



# THE COOLBAROO CLUB

**UPDATED INFORMATION KIT 2024**

Distributed by



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# THE COOLBAROO CLUB – PRINCIPAL CREDITS

Directed by	<b>Roger Scholes</b>
Produced by	<b>Penny Robins</b>
Written by	<b>Steve Kinnane, Lauren Marsh and Roger Scholes</b>
Co-producers	<b>Steve Kinnane, Lauren Marsh</b>
Director of photography	<b>Roger Scholes</b>
Editor	<b>Tony Stevens</b>
Music and songs composed by	<b>Lucky Oceans</b>
Vocals	<b>Lois Olney</b>
Narrator	<b>Marlene Cummings</b>
Witnesses	<b>Helena Murphy (nee Clarke), Eileen Clarke (nee Shang), Joan Penny (nee Deeble), Christopher Robin Bodney, Thomisha Passmore (nee Forrest), Frank Bropho, Gladys Bropho, Shirley Corunna, Roma Loo (nee Kickett), Nora Pickett</b>
Principal Cast	<b>Michelle Torres (Helena), Derek Nannup (Ron), Lois Olney (Gladys), Igor Sas (Geoff), Vanessa Elliott (Nora), Faith Clayton (Mrs Nancarrow)</b>
Musicians	<b>Lew Smith, Konrad Park, Russell Holmes, Ben Franz, Lucky Oceans</b>

Developed with the assistance of **Screen West, Film & Television Institute, W.A., Australian Institute of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Studies and the Western Australia History Foundation**

Produced with the assistance of **Film Victoria**

Produced with the assistance of the **Australian Broadcasting Corporation**

Developed and produced with the assistance of the **Australian Film Commission**

Financed by the **Australian Film Finance Corporation Limited**

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Running time: 55 minutes • 16mm

Classification: G (suitable for General Exhibition)

**ffc** australia  
Film Finance Corporation



# NFSA RESTORATION

The Restored Version of THE COOLBAROO CLUB was launched at the Melbourne International Film Festival in August 2023.

**NFSA Restores** is a program to digitally preserve and restore classic Australian films to the highest archival standards. **The Coolbaroo Club** (1996) was selected to be restored given the significance of the film in covering an important part of Australian history. The production team employed a bold aesthetic marrying documentary filmmaking and beautifully orchestrated drama. Source material was the 16mm original picture negative which was scanned on the NFSA's preservation scanner to meet archival preservation specifications. The file was then conformed, digitally cleaned and graded over a period of weeks. The NFSA Audio Services team examined several audio sources to determine which would give the best outcome. The process of audio restoration included speed conversion to the required frame rate; removal of echo and replaced with ambience; the removal of clicks, pops and drop out; equalisation and noise reduction in some parts and the sound was then rendered out as a stereo wav file.

The NFSA's Restoration Partner for **The Coolbaroo Club** was The Post Lounge, Sydney.

Previous NFSA Restores titles have included **My Brilliant Career** (1979), **Shame** (1988), **The Year My Voice Broke** (1987), **Gallipoli** (1981), **Storm Boy** (1976), **My Survival as an Aboriginal** (1978), **Starstruck** (1982), **Bliss** (1985), **Proof** (1991), **Strictly Ballroom** (1992) and **Floating Life** (1996) as well as silent films **The Sentimental Bloke** (1919), **The Cheaters** (1929), **The Man from Kangaroo** (1919), and the Snowy Baker films, **The Empire Builders** (USA, 1924) and **Three Days to Live** (USA, 1924), all of which have been screened at various film festivals and events.

- Gayle Lake, National Film and Sound Archive, 2024

# THE COOLBAROO CLUB IN THE WORLD

**THE COOLBAROO CLUB** was financed with a pre-sale to ABC TV and was first broadcast nationally on 9 July 1997, during NAIDOC Week. The broadcast was preceded by a “window” for festivals and theatrical screenings. Accordingly, the film was able to premiere at the Sydney Film Festival in June 1996, and at the Melbourne International Film Festival in August.

The film went on to win a Human Rights Award (Arts category) from the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission in 1996. And at the Columbus International Film Festival, USA, it received an Honourable Mention, 1997.

Immediately after the Sydney and Melbourne festival premieres, the film opened for seasons (with daily sessions) at the following cinemas: Valhalla Cinema, Glebe (Sydney); the George Cinema, St Kilda (Melbourne); the Luna Cinemas in Perth; and the Electric Shadows Twin Cinema, Canberra.

