

ACOFS Bulletin

Australian Council of Film Societies

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Secretary: Prodos Marinakis, PO Box 2165, Richmond South, Victoria 3121.
Phone: 03 9428 1234, Email: secretary@acofs.org.au

Incorporated in Victoria: A0057904W

ABN: 69 667 887 179

This Bulletin has been compiled and edited by Ian Davidson, (ACOFS President) president@acofs.org.au

This Issue contains information important to your president, secretary, treasurer and programmer, so please pass it on to all your committee people.

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From the President

For many years now Australia has had just four state film federations serving all of Australia. While the WA and Tasmanian Federations represented societies in their own states the Victorian Federation served South Australia as well as Victoria while the NSW and Associated Federation has served Queensland, ACT and Northern Territory in addition to NSW.

I am very pleased to announce a new state federation has now been formed and is now a member of ACOFS - The Queensland federation of Film Societies - QFFS. They have five member societies but I am sure that number will grow very soon.

We also have an associate member - the Institute for the Study and Advancement of the Film Society Movement - FiSMoTron. I welcome both organisations into ACOFS and hope that both will prosper. Further information on both organisations can be found on the ACOFS website.

Another announcement I am very pleased to make is that at long last ACOFS is incorporated. Because our main office bearers are in Victoria we chose to incorporate in

that state, but that should not disadvantage other state federations. Incorporation limits the liability of members of an organisation for the actions of the organisation. In other words, the delegates and hence all office-bearers, are protected against any legal action against them personally while conducting ACOFS business. Legal advice, as well as information from Consumer Affairs Victoria, has confirmed that all members of ACOFS are protected regardless of their state of residence and where the ACOFS business takes place, as long as our "main business activities" are in Victoria and the public officer resides in Victoria.

Our incorporation number is A0057904W.

In order to incorporate it was necessary for ACOFS to upgrade its constitution to meet the stringent requirements of Consumer Affairs Victoria. This editorial work was done by a sub-committee of the executive with input sought and included from all state delegates. The new constitution was presented at the 2012 AGM (in May) together with some amendments requested by the state delegates. All were approved with no dissenters at the AGM. A copy of the new constitution is available on www.acofs.org.au/documents where it can be downloaded as a pdf file.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank all who contributed to the work of putting this new robust constitution together.

Other matters of interest from this Bulletin are recent developments in the DVD rights arrangements and some new acquisitions at the NTLC and other distributors.

Ian Davidson
President ACOFS.

Your current delegates to ACOFS are:

NSW and Associated Film Societies

Michael O'Rourke
Leth Maitland
Brian Dunne
James Sandry
Hilton Prideaux
Graham Seaman

Tasmanian Federation

Paul Bywater
Mark Horner
Tom Busby

WA Federation

David Smith

Qld Federation

Kerry McKinnon

Victorian Federation

Ian Davidson
Susan Davidson
John Turner
Prodos Marinakis
Barboo Marinakis
Anna Blainey Warner
Suzanne Nunn
John Arkins
David deLeon

FiSMoTron (Non-voting member)

Barboo Marinakis

Is this the Best Year Ever for Film Societies?

(Originally prepared for and published in Dress Circle Vol 13 No 4 May 2012, but later amended for this Bulletin).

The film society movement started in Australia around 1950 and in Victoria grew to a maximum of 75 societies in 1963 hovering around 65 to 70 societies in the 60's and 70's.

This period is often referred to as the heyday of the film society movement in Australia. Over recent years this number has been growing again and by mid 2012 the FVFS had again reached 75 member organisations.

The growth of film societies during the heyday came about primarily because film lovers could not get enough of the new wave of “foreign” or “art-house” films coming primarily from The Continent. The existence of the Melbourne and Sydney film festivals fed this desire to see something other than the English language movies available at most film theatres. So the film society was born, and they obtained their films (mostly 16mm) from State and National film libraries and the many film libraries at the embassies. The notable ones were the French, German, Japanese and Chinese embassies.

But the popularity of the so-called “Art-house” films at film societies brought these films to the attention of commercial cinemas. They realised the potential of screening foreign language films and a series of “Art-house” cinemas sprang up in all capital cities, bringing to the public the chance to see a wide range of foreign films. This was coupled with the creation of many private film distributors dealing in this newer range of film culture, supporting these smaller cinemas. Gradually even the larger cinema chains “discovered” the popularity of certain foreign films and were prepared to screen them occasionally. All this led to a reduction in the number and size of film societies in Australia.

