



The Australian Museum of Motion Picture Technology (Inc) NEWSLETTER

Edition Seven

March 2006

OUR BIRTHING SUITE



Lindsay Cox and Daryl Binning
inspect display case.

It is often said that we tend to overlook what is right in front of our eyes. Such has been the case for many years during which as a member of the industry, I have read the occasional article about the pioneering efforts of the Salvation Army with their early productions including *Soldiers of the Cross* etc. At no time did it rouse more than a curious interest as obviously was the same with many others. It was only when the Salvo's Territorial Archivist Lindsay Cox joined as a member of AMMPT that my interest was rekindled. Apart from these occasional articles on arguably Australia's first film production organizations, the Limelight department, and the counterpart touring film exhibition entity, the Biorama company (as opposed to individuals), long overdue recognition of those pioneering efforts has never really been acknowledged or given the public prominence they deserve.

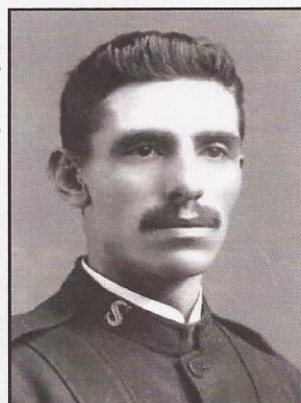
Similar examples of previous indifference to the achievements of many of our industry's pioneers and innovators throughout Australia led to the formation of The Australian Museum of Motion Picture Technology (Inc.). AMMPT is a rapidly growing volunteer and nationally registered organization dedicated to the location, preservation, public display and promotion of the equipment,

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memorabilia and stories of our industry's pioneering innovators and entrepreneurs. It also plans to showcase the achievements of contemporary cinematographers, technicians and professionals who continually provide examples of Australia's ability on the international stage. Its aim is to make the Australian community identify with and become proud of the heritage of the nation's moving image industry.

In Melbourne recently on a business plan fact finding trip, I was invited by Lindsay to call and inspect their museum, part of which was related to the Limelight and Biorama activities. The combination of these two entities, at the time considered an innovative approach to mass visual communication, was the brainchild of the Salvo's Commandant Herbert Booth. With the head of the Limelight Department Major Joseph Perry, they produced film and slide presentations, not only for their own evangelistic purposes but for private companies – perhaps the nation's first advertising commercials. Such was their expertise and reputation they were selected by the Federal Government to provide a film record of our Foundation ceremony.

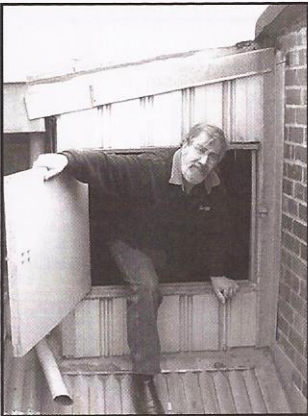


Major Joseph Perry.

CONTINUING FROM PAGE ONE OUR BIRTHING SUITE

Soldiers of the Cross is one of their better known productions. With the combination of slides interspersed with segments of motion picture film of costumed actors in a narrated drama, there is debate if it can be classified as the world's first feature film. It is reported that when "Soldiers" was screened in the USA, it was seen by a young lad who was most impressed by the elaborate sets and powerful biblical themes. Later the public appeal at this proven format was recreated by that boy, Cecil B. De Mille.

Unfortunately the successful efforts of these pioneering entrepreneurs were brought to an abrupt halt by the directive of a newly appointed Salvos supreme. He declared the activities of the Biorama company and related use of moving images to be the work of the devil. The units were disbanded. Luckily relics from these pioneering film production times are preserved in a showcase amongst other Salvation Army memorabilia and can be inspected by arrangement. Hardly had I time to digest the significance of the objects on display when Lindsay invited to me what was to be the

