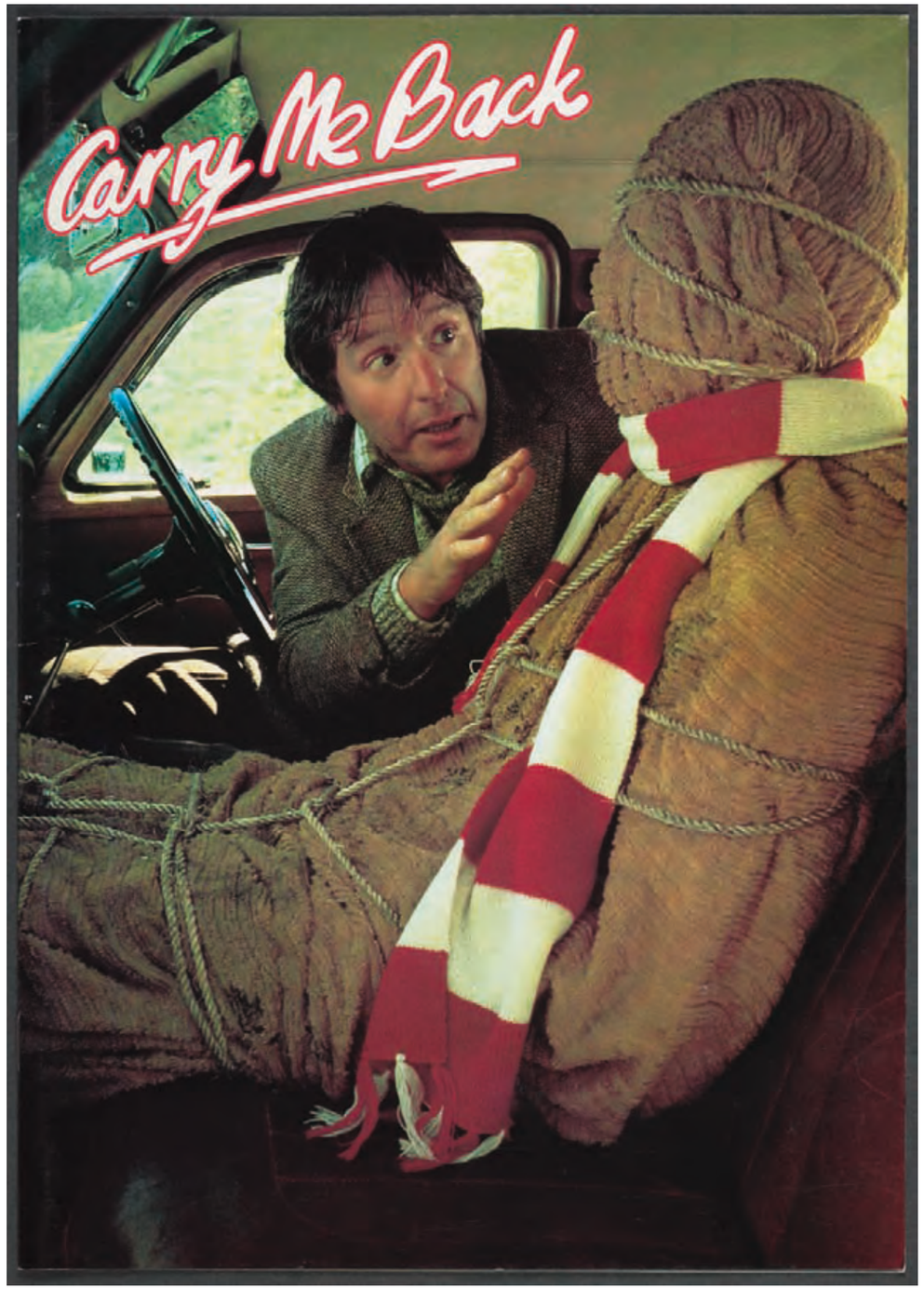
Towards the New Zealand Film Commission

Right from the start of the decade, there were initiatives to create a national film-making infrastructure. These began in April 1970 with Arts Conference 70, held at Victoria University of Wellington, at which a symposium on 'The Role of Film and Television in Establishing a Nation's Identity' took place. It was chaired by Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council chairman William Sheat, and the participants included English film scholar Dr Roger Manvell, local film critic Catherine de la Roche, chief film censor Doug McIntosh, and John O'Shea and Tony Williams of Pacific Films. Resolution 117 of the conference recommended to the Arts Council 'the establishment of a National Screen organisation to … set up and administer … a New Zealand Screen Finance Corporation'.[11] The body formed to work towards this end, the Film Industry Working Party, again chaired by Sheat, delivered its final report to the Arts Council in April 1975.