The very nature of film societies has changed over time. Initially patrons were prepared to sit on uncomfortable chairs, watching sometimes badly produced or scratched or jumpy 16mm films on a smallish screen with a single mono speaker competing with the sound of the projector in the back of the room. Not that there is anything inherently wrong with a mono speaker system, but most films made today are made for multi-channel sound systems and combining all channels into one mono speaker can lose the ambience designed by the director.

Die-hards say that the essence of the film society is the “sound and smell” of celluloid – but I believe that is nothing but rationalisation.

A film should be screened in the manner and to the standard intended by the director. That is with a good image on a big screen, in the dark, with good stereo or even multi-channel sound. Film societies screening 16mm films find this very difficult to achieve. It does not matter whether the image and sound is reproduced from celluloid, a DVD or even a hard disk drive (HDD), it is the final picture on the screen and sound in the auditorium that counts. But the temptation to wind the sound up full on all channels of a multi-channel sound system, deafening the audience, should be resisted. The main sound should be from the front speakers (The two stereo channels and the central "speech" channel) while any "surround" speakers should be audible only when the director intends that sounds come from the rear of the theatre. Any system that directs the whole of the left channel out all the speakers on the left side of the auditorium is doing the audience no favours. The balance between the channels is as important as the overall volume.

Technology also, has been the reason many film societies have been in decline. With the advent of video tape and video libraries, many patrons were happy to borrow their choice of film and watch it at home in the comfort of their own lounge room. With DVDs and larger TV screens and surround sound, many “movie buffs” are happy.

However this newer technology is far from causing the final demise of the film society – it is in fact bringing about the revival of the film society and bringing them within reach of everyone.

But perhaps I should digress to ask “what is a film society anyway”?

It is more than just another way to show a movie – to entertain the masses – a film society recognises that film is an art and has something important to say. Films selected to be screened by film societies are rarely the “block busters” common in the larger cinemas, but will often come from the smaller distributors, the independents, and offer thought-provoking films to audiences. That is not to say they aren’t entertaining – but that is not their sole purpose.

But how has technology made this easier?

The early film societies relied on 16mm film being screened in finely adjusted mechanical projectors. Combine a delicate length of film with a mechanical projector that needs to be as carefully adjusted as a sewing machine, and you have the potential for film damage and large costs for ongoing maintenance and adjustments. Some film libraries insist that only trained projectionists show their films, but where do you get training these days?

New film projectors aren’t cheap either, and lamps have finite lives so need replacing from time to time. A lamp for a film projector might cost as little as \$30 and last for 50 hours, while a digital projector globe could be as much as \$500 but it could last up to 5,000 hours. The cost per hour of the latter is one fifth that for the film projector. Then there is the cost of film hire, the rights and transport. With the cost of hiring a new 16mm film around \$150 and the cost of transport over \$50, this easily exceeds the cost of a DVD at around \$30 (or even free if you borrow from a member) and the rights payment of \$55, making the cost of running a film society using DVDs much less than that of a film society using celluloid - and a 35mm film society would be more expensive again.

Some DVDs are available from the NFSA (National Film and Sound Archives) for just \$16.50, or a society can purchase a DVD (nominal costs \$30) and generally obtain the screening rights for \$55. (See the ACOFS Screening rights agreement)

Added to this is the problem of supply. Over recent years most 16mm film libraries have closed, embassies no longer supply films and those that are still operating tend to focus on the more popular releases – a long way from the type of film sought by film societies. The future of new films on 35mm and 16mm film is reported to be limited, with most titles to be available only in digital formats within the next 2 years. For this reason many 16mm and 35mm projectors are being replaced and the price of second hand gear is dropping rapidly. But if you cannot get the films in that format how does the lower price of film projectors help anyone but the enthusiast?

To counter the demise of 16mm films some film societies have considered moving to 35mm. But these too are an endangered format, with the larger cinemas all looking to move to digital projection from hard drive systems. Even so, 35mm films are heavy, more expensive to hire and transport, and require fully trained operators for the highly technically sensitive projectors. Not a viable solution for most film societies.

The common DVD (and now Bluray) has come to the rescue of the film society. Most films released around the world are very soon available here in DVD format – often only weeks after the cinema release. The technology to project an image from a DVD is

available at a reasonable cost – even at “high definition” standards – which can compete well with 16mm and 35mm film. They all provide a full sound track which a society can use to produce a surround sound experience, or at least full stereo. And the extra speakers do not simply mean the sound is clearer, but that it is separated. The music, dialogue and sound effects can come from different speakers rather than being all lumped into the one central channel.