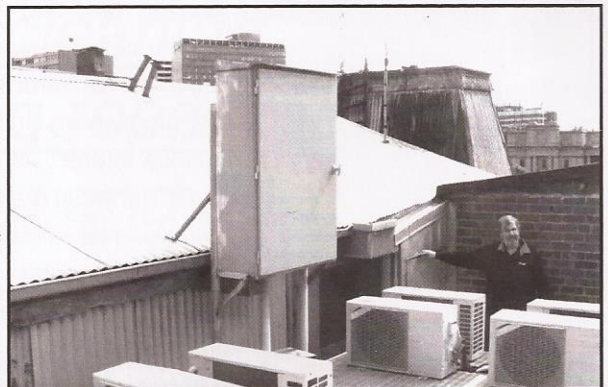


member Lindsay Cox

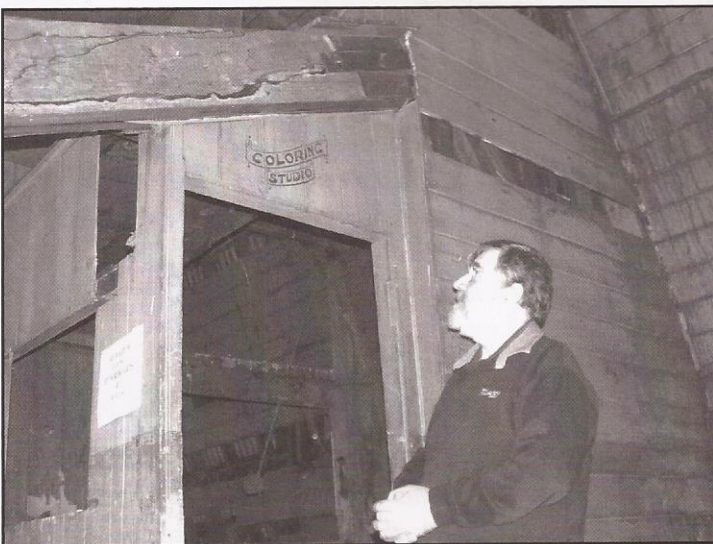
highlight of the two week trip - a visit to the actual birthplace of our industry. High above the Salvation Army headquarters in Bourke St., is a large roof area in which housed the original Limelight production unit. What was more amazing is that most of

the rooms and related fittings are exactly the same as when used by the unit over 100 year ago, apart from the natural deterioration by time and the thoughtless damage done to some of the timber walls and flooring when an automatic sprinkler system was installed. It was an eerie feeling, standing on the same floorboards as those responsible for the birthplace of the Australian film industry.

If any industry was to have a Mecca, this is ours. The heritage significance of this location has been largely overlooked by all but the Salvation Army, who are rightly keeping it under tight lock and key, with access only via a tortuous path known only to a few.



View of the Melbourne skyline with entrance to studio



Lindsay at entrance to old Coloring Studio where slides were prepared.

Proper recognition and support to preserve the site will be one of AMMPT's priorities once all regional branches are eventually incorporated and operational, and able to promote this aspect of our industry's heritage in displays around Australia. Till then, Lindsay has agreed to permit members of AMMPT, of which he has a list, to visit our industry birthing suite as a special favor, given prior request and at times convenient to the Salvation Army. Any member desiring to take advantage of this privilege should contact Lindsay Cox direct on 03 9639 3618. A small donation to the upkeep of the Salvo's museum till such time as AMMPT can

attract substantial funding would not go astray - this is my suggestion, not Lindsay's.

AMMPT PRESERVING THE HERITAGE OF AUSTRALIA'S MOVING IMAGE INDUSTRY

INDUSTRY COOPERATION

What is thought to be an industry "first" in Western Australia, three local TV stations, channels, 2, 7 and 9 have joined forces to present a unified public exhibition. The two week display at the Perth Town Hall during October and November is to commemorate 50 years of public television broadcasting in Australia. It has been initiated and being Coordinated by AMMPT Western Region branch who will also use the event to showcase equipment and memorabilia of the cinema production and exhibition industry during the 50 years leading up to the introduction of television.