The report stressed the primacy of feature films, arguing that 'a country does not have a film industry until feature films are made on a reasonably regular basis'.[12] In the two-and-a-half years that followed the report, six feature films were released locally (*Test Pictures*, *Wild Man*, *Landfall*, Michael Firth's 1977 skiing/hang-gliding adventure film *Off the Edge* and, crucially, the 35mm films *Solo* and *Sleeping Dogs*). The momentum provided by these films and the arguments surrounding them proved to be persuasive to the Minister for the Arts in the National government, Alan Highet, who announced the establishment of an Interim Film Commission (IFC) in October 1977.

Among the most notable achievements of the IFC were the preparation of the documents 'Towards a New Zealand Motion Picture Production Policy' (February 1978) and 'Design for the Motion Picture Production Industry' (May 1978). It also provided financial assistance to three projects that were released or scheduled for release immediately prior to the formal creation, through Act of Parliament, of the New Zealand Film Commission on 12 October 1978. One of these was Geoff Steven's 35mm colour feature *Skin Deep* (1979) [Image 6-39/7-25], a study of the destabilising impact of the arrival of a young urban woman who opens a massage parlour on the mores of a group of small-town businessmen. The film departs from Steven's earlier, austere art-cinema exercises

[Image 6-41] *eriustrud er sustin venim del dit wis ea facinismolum dolore tem iriurer auguer summy nullute exercin ut diamconum vulla amcore dolore diamconum vulla amcore dolore*



Mr Gormsby (2005–06) and *Flight of the Conchords* (2007–09). At the end of the 1970s, significant comedic notes were struck in very different cinematic modes: the laconic small-town comedy of *Skin Deep* (1978) and the sophisticatedly loquacious urban–suburban comedy of *Middle Age Spread* (1979) adapted from Roger Hall's popular stage play [Image 7-26]. The early 1980s comedies – *Carry Me Back* (John Reid, 1982), *The Scarecrow* (Sam Pillsbury, 1982), *Came a Hot Friday* (Ian Mune) and *Pallet on the Floor* (Lynton Butler), if in its darkness the last qualifies as comedy – followed *Skin Deep* in excavating the old small-town world (a past with deep psychic roots for primarily urbanised New Zealanders). They also viewed this world through a sophisticated double focus, both nostalgic and satiric, showing the way New Zealanders were through the way they are and the way New Zealanders are through the way they were.

Reid's minor masterpiece *Carry Me Back* [Image 7-28], is built around an attempt by two brothers to smuggle their father's corpse back to pastoral Marlborough from urban Wellington in order (under the terms of his cranky will) to save the family farm, an archaic symbol of a life of independence for both the characters and the audience. Their unregenerate father, having called his boys 'sheilas' as the ultimate insult, suffers comic punishment for his patriarchalism through the indignities visited on his corpse, which is finally positioned on the mock throne of the farm's ancient dunny – as though he had met his death there. The ending forms a new extended family with significant female additions representing the future and the past.

The three other comedies, constituting almost a distinct micro-genre, are adaptations of Ronald Hugh Morrieson's novels. Combining long traditions of demotic New Zealand humour with colonial Gothic verging on horror, they subvert any simple reversion to small-town mythologies in their emphasis on death and decay. In *Pallet on the Floor*, [Image 7-29] the grim background of the freezing works – slaughter as the foundation of the New Zealand good life – permeates the narrative. The film versions soften the blackest depths of Morrieson's comedy but develop marvellously incisive comic stereotypes of traditional New Zealand characters. They also present a complex version of the pastoral idiom with their small-town locations, most successfully in *Came a Hot Friday*.

She through he

The women's issue of the journal *Alternative Cinema*, Summer 1983/84, contained an article called 'She Through He', a

[Image 7-26] *eriustrud er sustin venim del dit wis ea facinismolum dolore tem iriurer auguer summy nullute exercin ut diamconum vulla amcore dolore diamconum vulla amcore dolore*

[Image 7-29] *eriustrud er sustin venim del dit wis ea facinismolum dolore tem iriurer auguer summy nullute exercin ut diamconum vulla amcore dolore diamconum vulla amcore dolore*

[Image 7-28] *eriustrud er sustin venim del dit wis ea facinismolum dolore tem iriurer auguer summy nullute exercin ut diamconum vulla amcore dolore diamconum vulla amcore dolore*

BIRTH OF A MĀORI FILM INDUSTRY

by Bruce Babington

To make a feature film is one of the great human endeavours. The funding, production and sale of films demand huge risk. Māori can make movies, but as yet we have no involvement in distribution or exhibition. We are certainly a vital part of the Kiwi film industry, but the Māori industry itself remains in its infancy.

