



WHAT'S THE NEWS? 3

MARCH 2002

### **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

### **HELLO FRIENDS AND A SPECIAL WELCOME TO ALL OUR NEW FRIENDS**

We are now 403 strong with 144 Friends in the ACT, 175 in Sydney and New South Wales, 26 in Victoria and a further 58 located everywhere from Western Australia to New Zealand.

The Friends are 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. We are always looking for new Friends—you can sign up one or two of your friends now! Just send us their details. (And many thanks to the Australian Screen Directors' Association for canvassing their membership about joining the Friends.)

### **NOTICE OF SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING**

All Friends are invited to attend a Special General Meeting at 12.30 pm on 2 May 2002. The purpose of the meeting is to allow all Friends to vote on cancelling our NSW incorporation as the committee wishes to register as an incorporated body in

the ACT, a move planned to help with both our administrative and financial loads.

The resolution is worded thus:

'That the Friends of the National Film and Sound Archive Incorporated apply to the NSW Department of Fair Trading for cancellation.'

The meeting will be held at the Ronin Films office on the second floor of the Center Cinema building in Civic. To reach the office you will need to take the lift, which is immediately to your right after you enter the Center Cinema doors on Bunda Street. There is plenty of parking across the street in the Bunda Street car park.

Please let us know if you are able to attend. If you are unable to attend and wish to vote by proxy, contact us on [friendsofarchive@hotmail.com](mailto:friendsofarchive@hotmail.com) and we will send you a form.

## **FIRST FRIENDS OF THE NATIONAL FILM AND SOUND ARCHIVE FILM EVENT**

On Sunday 2 December 2001, at the Center Cinema in Canberra, the Friends of the National Film and Sound Archive held a special screening of the rarely seen 1993 Australian film, *beDevil*, the first feature directed by Tracey Moffatt. A collection of three ghost stories involving indigenous Australians, the film is a unique vision involving elaborate and innovative production design, modelled on such disparate sources as Vincente Minnelli and the Japanese director Kobayashi. As one of Australia's most famous visual artists, Tracey Moffatt's short films and photographic works have been celebrated at festivals and galleries internationally.

The producer of *beDevil* and a founding patron of the Friends Mr Anthony Buckley AM was present at the screening and provided an illuminating introduction about the background behind the film and his experiences working with Ms Moffatt. Mr Buckley was also present for a 'Question and Answer' session after the screening. He is one of the Australian film industry's treasures and the Friends are very fortunate to have his strong support. About 100 Friends and their guests attended. It was wonderful to see so many of you there for our very first Friends' event.

## **SENIOR ARCHIVE STAFF AND FRIENDS COMMITTEE MEET**

On Tuesday 27 November, members of the Friends of the National Film and Sound Archive committee took the opportunity to meet with the Archive's Director, Ron Brent, and his senior managers. The committee was met with a warm welcome by Archive staff, who were available to chat on various topics of interest to the Friends. Ron Brent conducted an extremely interesting tour of the Archive's Acton operations. It was a promising start to what we hope will be a mutually beneficial relationship,

working together productively to further the aims of the Archive.

## **GETTING ORGANISED**

A small group has been meeting regularly to keep the Friends moving. Whilst several Friends have put up their hands to assist with particular tasks, we need more help. PLEASE consider joining our working group. You would be VERY welcome. Contact us at [friendsofarchive@hotmail.com](mailto:friendsofarchive@hotmail.com)

## **SOUTH EAST ASIA-PACIFIC AUDIOVISUAL ARCHIVE ASSOCIATION (SEAPAVAA) UPDATE**

Archives in some countries in Asia and the Pacific work under economic and practical difficulties that are hard for Australians to imagine: budgets are miniscule, tropical conditions are very destructive to film and tape, skills are at a premium and the demand for training is enormous.

SEAPAVAA meets annually in a different country within the region: this year the conference will be held in Vientiane, the capital of Laos, from 13 to 17 May. The theme of the conference is *Mapping Tomorrow: A Reality Check For Audiovisual Archives*, and the conference is open to all who wish to attend—you do not have to be a member. The National Film and Sound Archive and the Friends are both institutional members of SEAPAVAA, which includes over 30 audiovisual archives and related organisations from South East Asia, Australasia and the Pacific countries. The Friends' nearest 'opposite number' in SEAPAVAA is the Society of Film Archivists (SOFIA) in Manila, Philippines.

