

## ***NEWSLETTER NO. 55 May 2023***

### **PRESIDENT RAY EDMONDSON'S MESSAGE:**

***40 years on – almost!***



Next year the NFSA reaches a significant milestone: its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. On 5 April 1984, Home Affairs Minister Barry Cohen announced in Parliament the creation of the NFSA, based on the film and sound archives that were formerly part of the National Library. On 3 October 1984, Prime Minister Bob Hawke officially opened its Acton headquarters in the refurbished building of the former Australian Institute of Anatomy.

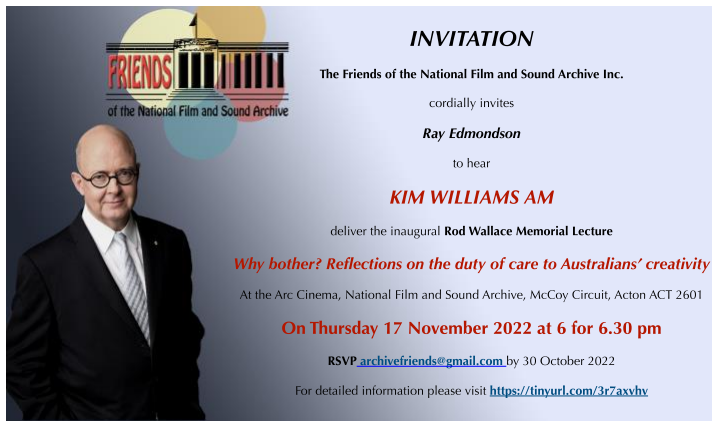
The NFSA is the repository of a multitude of Australian stories. But the evolution of the NFSA is itself an inspiring Australian story, too. Its beginnings go back to 1935. The present institution came into being through the persistent efforts of public advocacy groups, and such groups - including the Friends – have ever since worked to sustain it along a sometimes bumpy road.

We are considering how best to celebrate next year's anniversary. If you have any ideas about how best to do this, we would love to hear them! Please email us with your thoughts.

Ray Edmondson  
President

### **Inside:**

- p. 2 The very successful inaugural Rod Wallace lecture.**
- p. 3 A round up of recent Friends' events**
- p. 6 Webinar - Michael Organ on 'Metropolis'**
- p. 7 Webinar - Our NFSA CEO Patrick McIntyre on 'NFSA's Future Directions'**
- p. 8 News from the Melbourne Friends**



## The Inaugural Rod Wallace Lecture:

The inaugural Rod Wallace lecture was delivered by Kim Williams AM in the NFSA's Arc Cinema in 17 November 2022, in the presence of members of the Wallace family and before an audience that included visitors from interstate for the occasion. The lecture was titled '**Why bother? Reflections on the duty of care to Australians' creativity**' and was richly illustrated with film and audio clips.

The entire presentation can be viewed on [YouTube](#) – the best way of capturing the dynamic of the evening. It is downloadable if you want to keep your own copy. The lecture can also be read both as simple text and illustrated text with links by going to [the web page](#). Follow the links on the same page to read more about Kim Williams and Rod Wallace.

As a distinguished public figure with a wide-ranging background in music, film, television and journalism, Kim's presentation was a scholarly and entertaining celebration of Australia's audiovisual heritage and a reflection on the NFSA's role and performance as its guardian. It will stand as a landmark occasion and a reference point for the future.



## *Friends Events Round-Up*



Committee and Friends enjoyed a meal with Kim Williams before the Rod Wallace Lecture in November.



Our new banner and the lovely courtyard at the NFSA were on show for our screening of 'Sunday Too Far Away', presented in partnership with the NFSA.



Geoff Burton (centre) was the cinematographer for 'Sunday Too Far Away', newly restored as part of the NFSA Restores program that the Friends proudly support.



Even our hard working secretary/front desk attendant, Sue, has to have a moment of relaxation!





