

# TENDER HOOKS

The first feature by Mary Callaghan (director of GREETINGS FROM WOLLONGONG) is an edgy inner-city romance full of unexpected pleasures and featuring a marvellous central performance by Jo Kennedy (nominated for Best Actress, 1988 AFI Awards).

"A FILM OF EXCEPTIONAL CHARM AND ASSURANCE AND AN UNFAILING LIGHTNESS OF TOUCH...a comedy of exquisite reverberations."  
—Evan Williams, *The Australian*

"SPARKLING ENTERTAINMENT... a richly observed slice of life..."  
—Rob Lowing, *Sun Herald*

"SPIKED WITH REAL HUMOUR AND CONSTANT INVENTION... film-making with a contemporary urgency quite rare in local cinema."  
—Chris Stafford, *Ram*

Mitchell leaves the comforts of suburban bliss on the belief that you can't assess life if you haven't lived. She's clear on what isn't for her, but is on the lookout for what is...a choice. She takes a job in an inner city hair salon and a room in a nearby boarding house. Here she meets Gaye who lives on love and spurts on her asthma inhaler. Through a quirk of fate she meets Rex in the hall with not much on but the imprint of a boot on his behind. She takes him in — it's the smile! Somehow they click. Rex appreciates Mitchell's style and there is no way she can ignore his. The catch is he

comes fully loaded: you take on Rex and trouble comes close behind. Rex is not so much a criminal as he is loyal to his off-beat mates. He can't say no. It's his pride: never turn down a mate, one more favour to the next...and he loses out every time. He hopes his late night vigils and bounty of gifts will keep Mitchell sweet. What he knows about love, romance and caring, he's borrowed from pop songs, bubble gum wrappers, tattoos and bus shelters. When Rex gets arrested, after one favour too many, he and Mitch are forced to re-evaluate their relationship and take their bearings.

Released by Ronin Films, P.O.Box 1005, Civic Square, ACT 2608. Ph: (06) 2480851 Fax: (06) 2491640

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Approx  
95 mins  
VHS

TENDER HOOKS

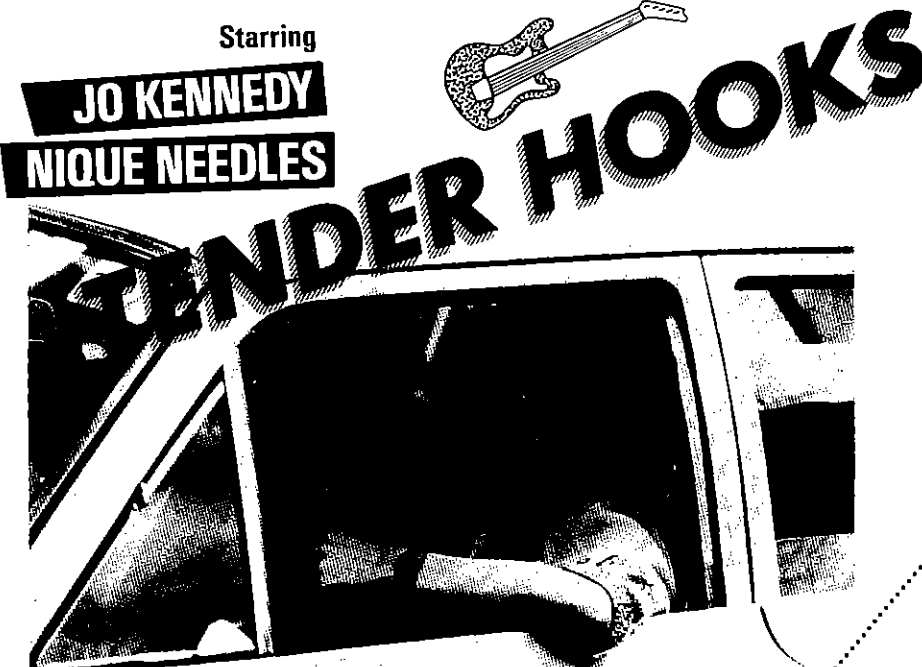


"Are you 'for real'?" she said

"Trust me." he said

Starring

JO KENNEDY  
NIQUE NEEDLES



TRU YU PICTURES presents JO KENNEDY and NIQUE NEEDLES in  
"TENDER HOOKS"

co-starring ROBERT MENZIES and ANNA PHILLIPS  
Written and directed by MARY CALLAGHAN  
Produced by CHRIS OLIVER

Director of photography RAY ARGALL • Editor TONY STEVENS  
Associate producer ANNA GRIEVE • Music director GRAHAM BIDSTRUP  
Art director KERRIE BROWN • Released by RONIN FILMS



15+ RECOMMENDED FOR MATURE AUDIENCES 15 YEARS AND OVER



Directed by  
Mary Callaghan

Produced by  
Chris Oliver

With music by  
PAUL KELLY  
THE STEVENS  
THE TWILIGHTS  
GANG going



# TENDER HOOKS

## SYNOPSIS

**M**itchell leaves the comforts of suburban bliss on the belief that you can't assess life if you haven't lived. She's clear on what isn't for her, but is on the look out for what is...a choice. She takes a job in an inner city hair salon and a room in a nearby boarding house. Here she meets Gaye who lives on love and spurts on her asthma inhaler. Through a quirk of fate she meets Rex in the hall with not much on but the imprint of a boot on his behind. She takes him in — it's the smile!