A meeting was held at the ABC in Perth where representatives from all parties contributed ideas for the event. Sub committees have been formed to organize the many facets of not only the static displays, but silent movie presentation in the main hall above. This is where the first



Photo: Project Planning Group meeting at the ABC. Around table from L-R. Nat. Sec. Eddie Mills, Veteran TV presenter Earl Reeve (ABC 2), Brian Williams (AMMPT), Veteran commercial TV personality Peter Harries, Peter Goodall (AMMPT & ABC), Rudi Gracias (TVW 7), Terry Spence (STW 9, back to camera) photo by Daryl Binning.

local demonstration of television was held in 1947 and silent movies were shown from 1900 and through the following decade. Also a reunion is scheduled for all those who have been employed by the local TV stations since their inception. The Perth City Council and the Office of Seniors Interests are also supporting the event. **Volunteers are being invited to assist in manning the static display between the hours of 10 am and 4pm.**

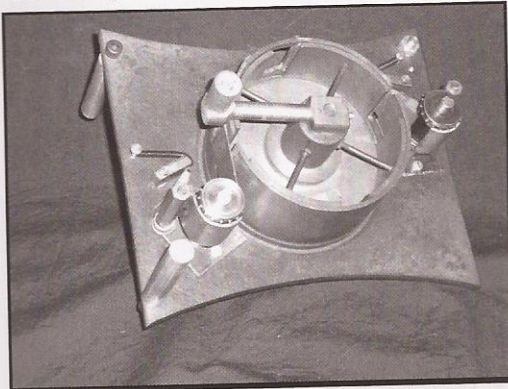
BUSINESS PLAN DATA COLLECTED



Photo of Sydney meeting held at Film Australia. Many familiar Sydney faces representing both sides of the industry including; AMMPT member, cinematographer and editor of Australian Cinematographer magazine, Butch Calderwood. (Top row left), meeting coordinator and ex Movietone news cameraman Ron Windon. (third from right) , Internationally acclaimed feature cinematographer Peter James, (front row in shorts and white shirt) and seated next to him to the right of picture, long time specialist cinematographer and new AMMPT member, Yuri Sokol.

The Screenwest funding to devise a national business plan resulted in a hectic two week interstate itinerary late last year by National Coordinator, Daryl Binning to gather information on which to formulate a realistic presentation from AMMPT. As most of the existing and prospective membership are those working in or retired from the Industry, it was essential that closer contact be made with existing museum and kindred entities from which factual information and input could be obtained. The trip also included meetings with groups in other regions who had expressed support for our objectives and with those who had already joined.

High on the agenda were meetings with curators and directors of museums in most mainland capital cities and Canberra, including personnel at the National Film & Sound Archive. A brief but informative tour of their extensive



Queensland inventor, Ron Jones' first prototype of the revolution rolling loop movement which became the heart of the IMAX projection system. This item is in store in the Queensland museum.

facilities was provided which gave a better understanding of the effort being put into preserving Australia's films, audio tapes and print materials. Due to time restraints, a visit to their store of objects at their Mitcham warehouse was not possible, but lists were provided of items in the collection. Almost without exception, all curators expressed a desire to cooperate with any locally incorporated branch of AMMPT and in some cases, offered gallery space to host collaborative exhibitions.

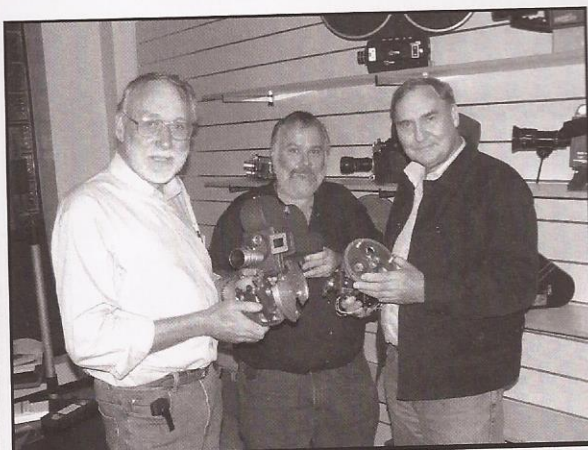
Daryl was provided with a list of the Wetzell collection by curator Kirsten Wehner during a visit to the National Museum she expressed interest in AMMPT suggesting persons who may be able to assist in identification etc. of the more obscure pieces. This sentiment was echoed by other curators.