## *Friends' Events (cont.) . . .*

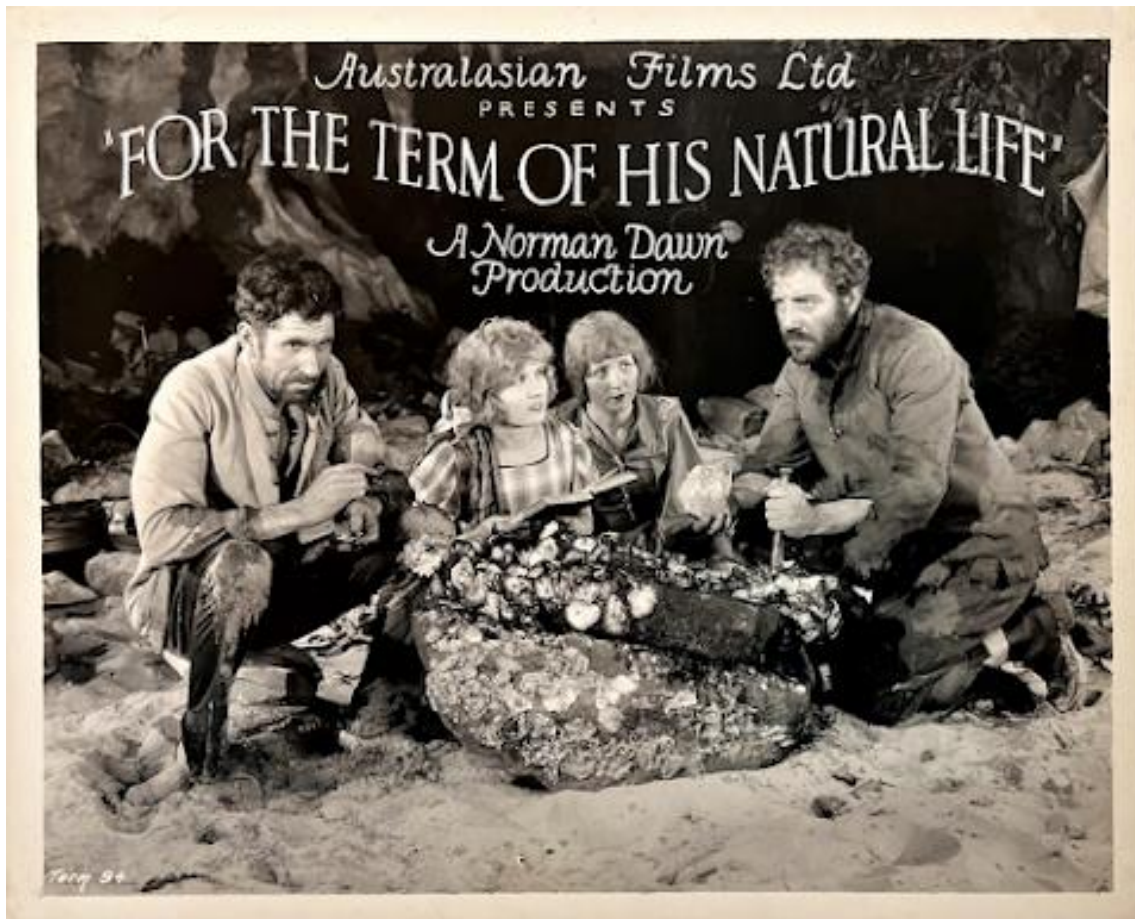
In March a group of Friends took part in the second of our 'Behind the Scenes at the NFSA' tours at the Mitchell Warehouse.

These events are a real bonus of Friends' membership, allowing small groups to be conducted through these restricted areas within the collection, and enabling an insight into the fascinating work of the NFSA. And it's a nice, social occasion, too!



