



WHAT'S THE NEWS SEPTEMBER 2004  
FRIENDS OF THE NATIONAL FILM AND SOUND ARCHIVE INC.

Founding Patrons: Gil Brealy, Bryan Brown, Anthony Buckley, Scott Hicks, Patricia Lovell, Chris Noonan, Michael Pate, Fred Schepisi, Albie Thoms

‘Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.’

Margaret Mead

Welcome Friends

Welcome to the tenth issue of the Friends NFSA newsletter. We hope you enjoy reading about your Friends and what they have been up to since the last issue.

Contents

- 1. Welcome Paolo Cherchi Usai**
- 2. Recent activities - the Workshop/Conference**
- 3. The election - what you can do**
- 4. Other sources of information**
- 5. What's happening at the Archive**
- 6. Contacts**

## **1. Welcome Paolo Cherchi Usai**

The Friends would like to extend a warm welcome to incoming Director Paolo Cherchi Usai. In a time of uncertainty and confusion, the appointment of an internationally acclaimed archivist is a welcome addition to the ranks of qualified staff the Archive.

Hailing from Italy, where his career began as a film critic and writer on film and arts, Paolo Cherchi Usai rapidly took a curatorial path that has included Preservation Officer for the Royal Film Archive in Belgium, a founder and director of the Silent Film Festival of Pordenone in Italy, and Adjunct Professor of Film at the University of Rochester. He has been Senior Curator of the Motion Picture Department at George Eastman House in Rochester, New York, since 1994.

Paolo is currently Vice President of the International Federation of Film Archives among his many honorary roles, as well as director of the L Jeffrey Selznick School of Film Preservation. He was honoured by the French Government earlier this year as Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres for his contribution to film culture.

He has conducted extensive academic research and has been published widely in books and papers on subjects ranging from the history of silent cinema to film preservation and, most recently, issues associated with audiovisual archiving in the digital age. Among his most acclaimed books are *Burning Passions: An Introduction to the Study of Silent Cinema* (1994) and *The Death of Cinema: History, Cultural Memory, and the Digital Dark Age* (2001).

Paolo was attracted to the Directorship of Australia's National Screen and Sound Archive because of the significance of the collection and the Archive's international standing and reputation.

The above text is from the archive website.

## **2. Recent activities - the Workshop/Conference**

As advertised in the last newsletter, the Friends in association with the ACT Branch of the Australian Society of Archivists held a conference to discuss the issues closest to our hearts, the future of the Archive.

With over fifty people in attendance over the weekend, the conference drew a fantastic diversity of interested individuals from across the country, with sessions on governance, politics, public programs and indigenous collections. Speakers included Adrian Cunningham (Australian Society of Archivists), Louise Douglas (Museum curator), Roslyn Dundas (Australian Democrats spokesperson), Ray Edmondson (NFSA Curator Emeritus), Tom Eccles (Archivist), Susan Herbert (Gallery curator), Senator Kate Lundy

(Shadow Arts Minister), Roland Manderson (Greens spokesperson), Vincent O'Donnell (Academic and broadcaster), Michael McKernan (Historian and author), Frances Peters-Little (Historian and Film-Maker) and Matthew Wood (Community and Public Sector Union).

On the Sunday afternoon the conference had arrived at a detailed communiqué, statement and a series of resolutions. For a full copy of these documents and papers delivered by Vince O'Donnell, Mathew Wood, Ray Edmondson and Frances Peters-Little, as well as Ron Brent's paper who was unable to be present to deliver, please email [friendsarchive@hotmail.com](mailto:friendsarchive@hotmail.com) or contact via mail. We have reproduced the communiqué here for your easy reference.

### COMMUNIQUÉ

On 3-4 July 2004, one year after the merger of the Australian Film Commission (AFC) and the National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA, aka ScreenSound and "the Archive"), the Friends of the NFSA and the Canberra Branch of the Australian Society of Archivists convened a conference in Canberra to discuss The Future of the Archive. The conference applauded and supported the appointment of Dr Paolo Cherchi Usai as Director of the NFSA and acknowledged his future role in directing and developing the NFSA. The conference discussed a range of issues concerning the future of the Archive and made the following key recommendations:

1. That the AFC address in detail all the responses to its December 2003 "Directions" paper
2. That the NFSA be established as a statutory authority separate from the AFC
3. That national public programs remain an integral part of the NFSA
4. That the NFSA's comprehensive role and support base as a national custodial institution based in Canberra be affirmed and developed