A visit to the Powerhouse museum in Sydney and its curators yielded information about their proposed exhibition on the 50 years of TV broadcasting, This on which

our own local display has been modeled. It also provided much constructive information on the recommended structure of AMMPT and museum operations in general. Collaboration with our local project was offered. A courtesy meeting with the various State film support organizations to tell them first hand of our project brought positive results, as was a meeting with the Australian Film Commission who were very positive in suggesting ways they could support our initiative. The main theme of these meetings was to convince all parties that AMMPT was not to be a Perth dominated organization but a national entity with each region promoting the industry pioneers who operated in that area. Also to have the professional credibility to entice the custodians of the public collections and private collects to permit objects normally held in storage to circulate for exhibition around Australia under the control of properly trained and qualified



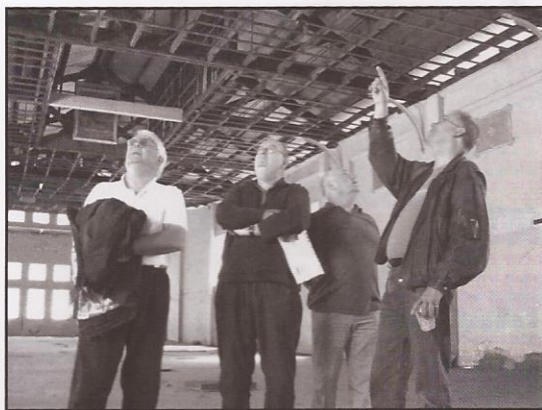
At National Film & Sound Archive. Technician inspects donated nitrate film.



Member John Bowring (centre) proprietor of Lemac in Melbourne where the Southern Region meeting was held, shows Perth cinematographer, Kevin Wiggins (right) who is now based in Tasmania, and DB left, some pieces of Auricon camera equipment he salvaged from their factory in the USA which has now been demolished.

AMMPT members. A meeting was with Dr. Ina Bertrand who had done considerable research on the history of Western Australian cinema and published the Cinemaweb. Also with the Manning family who own a property in Fremantle of possible future interest as a regional headquarters for AMMPT. Prior to the interstate trip, a self funded journey was made on an invitation to visit the President of the American Society of Cinematographers, Richard Crudo a.s.c. at their Clubhouse museum in LA, This was to discuss their operations with curator Steve Gainer and to learn their methods and establish collaborative dialogue between respective organizations. Some common problems were identified including the demise of people who used to operate some of their older equipment and the lack of information left behind to adequately establish its provenance. The information obtained is currently being collated into a business plan, upon which future applications for heritage and similar State and Federal funding will be based.

A MAJESTIC BUILDING



Committee members inspect the roof area exposed by the collapsed pressed metal ceiling of the Majestic

Discussions are taking place with the Manning family, owners of the Manning estate in Fremantle which includes the old Hoyts Majestic Theatre in the High St. Mall. The prospect of the upstairs area of the building being used by AMMPT for possible short term storage and eventually a regional headquarters and exhibition area is being coordinated by John Woodall.

The committee visited the building a few months ago and noted the considerable restoration and repair required if the space was to be suitable for use. Access to the area is limited and restricted to those involved with the restoration activity. Any member wishing to be involved in the project should contact John Woodall. No attempt is to be made to enter the building without prior approval.