*Did you miss this?*

## ‘THE TERM’ REVISITED: A NEW BLOG

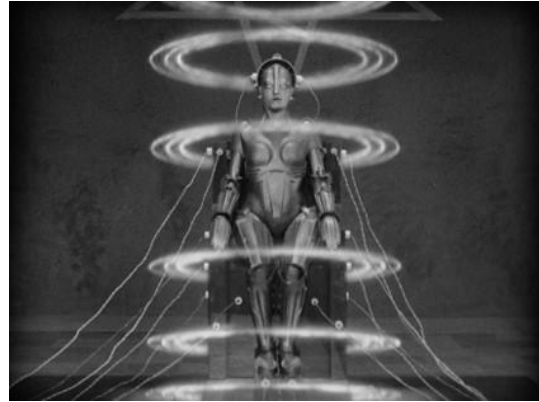


‘FOR THE TERM OF HIS NATURAL LIFE’ (1927) was Australia’s greatest silent film epic. Its survival, reconstruction and triumphant return to public view at the opening of the 1981 Sydney Film Festival was an epic project in its own right. On 19 March, film historian Graham Shirley presented at outstanding webinar on the project. If you missed it, you can view it at leisure on [the Friends’ website](#).

And, as the saying goes, there’s more! Friends’ member, film historian and archivist Michael Organ has developed [an extensive blog](#) providing a background to the film and the reactions to its original release, here and overseas. It links with Graham’s presentation and has a wealth of fascinating information. You can watch *EPIC*, the film made about the reconstruction, featuring one of the original stars, Jessica Harcourt. You can see the 1981 re-release trailer, featuring John Laws. You can even hear the original recording of the title song, sung by Sidney Burchall. And you can pick an entertaining way through the American showbiz slang in the original *Variety* review.



. . . . and coming up we have



### **Sunday 28 May at 2 pm – Webinar – Michael Organ on ‘Metropolis’**

**Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis* (1927)** has been called the greatest German film of the silent era. Whilst it is indeed that in terms of the size of the production by UFA, it is not necessarily that in regard to quality. The film is flawed and was not a success upon initial release by UFA in Berlin on 7 January 1927. Over the years since then *Metropolis* has received recognition as a classic of the sci-fi / fantasy genre and of the silent era. Unfortunately, the original 4,189 m director’s cut was shortened by some 40% for its US premiere. Until a near complete, degraded print was found in Argentina in 2008, modern audiences only ever saw this version.

A world-wide reconstruction and restoration effort, led by German film archivists and beginning in the 1990s, has seen the release of a version which is about 98% of Lang’s original. **In that effort, Australia played a role.** Michael Organ, former archivist at the University of Wollongong, is a long-time fan of the film, having set up the *Metropolis Archive* website back in 1999. In this webinar he will speak to Lang’s grand vision for *Metropolis*, its troubled history, recent reconstruction, status as a classic, and aspects of the Australian release back in 1928. The art and thematic aspects of *Metropolis* will also be highlighted.

#### **VIEW THE FILM FIRST:**

- [HERE is a free recent reconstruction](#)
- [HERE, for comparison, is the NFSA's print on their YouTube channel](#). This print also served as one of the source prints for the reconstruction.

**The webinar is free but BOOKINGS ARE ESSENTIAL.**

**Book [here at Try Booking](#)** The zoom link for the webinar will be sent after booking.

## PATRICK McINTYRE ON NFSA'S STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS – Webinar, Sunday 11 July at 2 pm



NFSA's CEO, Patrick McIntyre, will give a presentation on NFSA's strategic directions and participate in a Q&A session on 11 July at 2 pm.

The background to the presentation will be the increased financial provision announced in the 2023 Federal Budget, which will allow an expansion of NFSA staff and activities. A copy of the Strategic Directions paper will be sent to everyone who registers for the event, and the Q&A will be an opportunity to raise questions about where the NFSA is heading over the next few years.

A separate announcement will be circulated soon with further details and a link for registration.

### *From President Ray – an update on the film heritage of Brazil*



A couple of years ago our newsletter carried a feature on the situation of the Cinemateca Brasileira. Under Brazil's new president, a recovery is underway. At last year's AMIA conference, a resume of the saga was presented and [can be viewed here](#). It offers a sobering but also inspiring picture of the activism taking place in Brazil and it is not without relevance to Australia and the NFSA – for example, the theme of a government imposing non-expert leadership on specialist institutions, and the lack of visibility of the nation's film heritage in educational institutions. A national professional body, the Brazilian Association for Audiovisual Preservation, is a key player.