For the cost of under \$3000 a film society can set themselves up with a system to project from DVDs onto a large screen and deliver the movie “in the way the director intended”. This setup cost (once inflation has been taken into account) is less than the setup cost of a film society back in the 60’s setting up for 16mm with new equipment.

Technology is easier to operate today. It does not require specialised training to operate a DVD player and digital projector – although it does require some knowledge!

And running costs? There may as well be none. Modern digital projectors do require a replacement globe occasionally and although they can be expensive (at up to \$500 each) they last a long time. A typical globe might last up to 5,000 hours, equating to no more than 10 cents per hour. And a typical film society that screens for 3 hours once a month, will take 166 years to reach the lifetime of the globe!

The only other maintenance required is the occasional cleaning of the filters!

What does all this mean? Film societies are being re-discovered. Groups of people are getting together to see films of their choosing, in a good environment, with their friends and like-minded members, and staying round to talk about the film afterwards over a cuppa. Now that’s what a film society is all about. Attending a film society screening is now a social occasion.

The number of film societies that have become members of the state federations is generally been on the increase in recent years as the digital revolution has taken hold, and there are more member societies than for most of the “heyday years”. Film societies have re-invented themselves and are now offering their members something worth joining up for.

Further reading:

The ACOFS website www.acofs.org.au has lots of information for or about film societies including:

- A list of all state federations and their contact details
- A list of all film member film societies in all states, most with their contact details.
- Past issues of the ACOFS Bulletin.
- The Film Society Handbook, now published as a series of 18 chapters downloadable in pdf format.
- Technical information and handbooks for many 16mm projectors.
- Details of the ACOFS DVD screening rights agreement and participating distributors.

So now is the time for anyone interested to start a film society. All the information you will need is available on the ACOFS website www.acofs.org.au and your local state federation will provide all the help needed to get started.

Ian Davidson, President ACOFS

Society addresses - A contact necessity or privacy issue?

How does a member of the public looking for a film society to join get in touch with you? Do you have a contact address or phone number listed on the ACOFS or film federation website - or perhaps on your own website? What is the security risk of publicising your phone number and address like this?

The internet is a great source of information and is likely to be used by many prospective members to locate and research film societies near their homes. Does your film society have a website that answers their queries, that can tell the prospective member where you meet, how to join, and what is being screened, and most importantly who to contact for further information? Do you make it easy to join?

If you don't have a website because it is too daunting, or you think it is too expensive, don't think this way. ACOFS or your state federation can help you get started at minimal cost. If you don't have a website then make use of the ACOFS website where we list all member film societies and their contact details where supplied to us for this purpose.

But what about security and privacy if you have your email address, home address or phone number on display?

Publicity is very important if you expect to attract members, and to some extent you need to "put yourself out there" if you want results. But there are ways to minimise your exposure to scammers and nuisance callers.

Many film societies have set up PO Boxes for their mail. There are two clear advantages to this. Firstly, your private address is not publicised and secondly, as office bearers change the PO address can remain the same. But there is the need to check the box regularly.

The same can be done with email addresses. Rather than promote a private email address many societies have set up a Hotmail or Gmail account for privacy. It would take the form of "myfilmsociety@gmail.com" and would be administered by a member of the committee. If this is too onerous the email account can be set up to forward all email to a nominated email address to avoid the need to check the account regularly. This forwarded address is transparent to the sender and can be amended easily anytime by the account owner, so that emails are forwarded to the private account of whoever has the responsibility of monitoring the account.

Some people prefer not to have their private phone numbers quoted on film society publicity or the website for fear of scammers and nuisance callers, but the "Do not call" register has put the damper on most of these callers, so is not the problem it used to be.

ACOFS and the federations have systems in place to promote your film society and make your contact points known to potential members, so please take advantage of this facility. But at the same time be aware of your own need for privacy - we don't put your own contacts addresses and numbers on the website unless approved by you, but we always recommend you use the generic email address for your own peace of mind.

Please contact ACOFS or your state federation for more information.

Changes to DVD rights agreements

Discussions with some DVD distributors are under way to deliver a DVD rights process that is easier to use and fairer to the film societies and distributors.