Somehow they click. Rex appreciates Mitchell's style and there is no way she can ignore his. The catch is he comes fully loaded: you take on Rex and trouble comes close behind.

Rex is not so much a criminal as he is loyal to his off-beat mates. He can't say no. It's his pride: never turn down a mate, one more favour to the next ... and he loses out every time.

He hopes his late night vigils and bounty of gifts will keep Mitchell sweet. What he knows about love, romance and caring, he's borrowed from pop songs, bubble gum wrappers, tattoos and bus shelters. When Rex gets arrested, after one favour too many, he and Mitch are forced to re-evaluate their relationship and take their bearings.

Mitchell is not about to ask favours. She puts it to Rex that it's time for him to choose, to take responsibility for his lot. It is a simultaneous decision. They both know that they have to part. Rex lets her off the hook; he loves her too much to take her down. She knows that this time Rex is looking up — he has made his first decision ... one of the hardest. As he says, it must be right, it hurts enough.



# TENDER HOOKS

## CHRIS OLIVER — Producer

**C**hris Oliver graduated from the University of NSW (Bachelor of Science) majoring in Psychology and Industrial Arts, completing his degree in 1972.

For the next three years he attended Swinburne College of Technology Film and Television School, specialising in production, editing and direction. He graduated in 1976.

In 1979 he began work in the film industry as a news film editor at TCN Channel 9, Sydney, editing News, 'Wide World of Sport' and 'Weekend Magazine'.

The following year he returned to Melbourne and in partnership with John Ruane and Chris Fitchett opened a production and post-production facility in South Melbourne. During this time (1977-1983), Chris produced, directed and edited numerous documentaries and commercials for companies, governments and semi-government authorities.

In 1982 he produced (with Tom Broadbridge) and edited the internationally successful feature film BLOOD MONEY starring Bryan Brown which won an Australian Film Award in 1983. BLOOD MONEY is distributed by J.C. Williamson's Film Distributors and has been sold to numerous territories throughout the world. It was released theatrically in Australia and screened on the Ten Network.

During 1983 Chris produced the feature film DESOLATION ANGELS a Roger Corman-style action picture. DESOLATION ANGELS is distributed by Shapiro Entertainment Corporation in the USA. In that year he also produced the feature documentary MAN INTO WOMAN, a documentary on Sydney's transsexuals. Both the feature film and documentary were financed through private investors under 10BA.

Returning to Sydney in 1984, Chris had a break from producing and began developing a number of feature projects, one of which was TENDER HOOKS.

In 1986-87 he produced with Barbara Chobocky the feature length documentary WITCH HUNT for SBS Television. WITCH HUNT won an AFI Award in 1987. At this time he purchased, with Chris Fitchett, the production and post-production facility, Filmworks, in Sydney.

In 1987-88 he produced TENDER HOOKS.

In 1988 he also produced the feature documentary MOVIE TONE MEMORIES for CBS/FOX.

He is currently producing two new projects: a telefeature to be directed by John Ruane, with the working title DANCING OUT OF TIME, and a six part documentary series pre-sold to the ABC.

# TENDERS HOOKS

## MARY CALLAGHAN — Writer/Director

### BIOGRAPHY

**T**ENDERS HOOKS is the first feature by Mary Callaghan, one of the most exciting new talents in film production in Australia. Her short fiction film, GREETINGS FROM WOLLONGONG (1982) won three major Australian film awards, and was released theatrically around Australia. Its story of young unemployed people in a grim industrial landscape, was described by Peter Kemp in Film News as "visually inventive", bouncily paced, with refreshing humour.

Mary graduated from the Swinburne Film School in 1976 and made several experimental shorts. She worked with the Women's Theatre Group, Film Australia and the ABC, before returning to her home town, Wollongong, to make GREETINGS.

### INTERVIEW

**Q.1** How did you become involved in film ...?

**A.** As a child I loved stories, delighting in graphic details, I would picture every instant. I was fascinated by words and their ability to recreate the mood and emotion of an event. I threw around words I could hardly pronounce, acting out my characters' mannerisms and idiosyncracies where my vocabulary failed me. Film was an inevitable choice for me because it offered me the potential of words and pictures to express my ideas. I have always been full of ideas, my head would burst if I didn't get rid of some of them. Film gives you the opportunity to get rid of a whole lot at once ...