The Brazilian speaker comes second, after a presentation on the Thai Film Archive.

## More News from the Melbourne Chapter

**Well, 2022 was a pretty good year for Melfriendsnfsa!**

In December we finished the year with a bang, with the 16mm showing of the 1936 film of *Flash Gordon*, the Saturday-arvo cinema serial *par excellence*. Free refreshments and the odd drink or coffee added to the festive atmosphere in the Backlot Studios in South Melbourne. Despite nerves jangling and fingers crossed, our gun projectionist, committee member Jo Wellington, has been inspired to suggest that we have another 16mm event – after a while. The NFSA's coffers have a great deal to offer in films we could borrow.



2023 was under way with the unexpected offer from Warren Fahey to talk to us during his ONE DAY in Melbourne, on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> January in 2023. Who could resist the chance to meet with one of Australia's finest – and most entertaining - cultural historians? You will have received the invitation to Warren's talk at the delightful South Melbourne Community Centre in Ferrars Place - plenty of parking and no stairs!

Alas, Warren's talk ended up as a - shipwreck, I suppose. Warren was working on a cruise ship as an education and entertainment officer, and heavy seas out of Dunedin delayed his arrival twice, which led to a cancellation of the event. A big disappointment - we hope we might have Warren to speak another time.

February 2023 was a much-appreciated talk from Emeritus Professor Jenny Hocking at the Liardet Community Centre in Port Melbourne. Jenny brought us up to date with her research into the Palace Papers, and took as her theme '**How the royals are censoring history.**' A good audience and a lively discussion helped the event, while Bruce Watson filmed the proceedings.

Melbourne was happy to help organise the Barry Jones webinar in 2022, while Canberra was extremely busy with the Rod Wallace lecture. We also supported the webinar in March 2023 about the latest restoration of the classic Australian film, *For the Term of His Natural Life*. Melbourne had no events during April, because of Easter. We were pleased to have Gwenda's presence at the meeting on April 5th of the Friends with NFSA CEO Patrick McIntyre and Jacqui Uhlmann. We are looking forward to the webinar promised by Patrick about the NFSA's strategic directions, on 11th July.



We had a successful field trip to the Australian Jazz Museum (pictured, left) in Wantirna, one of Melbourne's leafy suburbs - getting close to the hills! The Australian Jazz Museum is one of Australia's unique private archives, totally voluntary owned, managed, funded and operated. It is recognized by the National Film and Sound Archive as part of the national distributed collection of audio-visual material. It houses a diverse collection of Australian jazz music and memorabilia and over 400 oral history interviews with jazz musicians. More information can be found [on their website](#).



On 18th June, Melfriends will be joining with the Thornbury Picture House for a showing of the NFSA RESTORES version of **Sunday Too Far Away**, the second-most popular film on the NFSA RESTORES LIST, when our committee member Bruce Watson conducted a useful survey.

**GWENDA DAVEY**



## ***GOOD ROWING, ARGONAUTS!***



The Friends' website is now the main source of memories and connections for the thousands of children in the 1940s, 50s and 60s who were members of the ABC's Argonauts Club. Hop onto the to read some of the reminiscences of those days.

## **VISIT NFSA ON YOUTUBE**

Have you seen [the NFSA's YouTube page](#)? With over 600 items to choose from, there are film clips, talks, interviews and much more to explore, taking you inside the work of the Archive.

## **2023 Committee:**

**President:** Ray Edmondson      **Vice-President:** David Kilby  
**Secretary:** Sue Terry      **Treasurer:** Chris Emery  
**Committee Members:** Jill Matthews, Tony Briscoe, and Lindy Ross  
**Public Officer:** Sue Terry  
**Newsletter Editor:** Lindy Ross

Interested in joining the Committee of our strong support group for the NFSA?  
We'd love to have a few extra hands on deck!



*The Friends would like to acknowledge the support of the IT firm, Blue Packets, in hosting our website.*



*Find the Friends [on Facebook](#) or on our [website](#).*

***[Check the Friends' website and Facebook page to keep up with what's happening!](#)***

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