## **3. The election - what you can do**

The forthcoming federal election is an important moment for the future of the Archive. The Friends are not a political party, however three of the four main political parties – the Australian Labor Party, the Greens and the Australian Democrats – have publicly declared their support for "de-merging" the Archive from its present incorporation in the Australian Film Commission (AFC), and for making it a separate statutory authority. The currently ruling Liberal/National coalition, who were responsible for the merger last year, have not. Although the fate of Cultural institutions is unlikely to dominate national news, you can make important decisions that can affect their outcome. We encourage you to contact your local member and make your concerns about the independence of the archive known. The Friends are spread across Australia so we're not going to list all the possible people you could contact. But if you need help, send us an email or write a letter and we'd be more than happy to put in contact with your appropriate local member.

## 4. What's happening at the Archive ?

Despite all the turmoil the Archive itself has put together a wonderful exhibition celebrating its 20th Birthday. With your help we can make sure we hit the 21st birthday in style, as an independent statutory authority. But if you're in Canberra or visiting friends, make sure you drop into their latest exhibition. The following text is from the Archive website.

Take '84 - ScreenSound Australia's 20th Birthday Exhibition Let us take you back to the sounds and images of the year 1984—the birthday of ScreenSound Australia, the National Film and Sound Archive. These moments, all from 1984, are a valuable record of our nation's collective imagination and creativity. From television variety, news coverage and the mini-series which boomed that year, to the films released and in-production, Take '84 screens the highlights. Recorded music, from jazz to alternative and rock in pubs and clubs, creates a 1984 soundtrack for everyone.

1984 was the year that computers started to change the way we live with screen-based information and the CD was introduced into the market. Cheap technology such as the audio-cassettes and super-8 film fostered a burgeoning counter-culture and the video revolution changed forever our cinema habits. DJs spun vinyl on turntables in the club scene giving birth to a new phenomenon, while bands like INXS were about to move from local pubs to international stadiums. Many of today's leading actors, directors, musicians and composers were just starting out in 1984. See and hear these 'best new talents' when it all started.

Take '84 opens at ScreenSound Australia on 16 September and runs till the end of April 2005. Admission is free.

## 5. Other sources of Information

The Friends are not alone in supporting the Archive. We have included some other important stakeholders and are happy to provide further information (see below for contact details).

### **The Australian Society of Archivists (ASA)**

The ASA have also been busy and have publicly “called on the incoming government to move quickly to establish the National Film and Sound Archive as a statutory authority separate from the Australian Film Commission.”

For a copy of a recent press release following the ASA's national conference please contact the Friends

### **The Archive Forum**

The Archive Forum has a statement which is being sent to relevant politicians, the Friends is happy to pass on the statement to any requestor.

### **Ray Edmondson**

Committee member Ray Edmondson gave a short ABC radio talk on Radio National “perspective”, about the Archive’s situation as part of the AFC, and calling for separate statutory authority status. Go to <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/talks/perspective/> the air date was 17 September and by going to the website you can click on the talk and get both a transcript and a playback.

### **Vincent O’Donnell**

Vincent O’Donnell’s “arts alive” national radio program is featuring a series of interviews with the arts spokespersons of all 4 parties, including their views about AFC – NFSA de-merger, and statutory authority status. The link takes you to the website and you can play each interview back. <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~artsaliv/election2004.htm>

## **6. Contacts**

### CONTACT DETAILS

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**About The Friends:** The Friends is a group of advocates, working to further the aims of the Archive and to encourage links between the Archive, the film and sound communities and the general community. In essence, the Friends want to promote excellence in film and sound culture, including: best practice in preservation, public programs and access; promoting high level appreciation of film and sound heritage and contemporary culture; creativity in the use of our Archive; a broad, outward looking focus that locates Australia in the South East Asia-Pacific region and globally; and restoration of the correct name for the Archive. To achieve our ends, we rely on Friends to contribute energy and enthusiasm, and to participate in events that will provide the resources. You can never have too many friends. Please encourage your friends and colleagues to join us. And if you feel you would like to contribute by joining our committee, don’t hesitate to contact Lucy our administration assistant.

We hope you have enjoyed this newsletter and would love to hear from you on any Friends topic.

Ina Bertrand, Shelley Clarke, Travis Cragg, Mary Domitrovic, Ray Edmondson, Chris Harrison, Charles Higgins, Oliver Jones, Andrew Kaminski, Tina Kaufman, Richard Keys, Andrew Pike, Cheryl Stevenson and Roger Westcombe.