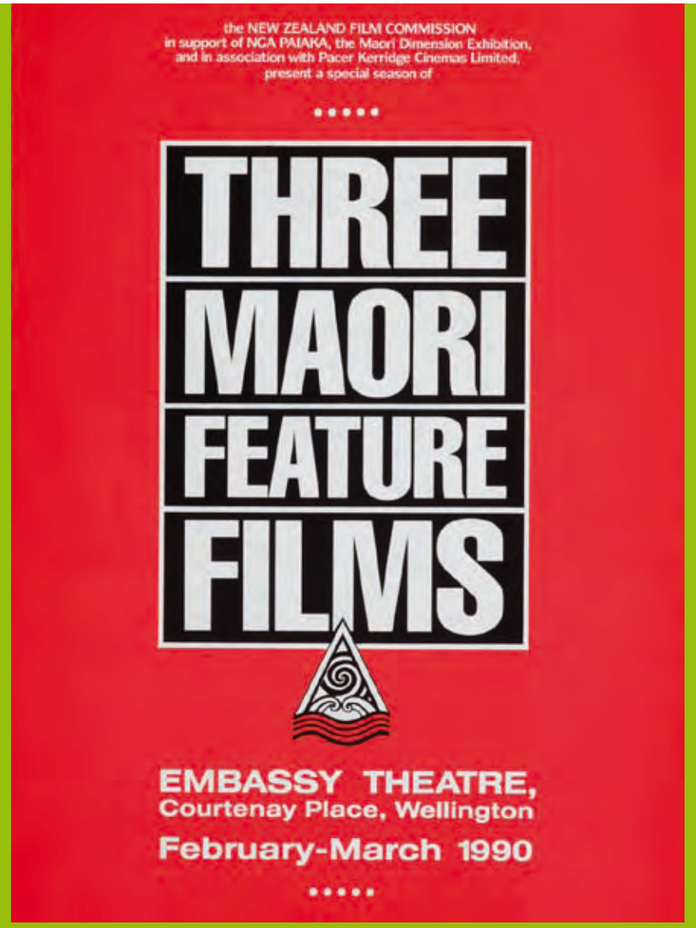
It is a matter of debate and occasional dispute as to what actually constitutes Māori cinema. *Whale Rider* (2002) is a successful film of a Māori story told by a Pākehā director. *Once Were Warriors* (1994) is a powerful Māori story told by a Māori director working with a Pākehā producer.

Such dissection is academic, because every film is a partnership between many people of difference. Film making begins with a dream. Then the dream becomes a vision. If the vision is Māori and inspires everyone to contribute to the cause of making a movie, we create what can truly be called Māori cinema.

A film is Māori if it possesses a certain spirit or wairua. This word is hard to translate and perhaps we should not even attempt to do so – that would be a first step in the dilution of the Māoriness of the endeavour.

However the future Māori film industry evolves, its parentage will always be traced back to two magnificent movies. Merata Mita's documentary film *Bastion Point: Day 507* (1980) is an unflinching view of a New Zealand society in turmoil over race relations. Barry Barclay's feature film *Ngati* (1987) is a profound tribal tale of cultural loss and reclamation. Each film is an honest reflection of a Māori world view. Only a Māori can have such a view. Witness, for example, Māori Television.

When Māori are in control of a film's creativity and management, and when Māori receive kudos and profits for the films they make, then we will have an industry. We are on the way.



[Sidebar 8B] La facinim vel eliquatum vel ea feum exerat, coreet dolor si bla feuisi blandre ea con euis nonsequis et lore.

GAYLENE PRESTON

by Bruce Babington

[Sidebar8C] La facinim vel eliquatum vel ea feum exerat, coreet dolor si bla feuisi blandre ea con euis nonsequis et lore.

Born in Greymouth in 1947, Gaylene Preston made her first short films while she was working in psychiatric art therapy in England (1972–76). Returning to New Zealand, she made television and film documentaries between 1977 and 1984, the most important being *All The Way Up There* (1979), *Learning Fast* (1980), *Hold Up* (1981) and *Making Utu* (1982). Her first feature, *Mr Wrong* (1985), was followed by *Ruby and Rata* (1990), *Bread and Roses* (a biopic television miniseries, 1993), and *Perfect Strangers* (2003).