These cinema seasons were remarkable for a one-hour film using 16mm prints, and indicated public awareness of the film’s quality and the degree of interest in First Nations themes. It would be almost impossible to achieve such results in today’s cinema trade.

Although seasons such as these could be loss-makers, they were invaluable for triggering media coverage and film reviews. **THE COOLBAROO CLUB** was no exception (*see the “Quote Bank” in this Information Kit*).

In those pre-digital days, releasing films was labour-intensive and expensive. Ronin Films designed and paid for newspaper advertising, and employed publicists in each location (Gayle Lake in Sydney, Miranda Brown in Melbourne, Natalie Cameron in Perth, Cris Kennedy in Canberra). Hard copies of publicity materials were physically duplicated and shipped. Press releases to the media were in voluminous mail-outs. Posters and brochures were printed and circulated in bulk, and VHS tapes were provided for journalists and reviewers who needed to see the film.

## **THE COOLBAROO CLUB IN THE WORLD** *Continued.....*

Prior to broadcast, and after it, the film attracted a continuing flow of non-theatrical screenings among community associations, public libraries and educational institutions – screenings that continued over many years and which are likely to begin again with the newly restored version of the film.

Sales of VHS tapes and later DVDs to educational institutions began in earnest even before the ABC broadcast, reaching high-schools and colleges, universities, public libraries, Aboriginal associations, government agencies, film societies, Australian Embassies in Asia, industry (including mining companies), and numerous private individuals. The list ranges from community kindergarten associations and elite private schools to the National Native Title Tribunal and Correctional Centres.

After the ABC licence expired, the film continued to be broadcast around Australia, first on PayTV, and from 2007 on National Indigenous TV. Overseas, the film was broadcast several times on Maori TV in New Zealand, and was screened at the Musee de l'Homme in Paris. Over the last decade, universities in USA and Canada have purchased streaming licences for teaching staff and students - activity which continues to this day.

Today streaming has largely displaced the sale of DVDs, and although on-line viewer statistics are consistently high, revenue back to the filmmakers from streaming is only a tiny fraction of the income that was once received from the sale of VHS tapes and DVDs.

The Restored Version of THE COOLBAROO CLUB was launched at the Melbourne International Film Festival in August 2023.

*Andrew Pike, Ronin Films, March 2024*



# QUOTE BANK

Winner of the 1996 Human Rights Award for Arts



*Margaret Pomeranz, SBS Movie Show*

**"Beautifully shot by Scholes ... interspersed with marvellous characters such as Helena Clarke (a ravishing beauty in the 50s) and Co-producer Steve Kinnane's grandmother and famed card player, The Coolbaroo Club delivers a lushly textured glimpse of an Australia – both lively and harsh – which most of us didn't know existed."**

*Ruth Hessey, Sydney Morning Herald*

**"A deeply moving film which deserves to be widely seen both in Australia and overseas. It is a testament to a people's will and their fight for the smallest piece of respect, and their enormous will to express joy in the midst of oppression."**

*John Diaz, Multimedia Film Review*

**"With the co-operation of Perth's Aboriginal community and one of its members, Steve Kinnane, Scholes has directed a fascinating, confronting film. (It) makes us painfully aware of how much of the history of White Australia's relationship with Aboriginal Australia has been hidden, suppressed or just strategically forgotten. But watching the film is also pleasurable. With photographs, interviews, music and re-enactments, Scholes vividly recaptures a sense of the fun and pleasure that emanated from the club on dance nights."**

*Barbara Creed, The Age (Melbourne)*

**"More shaming than a hundred news stories, this alternately chirpy and sad, dignified and scathing documentary by Roger Scholes (The Tale of Ruby Rose) and Steve Kinnane, does more than just recall a less tolerant time and place. In its modest way, it lifts the lid on post-war race relations in Australia. A copy should be obtained by every school in the country."**

*Robert Drewe, Sydney Morning Herald*

# FESTIVALS

1996

***Official Selection,  
43rd Sydney Film Festival,  
June 1996***

Screened as part of the 34th International Short Film Competition,  
Melbourne International Film Festival, July-August 1996

1997

***Honourable Mention to Roger Scholes,  
45th Columbus International Film & Video Festival,  
October 1997***

2023

***Melbourne International Film Festival (restored version),  
August 2023***



# Roger Scholes

(1950 – 2022),  
director of **THE COOLBAROO CLUB**

## Biographical notes

Roger Scholes was an Australian filmmaker who worked in a variety of genres, including drama, documentary, and community education. He was a versatile and skilled filmmaker who won numerous awards for his work, including four critics prizes at the Venice Film Festival for his film **The Tale of Ruby Rose** (1987).