Feedback from film societies has illustrated that the charges for DVD rights are too high for the smaller society but the larger film societies may not find it difficult or unreasonable to pay more for the DVD rights.

While distributors would like to see a price increase across the board, they may be willing to balance this by retaining the current prices for the mid range societies or even offering a bargain price for the smaller ones. Recognising that some societies use many more DVDs than others, we are also discussing the possibility of agreeing on a "blanket licence" along the lines of a bulk discount arrangement.

There will be more details to follow in later Bulletins, but for the moment I wish to thank all societies that have submitted DVD usage stats with their annual affiliation applications as these have allowed us to focus on the real needs of the societies and put real figures to the estimates under discussion.

Umbrella Titles of interest to film societies

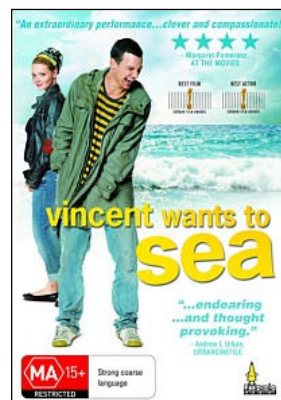
These titles have been highlighted by Aaron Rowlands of Umbrella as being the main ones in their catalogue of interest to film societies. For their full catalogue go to www.umbrellaent.com.au.

(The dates indicate when the rights expire)

Contact Aaron Rowlands (03) 9020 5144 aaron@umbrellaent.com.au

Adam Resurrected 31-12-2020
Assassin Next Door, The (Kiro) 31-12-2020
Bart Got A Room 31-12-2020
Beatdown 31-12-2020
Brian Eno: The Man Who Fell To Earth
1971 - 1977 01-11-2018
Brilliant Lies 06-10-2026
Caught Inside 22-05-2023
Circle Of Pain 1-12-2020
City Of War 01-07-2018
Closely Observed Trains 30-11-2013
Costa Rican Summer 31-12-2020
Day Of The Dog (Blackfellas) 01-01-2050
Deep Throat 01-09-2015
Episode 50 31-08-2022
Father 30-07-2032
Firemen's Ball, The 30-11-2013
High School Revolution 31-12-2020
Hindenburg - The Last Flight 30-06-2018
Hotel Sorrento 06-10-2026
Ingenious 14-12-2021

Killer By Nature 31-12-2020
Last House On The Left
31-12-2014
Life Blood 31-12-2020
Nic And Tristan 30-06-2017
Parting Shots 30-06-2017
Precious Life 01-09-2022
Prince Of Jutland 30-06-2017
Rainbow 30-06-2017
Road Games 06-10-2026
Simple Simon 28-02-2023
Small Town Saturday Night 31-12-2020
Sympathy For The Devil 30-06-2012
The Violent Kind 01-09-2022
Toms Midnight Garden 30-06-2017
True Story Of Eskimo Nell, The 06-10-2026
Vincent Wants To Sea 15-02-2019
Wind 01-12-2019



From Rialto (New releases or coming soon)

Jo Nesbo's Jackpot (released Aug 2012)
Tortoise in Love (released Aug 2012)
Chinese Takeaway
Last Will
I Wish
Safety Not Guaranteed

Electrick Children
Sightseers (Released Dec 20120)
Whole Lotta Sole (Released Feb 2013)
No (Released Feb 2013)
The Door

NEWS from the NTLC at the NFSA

There are now 878 DVDs or Bluray features in the NTLC licensed for screening by film societies, of which 108 have been added in the last 12 months. (Ref. NTLC catalogue search). Some interesting titles follow:

Ingmar Bergman Feature Films

Did you know that the NTLC has many Ingmar Bergman feature films available for borrowing by film societies, many of them recently added to the collection? All are on DVD and some, where indicated, are on 16mm film. Some are also available on VHS Video. For more details go to www.loans.nfsa.gov.au and search on the title.

Cries and Whispers 1958
Fanny and Alexander 1956
A Lesson in Love 1959
The Magician 1957
Persona 1972
The Seventh Seal 1982 (Also on 16mm)
The Silence 1954 (Also on 16mm)
Smiles of a Summer Night 1966
Summer With Monika 1963
The Virgin Spring 1955 (Also on 16mm)
Wild Strawberries 1952 (Also on 16mm)



NTLC Exclusive Australian Feature Films

Always Another Dawn 1948
Bud Tingwell enlists in WW2 navy to follow in his father's footsteps

Cathy's Child 1979
Bryan Brown - a woman's child is taken overseas by her former husband

The Clinic 1982
Chris Haywood - comedy in a sex clinic. Ointment and mayhem ensues.