A relative scarcity of feature film opportunities has proved no impediment to Preston's career, since, like the late Barry Barclay and Merata Mita, her commitment to documentary is profound. The feature-length *War Stories Our Mothers Never Told Us* (1995), in which New Zealand women relate home front experiences from the Second World War, highlights her characteristically determined but undogmatic focus on female experience. Later documentaries encompass portraits of artists (*Kai Purakau*, on Keri Hulme, 1987; *Hone Tuwhare*, 1996; and *Lovely Rita* on Rita Angus, 2007); descriptions of the physically impaired (the mastectomy sufferers of *Titless Wonders*, 2001, following on from *All the Way Up There* and the handicapped crime witnesses of the ingenious *Hold Up*); films tracing memories of the Second World War (*War Stories*; *The Time of Our Lives*, 2007; and the docudrama *Home By Christmas*, 2010); and an abiding commitment to the local (*Getting to Our Place*, 1999).

Of the fictions, *Ruby and Rata* and *Perfect Strangers* are arguably her finest work. The former exhibiting the director's social interests in the odd-couple relationship of the pensioner Ruby and the Māori street girl single mother Rata; the latter revealing wilder elements in its sardonically accented tale of love and passion.

With Robin Laing, Preston formed the long-standing company Preston–Laing Productions, later Gaylene Preston Productions, and she has also acted as producer on a number of other film makers' documentaries.

CHAPTER 9

NEW CURRENTS IN THE MAINSTREAM: THE 1990s

Ann Hardy

In the 1990s, with the emergence of a new generation of film makers, the New Zealand film industry displayed a new maturity and gained increasing recognition internationally as a fresh, lively source of English-language films.

As the decade developed, the commercial pressures faced by a small industry became more acute, with changes in the political environment heightening the old tension between culture and commerce. Nonetheless, for local audiences this was a particularly successful period for culture-oriented or 'minority' films, in particular those that reflected the energies of Māori and women film makers. While the 1980s had begun to tap those new perspectives, the 1990s saw them gain in strength and diversity.

An alternative centre

A team rapidly accumulating a substantial body of work was the director Gaylene Preston (see pp.XX [Sidebar 8c]) and producer Robin Laing. In 1990, they released their second feature, *Ruby and Rata,* about power struggles between an elderly, proud widow, Ruby, and her tenant, Rata, a streetwise single mother [Image 9-2]. This film pleased New Zealand and Australian audiences with its humorous treatment of the mid-1980s transition to a market economy, where citizens were encouraged to see themselves as both consumers and commodities within that economy. 'I like to present characters and situations not normally accepted as topics for entertainment,' said Preston. 'In *Ruby and Rata* we

CHAPTER 10

THE ‘JACKSON EFFECT’: THE LATE 1990s TO 2005

Geoff Lealand

In the closing years of the twentieth century, the New Zealand film industry experienced a time that was unparalleled in its history.

[Image 8-40] *Dolor er sustin venim del dit wis ea facinismolum dolore tem iriurer auguer summy nullute exercin ut diamconum vulla amcore dolore diamconum vulla amcore dolore*

It began in August 1998 with the announcement that the US company New Line Cinema was to make three fantasy/adventure films based on JRR Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* (*LOTR*) books, to be directed by Peter Jackson. Financed with an estimated US$320 million budget, this huge enterprise preoccupied Jackson (and much of New Zealand) for the next five years. Released in 2001, 2002 and 2003, the three films became a worldwide phenomenon, Jackson’s Weta Workshop grew into a centre for global film making and Jackson was elevated to the highest ranks of the Hollywood elite.

This chapter describes Jackson’s journey from New Zealand cult director to global film maker and examines what might be called the ‘Jackson Effect’: singular influence on the state of New Zealand film making in the wake of the *LOTR* trilogy. While his global success has not been insignificant in terms of his own career, it has also directly affected several elements of the New Zealand film industry. These include the development of New Zealand as an investment focus for global film making; the development of a New Zealand-based production infrastructure, to service both offshore and local film; and a measure of job creation and work stability in the industry. Jackson’s success has also

CHAPTER 11

INTO THE BLUE: NEW ZEALAND FILM MAKING IN THE EARLY TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Frank Stark

Even before it began, the first decade of the twenty-first century was framed as an epoch of dramatic technology-driven change for the film industry throughout the world.

The digital revolution was coming. As early as 1990, Francis Ford Coppola famously said, 'Suddenly, one day, some little fat girl in Ohio is going to be the new Mozart and make a beautiful film with her little father's camcorder – and for once the so-called professionalism about movies will be destroyed forever. And it will really become an art form.' [Image 11-62] [1] Such predictions have turned out to be both wrong and right – and sometimes right in ways that were largely unforeseen.