Scholes began his career in the 1970s, working as a cinematographer and editor on a number of short films and documentaries. In the 1980s, he began directing his own films, starting with the short film **The Franklin River Blockade** (1982). His first feature film, **The Tale of Ruby Rose** (1987), was a critical and commercial success, winning four critics prizes at the Venice Film Festival.

In the 1990s, Scholes continued to direct award-winning films, including **The Coolbaroo Club** (1996), which won the Human Rights Award for Media, and **The Human Journey** (1998), which won the Eureka Prize for Science Media. He also directed a number of popular television documentaries, including **Stories from the Stone Age** (2000) and **Last Port of Call** and **Future Shack** (2006).

Scholes's work was characterized by its diversity and social impact. He was interested in exploring a wide range of themes, from environmentalism to Aboriginal history to the human condition. His films were often critical of social injustice and inequality, and they often had a strong educational component.

Scholes was a highly accomplished filmmaker who made significant contributions to the Australian film industry. His work will be remembered for its quality, diversity, and social impact.



Scholes's death in 2022 was a major loss to the Australian film industry. He was a talented filmmaker and a dedicated educator who inspired and mentored many young people. His work will continue to be enjoyed by audiences for many years to come.





# Penny Robins

producer of **THE COOLBAROO CLUB**

## Biographical notes - July 2023

Penny has been active in the Australian screen production industry in various capacities since the 1980s. Much of her work as a producer explores issues of social justice and change seeking to look at the world around us in a contemporary frame but often with a view to history and at times with a nostalgic wash. Her work as executive producer, co-producer and producer of both series and one-offs, have been commissioned variously by ABC Television, SBS, Canal Plus and the BBC. The productions focus on a range of social and political issues featuring both big picture topics that throw light on Australia and its communities as well as providing insightful and moving stories from individuals: **Sugar Slaves, The Coolbaroo Club, Where Angels Fear To Tread, Wide Open Road, Whitlam: The Power and The Passion,** and the ABC 3 kids factual series **MY:24** being some of these.

Penny's work over many years has involved collaborations with a variety of individual filmmakers, production companies and film agencies. She worked in executive roles as Manager of Documentary Film Victoria, Manager of the Australian Film Commission's Women's Film Fund and Executive Producer, Film Australia. During her six years as executive producer with Film Australia she worked on a number of powerful, high rating and award winning productions including **Mr Patterns, The Life Series, Bombora the Story of Australian Surfing, and Growing Up and Going Home.**



# Steve Kinnane

co-producer and writer of  
**THE COOLBAROO CLUB**

**Biographical notes - July 2023**

Steve Kinnane co-wrote and co-produced **The Coolbaroo Club** an ABC TV documentary, was awarded the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Human Rights Award for the Arts, and collaborated with Lauren Marsh and Alice Nannup on the completion of **When the Pelican Laughed**, the story of Mrs Alice Nannup (Fremantle Arts Centre Press). His book, **Shadow Lines** was awarded the Western Australian Premier's Award for Non-Fiction 2004, the Federation of Australian Writer's Award for Non-Fiction 2004, The Stanner Award 2004, and was short-listed for the Queensland, South Australian Premier's Awards. Select publications include editing the journal **Westerly** Issue 61.1, the chapter 'History; a long, slow dance' for the Cambridge University Press book, **Knowledge of Life** (ed. Kaye Price), 'Finger Money; the black and white of stolen wages' (in collaboration with Judy Harrison and Isabelle Reinecke) for **The Griffith Review Issue 47 (looking West)**, the chapter, 'Indigenous Australia' (in collaboration with Anna Haebich) for the **Cambridge History of Australia**, and the chapter, 'Blood History' for the **First Australians** book accompanying the First Australians Television Series (SBS).

Steve is a Marda Marda from Miriwoong country in the East Kimberley, and retains strong personal, familial, and professional connections between the Kimberley in the North, and Noongar country in the South West of WA. Common themes of this work have included multi-layered narratives of diverse individual and collective community experience; cultural governance as a foundation of social capital for collective community development; and, the resonance of history in contemporary and evolving narratives of peoplehood.