SEAPAVAA actually grew out of an ASEAN/Australia training seminar held at the National Film and Sound Archive in 1995, and National Film and Sound Archive staff have been prominent as advisers and trainers in SEAPAVAA courses and workshops. Most recently, in Suva, Fiji, the National Film and Sound Archive's Graham Evans and Cushla Vula from the New Zealand Film Archive led the first SEAPAVAA/UNESCO workshop on audiovisual archiving in the Pacific. Held in November, it was followed by a technical workshop in Port Vila, Vanuatu.

SEAPAVAA's current president is the National Film and Sound Archive's Curator Emeritus, Ray Edmondson. For details on the forthcoming conference, email Ray at [ray@archival.com.au](mailto:ray@archival.com.au)

## **AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION OF FRIENDS OF MUSEUMS INC (AFFM)**

Over 80 member societies representing 160 000 individual supporters in Australia and New Zealand form the Federation, which is a national voice to promote

museums for the benefit of all Australians.

Late last year, Shelley Clarke attended the Australian Federation of Friends of Museums Annual General Meeting at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. She joined a large group of representatives from the many Friends and members groups that support Australia's museums and galleries.

As with most AGMs, the agenda consisted largely of reports from the president, treasurer, World Federation of Friends of Museums and the state vice-presidents, minor constitutional changes and election of new committee members, including a new president, David Tunny, Executive Director of the Historic Houses Trust Members group.

However, there was an opportunity for individual members to report so Shelley took the chance to introduce the Friends of the National Film and Sound Archive as a new member society and distributed copies of both the last newsletter and our membership form.

Right now, the Australian Federation of Friends of Museums is surveying member societies to help determine current priorities. If anyone has any views on this, please email Shelley at [mercury3@ozemail.com.au](mailto:mercury3@ozemail.com.au)

**ETHICAL GUIDELINES FOR AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION OF FRIENDS OF MUSEUMS 1998**  
(Adapted from the World Federation of Friends of Museums Code of Ethics 1996)

Below is the introduction from the Federation's ethical guidelines. The full text can be accessed at [http://amol.org.au/collection/hostedwebs/affm/ethical\\_code.html](http://amol.org.au/collection/hostedwebs/affm/ethical_code.html). Comments are most welcome.

Outlined are ethical guidelines for museum Friends and volunteer workers. Friends and volunteers of museums pursue noble objectives in cultural development. They bring to museums their support, their knowledge, their experience and their competence. In so doing, they contribute to the advancement both of museums and of museology. As members of the museum community, and at the heart of the museum's public, friends and volunteers represent the interests of the public to the best advantage of museum institutions. The status of Friends and Volunteers in museums imposes certain obligations toward the museum with which they are associated. They agree, therefore, to meet a number of requirements conducive to ensuring a fruitful collaboration. It is important that the institution, for its part, acknowledges the value of their contribution and assists in its implementation, in that a fully productive collaboration depends on the high quality of the mutual relationship between the museum and its Friends and Volunteers. These guidelines indicate the principles that inspire the relationship of Friends and Volunteers to the museums

with which they are associated, and also express their expectations regarding those museums. The seven sections cover definitions, statutes and mandate, function, duties, areas of operation, expectations with regard to the institution and the association.

## **NATIONAL FILM AND SOUND ARCHIVE AND 'MEMORY OF THE WORLD'**

Most people know of UNESCO's World Heritage List of significant natural sites and buildings: there are several in Australia, including Kakadu and the Blue Mountains National Park. Much younger and less well known is its 'Memory of the World' Register of irreplaceable documents that are deemed part of the heritage of all humanity. Recently Australia achieved its first two inscriptions on the Register: the Endeavour Journal of Captain James Cook, and the papers of Edward Koiki Mabo: both are held in the National Library of Australia.

A third Australian nomination, covering a group of constitutional documents, did not make it onto the international register, but will be a strong contender for inclusion on Australia's own National Memory of the World register when it is launched this year. That group of documents includes the surviving film record of the 1901 Federation ceremonies, recording the actual moment of Australia's birth. It's one of the great icons preserved in the National Film and Sound Archive. It's a world first: so far as we know, Australia was the first country to be born in front of a movie camera, and it's one of the earliest instances anywhere of a film made for a deliberate archival purpose.