The Dispossessed 1959
Lee Robinson co-production with France, set in the South Pacific

Eternity 1994
Doco on the Eternity man - cinematically shot by Dion Beebe

The Hayseeds 1933
Happy country folk meet confused city visitors. Plus songs and dancing.

The Highest Honor 1981
Australian commandos become Japanese POWs facing a grim fate

His Royal Highness 1932

Classic George Wallace mistaken identity slapstick farce

Into the Straight 1949

Romance, intrigue and horse racing culminating in the Melbourne Cup

The Intruders [Skippy] 1969

The Skippy movie! Sonny gets caught by smugglers. Guess who saves the day!

King of the Coral Sea 1954

Chips Rafferty adventure on a Torres Strait pearling lugger

Lucky Break 1994

Crippled Gia Carides falls for Anthony LaPaglia and breaks her leg

Manganinnie 1980

A child's-eye view of the last years of Tasmanian Aborigines.

Nickel Queen 1971

A mining boom gives Googie Withers a paper fortune. John Laws is her hippy Svengali turned sophisticated gigalo.

The Phantom Stockman 1953

Chips Rafferty foils some cattle rustlers.

Police Rescue - The Movie 1994

Gary Sweet leads his rescue team in this TV spinoff movie

Rangle River 1936

Zane Grey western story - someone is diverting the river!

Rough Diamonds 1995

Mum and daughter from the city meet nice truckie Jason Donovan, in the country.

Showgirl's Luck 1931

Australia's first movie musical, about rival actresses in the Talkies.

The Stowaway 1958

Adventurers compete to find the heir to a large fortune on a tropical island.

The Tale of Ruby Rose 1987

Rugged Tasmanian wilderness story set in the 1930s

Walk into Paradise 1956

New Guinea cop Chips Rafferty takes a French doctor into the mountains.

Wills & Burke 1985

Comedy version of the explorer story with Garry McDonald and Kim Gyngell in the lead roles.



"The Calling" DVD available to borrow

ACOFs has been supplied with a copy of "The Calling" by the director, who has agreed to make it available to all member societies at the rate of \$20 (Includes use of the DVD and the rights).

The Calling, USA, 2009, 85 mins. Doco. Directed by David Raghelli.

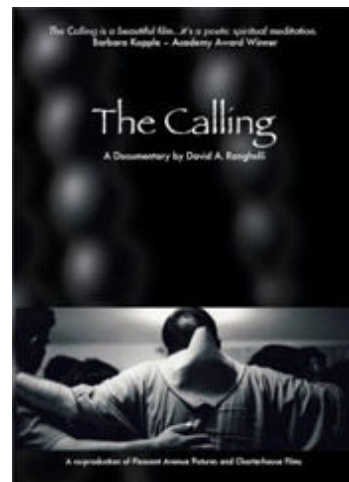
Transporting viewers to distant lands and into deep regions of the human soul, The Calling presents candid portraits of three people drawn to Catholic religious life: Orlando Castillo, a young man from a prosperous family who wishes to 'live simply' despite his parents reservations.

Mother Mary-Elizabeth a woman torn between her 'call' and the emotional needs of her biological daughters. And Fr. Philip Scott the founder of a new religious community - the Family of Jesus: Healer - who strives to establish his fledgling mission in his native country: Peru. We witness how they and their families embrace the challenges and blessings this special vocation entails. The Calling is a film about hard choices and having the faith to make them, providing a glimpse into the nature of belief, the bonds of family, and our eternal quest to discover: Who am I? *Written by David Rangelhi.*

The film has played at 16 international film festivals, and has won four "Best Documentary" and "Cinematic Achievement" awards .

For further details see www.thecallingdocumentary.com

Please contact ACOFS (dvdrights@acofs.org.au) if you are interested in scheduling a screening or if you wish to arrange a preview viewing.



Fact Sheets on the website.

We have recently released four ACOFS Fact Sheets, which are really re-writes of miscellaneous un-numbered information sheets, and published them at www.acofs.org.au/resources, where they can be downloaded as pdf files. They are:

Fact Sheet 1: 16mm films from ACMI.

Fact Sheet 2: Borrowing from the NTLC.

Fact Sheet 3: How to obtain your DVDs and get screening rights.

Fact Sheet 4: How to start a Film Society Federation.