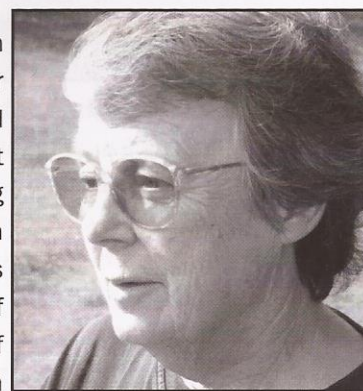
WESTERN AUSTRALIA - CINEMAWEB



Assistant Professor Arshad Omari, Roy Mudge and Paul Trimboli

Agreement has been reached with Dr. Ina Bertrand in Melbourne for AMMPT to take over the operation of her long time project, Cinemaweb, which extensively listed most of the cinemas in Western Australia from the silent days to recent times. An AMMPT web site is being developed by Webmaster Paul Trimboli who will be in charge of the project, assisted by Roy Mudge who as Curator- exhibition, will be responsible for the accuracy of the material posted. Paul will liaise with the School of Communication and Multimedia (SCAM) at the Edith

Cowan University who have indicated their willingness to host the site. The team will be assisted by members Max Bell and Jack Honniball who have extensively researched the W.A. cinema industry. It is hoped that Cinemaweb projects can be developed by other regional branches as they become established.



Dr. Ina Bertrand in Melbourne

CINE CENTRE CINEMAS - PERTH

As previously announced, AMMPT arranged with Roy Mudge and Paul Trimboli to photograph all aspects of the



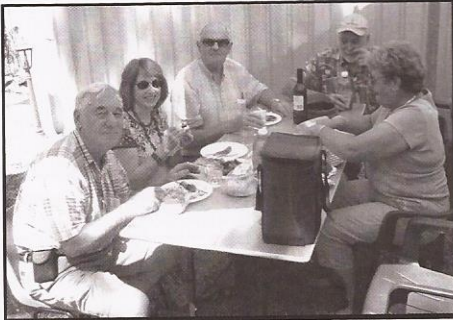
now closed Cine Centre a few days before the last curtain was drawn. A comprehensive coverage was obtained and Roy is currently cataloguing the shots for our archives which will be available for further display. What has caused concern is that a few days after our official visit, for which all members were invited to participate and take private photos, persons claiming to be AMMPT members or family thereof turned up at the cinema claiming to the manager to have made arrangements with Roy for them to

have access to all areas of the cinemas to take more photos. As no such arrangements were in place, not only was the action of the persons concerned deliberately misleading, it inconvenienced the staff and jeopardised our relationship with the exhibitor, also placing some question on the integrity of our members. We can ill afford bad public relations at this stage of our development.

EDUCATION BY STEALTH

Most organisations rely on the support of others outside of their membership if social gatherings and the like are to become popular events. Barbecues such as one recently held at Roy Mudge's home attracted a large section of the local membership with their partners and guests. Social Intercourse flowed freely with some members insisting on "talking shop" while others took advantage of moving into Roy's home cinema in expectation of the usual entertaining fare from his collection. Instead of the whirr of the 35mm

machines from the bio box heralding the start of the show, the curtains rose to reveal a video image of a DVD programme. The audience were treated to what was an entertaining, but thinly veiled set of three educational short titles relating to aspects of our industry. The first was a tour of an established moving image museum in the UK. The second was the history of development and intricacies of the Cinerama system. It



From left to right; Eddie and Heather Mills, member Tony Smith and Daryl and Wilma Binning



Members enjoying a chat while cooking at the barbecue



member Hedley and Valmae Simms

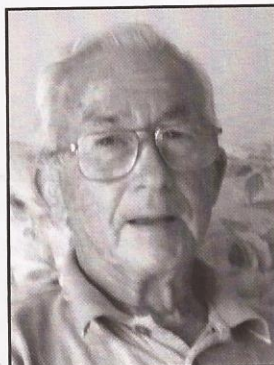
which also included scenes of John Mitchell and his Cinerama installation in New South Wales. Finally a nostalgic look at some of the old cinemas in Perth before they were demolished with interviews with many long deceased industry identities. A trip down memory lane for most, but with a subtle educational component to convince some of the partners that the time their blokes spend at AMMPT meetings and related activities is really worthwhile. Sneaky!!!