But the National Film and Sound Archive also holds other material, of potential International Register status. Last year, a feature film gained inscription on the 'Memory of the World' Register for the first time. It is Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927), a cinema masterpiece of vast influence. The Register will gradually include notation of all surviving early generation copies and related items in film archives worldwide, and should include two precious elements in the National Film and Sound Archive collection. The first is its own nitrate print of the film, part of the Harry Davidson Collection acquired in the early 1980s, reputedly, the only relatively complete TINTED nitrate print of *Metropolis* in the world. The second is the astonishing collection of *Metropolis* stills in the renowned Taussig Collection: scores of pristine, first generation production stills, most of which are not known to be duplicated in any collection overseas. Acquired by the National Library in the 1950s, the Taussig Collection is the foundation of the National Film and Sound Archive's huge stills collection: the Taussig Collection comprises over 20 000 stills providing a remarkable coverage of European and American cinema between the wars.

The circumstances behind the survival and acquisition of both elements make them, in their own right, integral parts of Australia's film heritage. The Friends encourages the Archive to pursue both nominations.

## DAVID HAMER AND THE NATIONAL FILM AND SOUND ARCHIVE

David Hamer, DSC, naval hero, former Senator for Victoria, former Chairman of the Australian Film Institute, and persistent protagonist on behalf of the National Film and Sound Archive, died on 14 January this year. This is a matter of great sadness to the Friends of the National Film and Sound Archive, not only because the Archive has lost a great friend and benefactor, but also because he had agreed to become the first Chair of our newly formed Friends group.

Funeral orations and condolence speeches in the Senate recalled David Hamer's outstanding career in the Navy and his astonishing act of courage and coolness in the heat of the Battle of the Philippines, but there has been scant reference to his other war effort—on behalf of the National Film and Sound Archive. In 1982, when the then Senator Hamer became aware of the perilous condition of nitrate films held in the National Film Archive, mouldering within the National Library through underfunding and lack of staff, he immediately initiated a campaign in the Senate with questions in the Senate Estimates Committee, questions to Ministers, and speeches and press releases.

Senator Hamer kept labouring the point that 'if the present holdings of nitrate film were not copied for preservation by the year 2000 it would be too late to preserve these films because they would have deteriorated irretrievably'. He would ask repeatedly if extra funds and staff had been allocated for this urgent copying program. He was also concerned that the National Film Archive, also through lack of funding and staff, was forced to restrict services to film makers to the detriment of the entire Australian film industry.

In 1983, it was estimated that \$600 000 per annum was needed to complete the task of copying the current nitrate stock, but only \$250 000 had been allocated in the 1982-83 Budget. In the same year, the media began to notice Senator Hamer's campaign and joined in the fight with some vigour.

The ABC noted the five Hamer questions that were to become persistent and famous:

1. Had any additional funds been allocated since the last budget to enable the copying programme to be achieved? Answer: None.
2. What was the number of full time qualified staff in the National Film Archive? Answer: Ten, but actually nine.
3. Is this number sufficient for the task of copying? Answer: No.

4. It has been estimated that the Archive needs to copy 700 cans of film per year to reach the year 2000 target. What is the present rate of copying per year? Answer: 250.

5. Is there a prospect of further funds and staff being made available to the National Film Archive to rectify the problem of restricted services to filmmakers and the film industry in general? Answer: No

The ABC transcript concluded: 'Well, stand by for some action, we trust.'

Later in the same year, Senator Hamer was to utter a 'no-holds-barred' (after all he had once been a professional boxer) speech in the Senate:

'Our present National Film Archive as part of the National Library has great problems. It has poor access for people who want to use it. It is very badly underfunded. It is poorly catalogued and it is not keeping pace with the necessity to transfer on to modern stock the old nitrate stock that is deteriorating very fast. We have an urgent need to preserve and give proper access to this vital part of our national heritage. It is believed it is now time that the National Film Archive should be separate from the National Library...I do not believe that the National Library is an appropriate setting for the National Film Archive. I do not believe that the management of the Library has ever understood or will understand the nature and needs of a National Film Archive. There should be a commitment by this [Hawke] Government, as soon as practicable, to make the National Film Archive a separate statutory body, at the latest, by 1986.' (Senate Hansard, 7 October 1983)

Other Senators began to take up Senator Hamer's lead and there was a barrage of questions in the Senate Chamber and in the Senate Estimates Committee on the paucity of staff and funds to maintain an appropriate National Film Archive and the failure of the National Library to take any action to rectify the situation. Pat Lovell was forced to resign from the National Film Archive Advisory Committee because service on this committee was 'a waste of time': the National Library ignored the advice of the Committee and the Library Council never once met with members of the Committee.