The power of computers to generate convincing unrealities grew exponentially over the decade from 1990 to 2000. Weta Digital, part of the rapidly expanding Peter Jackson ecosystem in Wellington, had already demonstrated its capability with work on the fervidly imagined fantasy worlds of Juliet Hulme and Pauline Parker (the main characters in *Heavenly Creatures*, 1994); on the ghostly apparitions of *The Frighteners* (1996); and on the roller-coaster relativity effects for Robert Zemeckis's *Contact* (1997). But Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* movies, which went into production in 1999, were a much more ambitious undertaking in every way (see pp. XX [Chapter 10]). As each film in the trilogy was shot and processed, the required computing power expanded, until Jackson found himself,

TAIKA WAITITI

by Aaron Lister

Taika Waititi (Te-Whānau-ā-Apanui) is a Wellington-based director, actor, comedian and visual artist. He first came to prominence playing the obnoxious character Alex in Robert Sarkies's *Scarfies* (1999) and as part of comedy duo the Humourbeasts with Jemaine Clement.

Waititi's breakthrough short film, *Two Cars, One Night* (2003), and its follow-up, *Tama Tū* (2005), explore the camaraderie and bonds forged between characters in potentially perilous situations: children entertaining themselves in the car park of a local pub and soldiers of the Maori Battalion sheltering in a ruined building. Where *Two Cars, One Night* is carried by colloquial East Coast dialogue and childhood bravado, *Tama Tū* features characters forced into silence. The humour laced with impending menace that characterises Waititi's films is conveyed through gestures and symbols, ranging from military commands to fart gags to the appearance of a tohu (omen).

Waititi's subsequent features *Eagle vs Shark* (2007) and *Boy* (2010) extend these ideas, especially dwelling on the connection or lack of connection between central characters: two misfit lovers stuck in suburban hell and an idealistic son reunited with his wayward father. Both films simultaneously exalt in and mock the way we weave stories around ourselves and others and are closely attuned to the role popular culture plays in shaping these fantasies. Waititi himself is an expert storyteller. Much of his work taps into and celebrates the power of film as a medium for contemporary storytelling.

Waititi's short films especially have received positive reception on the international festival circuit. *Two Cars, One Night* was nominated for Best Live Action Short at the Academy Awards in 2005, and Waititi was subsequently named as one of the 'Top Ten Directors to Watch' by *Variety* magazine. The following year, Waititi was named a New Generation Laureate by the New Zealand Arts Foundation.

[Sidebar 11A] La facinim vel eliquatum vel ea feum exerat, coreet dolor si bla feuisi blandre ea con euis nonsequis et lore.

THE SCREEN INNOVATION PRODUCTION FUND

by Lawrence McDonald

The Screen Innovation Production Fund (SIPF) was established in 1996 as a partnership between Creative New Zealand, where it was administered, and the New Zealand Film Commission. It succeeded the Creative Film and Video Fund (1984–96) and after its final round in April 2009 was replaced by the Independent Film Makers Fund.

SIPF operated during a period in which developments in digital video technology coincided with the expansion of options in film training. And for graduates of film studies courses who wished to move up the budgetary scale, SIPF was the only place to turn. SIPF's brief was specific: to fund projects that suggested new directions outside mainstream narrative film. But it was flexible enough to recognise outstanding projects of any kind, and to respond to trends such as the increasing demand for the funding of documentary projects in the first decade of the twenty-first century.

In its thirteen-year existence, SIPF funded a large number of remarkable films and helped launch the careers of many emerging film makers, as well as helping to maintain or revive the careers of older film makers. Among the former are Patrick Gillies's *Kitty* (2003) and *Offensive Behaviour* (2004); Florian Habicht's *Woodenhead* (2003), *Kaikohe Demolition* (2004) and *Land of the Long White Cloud* (2009); Colin Hodson's *.OFF* (2002); Gregory King's *Christmas* (2003); Briar March's *Allie Eagle and Me* (2004) and *There Once Was an Island* (2010); Alex Monteith's *Clouds, Three and Me* (1999) and *Chapter & Verse* (2005); Tom Reilly's *The Ambassador's Brain* (2007) and *Gordonia* (2010); and Campbell Walker's *Uncomfortable Comfortable* (1999) and *Little Bits of Light* (2005). Among the latter are Alister Barry's *In a Land of Plenty* (2002) and *A Civilised Society* (2007); Kathy Duddings' *The Return* (2008); and Michael Heath's *A Small Life* (2000) and *Edith Collier: A Life Among Shadows* (2007).

[Sidebar 11B-1] La facinim vel eliquatum vel ea feum exerat, coreet dolor si bla feuisi blandre ea con euis nonsequis et lore.