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

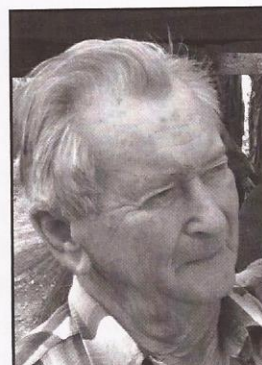
The audio recording of interviews with the industry's pioneers continued this year with Frank Worthington arranging appointments with Arthur Stiles and John Pye. This adds to those done last year with Colin Hatfield and Jim Poore. The donation to AMMPT of a set of three lapel microphones and small audio mixer by Clive Woodward certainly improved the technique. Frank would appreciate hearing from any other member wishing to be on his team and to hear first hand, the stories of those who have become industry legends. Also assistance in transcribing the tapes would be appreciated by anyone who had time to spare.



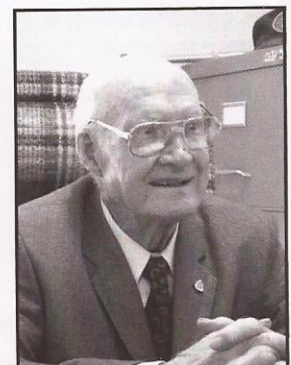
Arthur Stiles 2006



Jim Poore 2005



Collin Hatfield 2005



John Pye 2006



WE NEED YOU NOW!



If you are reading this newsletter, you are either an AMMPT member, been loaned a copy by a member, or as an individual or organization who has expressed an interest in what we are trying to achieve, received a complimentary copy. Let's face it, individuals, no matter how well intentioned, are unlikely to ignite national passion to preserve what's left of the early days of our industry or create a community awareness of what it has achieved. Nor do they have much clout in persuading the legislators to address the situation. Despite intermittent attempts by public institutions, nothing permanent or widely accessible display has emerged. The passion, knowledge and vitality of those who are in or have been in the industry is now being tapped to provide an alternative avenue for collection, preservation and exhibition. This will complement the efforts of existing entities without the restraints of the ever changing government policies, budget restrictions and constant administrative changes. Corporate or individual membership of AMMPT will assist in creating a solid national organization which can address this long neglected situation.

Do you consider our industry's heritage is worth preserving????

If so, what are YOU doing about it ?

If joining organizations is not your cup of tea, at least let us have your feedback on what we are trying to accomplish. Suggestions on where you consider we are misdirected or ways to better achieve our objectives would be appreciated. Valid concerns have already been expressed that most AMMPT newsletters to date refer to cinemas and projection technology. This has been due to most of the Western region membership comprising those from that sector of the industry with very little production heritage or current activity to report. It is anticipated when other regional branches come on stream there would be greater input and articles relevant to that sector. Similar concerns would be welcome.

Remember, the annual cost of individual membership equates to bottle of decent restaurant wine. The next couple of years will be crucial in deciding if our project becomes a reality, but needs collective support now to make it happen. Would you prefer to be one of those who is finally called to the big film set in the sky, pleased with the knowledge you at least tried to preserve our industry's heritage for future generations, or one who just couldn't give a damn.

If you are genuinely concerned, Join AMMPT NOW!!

Contact JOHN MARSDEN on 08 9581 7565 Email; wesaus@westnet.com.au



**THE AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM OF
MOTION PICTURE TECHNOLOGY
(Inc)**

P.O. Box 476 LEEDERVILLE WA 6903

ABN 73 111 667 924

National Coordinator

DARYL BINNING a.c.s.

Ph 08 9310 3377 Email: ammpt@inet.net.au



National Treasurer KEITH COOTE 08 9259 0459 - National Secretary EDDIE MILLS 08 9447 4531
Western Region Curator of Exhibition ROY MUDGE 08 9419 1794