The harrying tactics of Senator Hamer and other members of Parliament were rewarded and the ABC's wish for action was granted when Prime Minister Hawke announced in September that the Government would give the National Film Archive 'some autonomy so that it can concentrate on what is a distinctly important task'. Then in April 1984 the Honourable Barry Cohen, Minister for Home Affairs and Environment, told the House of Representatives that the Government would establish a new National Film and Sound Archive. The new Archive would be made administratively independent of the National Library immediately and would initially be an office within the Department of Home Affairs and Environment reporting to the

Minister (i.e. Barry Cohen). The Archive's staff and finance would be separated from the National Library immediately and separate accommodation would be provided as soon as possible. There was rejoicing in the land at the news of victory and the establishment of the National Film and Sound Archive as a separate body, but Senator Hamer alerted the Senate to problems still to be solved: 'Now that this new body has been established the question of staffing is extremely important. It is important that there be no long term hiatus before more staff can be recruited to replace the sixteen members of the National Library's part-time task force, which will cease to operate in less than a month. It is essential that new staff be recruited as soon as possible.' (Senate Hansard, 1 June 1984)

Besides the question of staffing, there were also the questions of accommodation and the prospective establishment of the new Archive as a statutory authority. But it came to pass that the new National Film and Sound Archive was totally separated from the National Library, and it was finally established in an existing building, the about-to-be-vacated Institute of Anatomy. Staffing and accommodation were finalised, but the status of the National Film and Sound Archive has never been resolved. Senator Hamer had hoped that the Archive would have been established as an independent authority with its own board of directors and budget not later than 1986. It neither happened in 1986 nor had it happened in 1989 when Senator Hamer re-entered the lists: 'It is now five years since the National Film and Sound Archive was established. When will the appropriate legislation be introduced into the Parliament by which the now not-so-new National Film and Sound Archive will operate? 'I want an assurance from the Minister that there is a very real determination to get a statutory basis for the National Film and Sound Archive. All the structural questions were dealt with in the report, *Time in our Hands*. Why do we need another inquiry now to gallop over the old battlefield that was dealt with in 1984? Can I have an assurance that this is not a bureaucratic delaying mechanism, but that a proper structure for the National Film and Sound Archive will be addressed?' (Senate Hansard, 24 November 1989)

Senator Hamer was never to receive that assurance. Nevertheless, David Hamer had been the most constant and the most probing interrogator in Parliament and elsewhere. The Hawke Government accepted his challenge and the National Film Sound and Archive in its present building is a fitting tribute to all the people who made it happen. **Wendy Brazil**

## **ABOUT THE ARCHIVE**

This is the first in a series of newsletter items on the Archive. Here are some of the basics taken from their website. **December 1935** Commonwealth Cabinet decision established the National Historical Film and Speaking Record Library as part of the Commonwealth National Library. **April 1984** The National Film and Sound Archive created as a separate Commonwealth collecting institution. **June 1999** Archive



became known as ScreenSound Australia, the National Screen and Sound Archive.

**Organisation** A semi-autonomous organisation with the Commonwealth Government Department of Communications, Information Technology, and the Arts and part of the Arts and Sport portfolio managed by the Minister for the Arts and Sport, Senator the Hon. Rod Kemp. A Council provides advice to the organisation and the Minister on a range of policy, strategy and management issues. Council members include Susan Oliver (Chair), Daryl Somers (Deputy Chair), Michael Cordell, Andrew Pike, Glenn Wheatley, and Janette Wright.

We hope you have enjoyed this newsletter and would love to hear from you on any Friends topic. You can contact us at [friendsofarchive@hotmail.com](mailto:friendsofarchive@hotmail.com)

Regards from your Committee,

**Wendy Brazil, Shelley Clarke, Adrian Cunningham, Ray Edmondson, Shauna Hicks, Charles Higgins, Roger Noel, Andrew Pike, Cheryl Stevenson and Kathy Thomas.**