I was introduced to filmmaking by an adventurous art teacher. I had designed a set of life-size bird costumes and having made them, photographed them, displayed them, admired them. It seemed a waste to lock them away forever in a cupboard. So we went down to Bombo Quarry (prior to AUNTY JACK using the location) and with the patience of a lot of friends who jumped around the cliffs in these insane winged contraptions we made a film ... which I submitted as my Higher School Certificate major work. It was my first and only fantasy-surreal film.

I remember being so emotionally involved in a film that at the age of ten DR ZHIVAGO was able to induce weeks of morbid depression, I would have to keep repeating to myself "it is only a film", it is not really happening. At the same time I was aware that there was a chance that horses were injured in stunts, I was worried all the way through CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE, worried about the poor horses, it was real enough for them. LAWRENCE OF ARABIA was the first film to inspire thoughts of direction in me. I realised that someone was responsible for making it all happen. I couldn't imagine how someone could control that many people and keep the action together. I was worried about how I would do it, but I knew I wanted to make a film, I would just keep the horses to a minimum. I think I was about ten when I came to that inspired decision.

**Q.2** "You were born in Wollongong but you ended up going to Swinburne Film School ...

**A.** It was the practise amongst peer groups to leave home the instant you left school, so I moved to Sydney and spent a year ringing up the names of people somehow connected with filmmaking to be given another name and another number to ring ... I did this trying to retain my enthusiasm and optimism to dial the next digit until I learned of the existence of Australia's one and only film school, Swinburne — the national film school was still on the drawing board. I was one of two girls in a group of fifteen accepted that year. It was there that I learnt the determination and perseverance which is essential to survival in the independent film industry. There was very little equipment at Swinburne and it was like a bargain basement rush to get hold of it. Often the ability to scrum and shove was interpreted as aptitude and talent. People failed politely waiting a turn at the Steenbeck. I successfully applied for an experimental film grant and was able to complete a short film IMAGE PLUS whilst I was a student there.

**Q.3** How did you find film school? Did you see it as a factory where you were taught technical skill, or did you try to go into film theory?

**A.** I learnt enough about the technical stuff to know the immensity of the information involved and just how little I knew. I decided the only way I could get the technique down was by making a film, getting a grounding in each of the disciplines involved. I knew that my ultimate goal was direction. In some ways I rejected conventions before I really understood them, challenging conventional narrative and deliberately breaking golden rules. But in some ways I think it was the right way for me. I understood the reason for some of the conventions of narrative more fully than if I had just stuck to old routines and never explored alternative devices. I think my particular style is more idiosyncratic because of my initial experiments with film language and, by eliminating conventional story telling techniques in my early films, I have developed the visual component of my film. I can't separate the design from the action or the dialogue, they are totally integrated for me. I design and art direct at the same time as I write. If it was possible I would do my own art direction on my films.

**Q.4** What filmmakers were having impact on you at the time?

**A.** One of my favourite films was Agnes Varda's *LION'S LOVE*. I loved Godard films in those days too. I was particularly impressed by an Argentinian filmmaker, Raymondo Gleyser who made *TRAITORS*. He put his life on the line by making politically potent films that were action packed and dynamic. He was able to fuse adventurous content with adventurous technique to create intensely dramatic entertainment. He was imprisoned for his trouble.

**Q.5** How did *TENDER HOOKS* originate?

**A.** *TENDER HOOKS* is my attempt to foster understanding through entertainment. It looks at society from the outside ... from the point of view of the characters who don't slot in and make the whole show messy. Like any sub-culture, Rex, Gaye and Yawn say as much about dominant culture as they do about themselves. Mitchell is on the fringe of the sub-culture. She is still evaluating, feeling her way. It is through her conflict and personal struggle that we encounter the other characters and plot the alternative courses open to her. Unlike the others, she has a conventional job in a hair salon. She has recently left home and taken a room in an inner city hostel where she is introduced to a range of characters and lifestyles that question every value and premise she has known in her home town, congenial existence. She falls for Rex before she is aware of the implications of that love, the uncertainty and ultimate danger that embodies his very person. Rex is someone who has never known security or love and can only express himself through half-baked comic book platitudes and sentiments found in fortune cookies and bubble gum wrappers. *TENDER HOOKS* is a universal story ... people striving to fit in somewhere, somehow, trying to locate themselves through common identity and purpose. *TENDER HOOKS* is the embodiment of contradiction, humorous pathos, tragedy realised in humour, a range of emotions, fears, conflicts that are told through fast moving idiosyncratic anecdotes. Whilst it is raw, it is gentle, tender, rough, kind and cruel — all the contradictions that fuse to make up human nature.

**Q.6** You weren't interested in making a film about prisoners and rehabilitation?

**A.** No, not in formal terms. Whilst Rex avoids taking command of his own life, making decisions, taking responsibility for his actions, he creates every prison he has known — he carries it with him. Whilst he accepts those restrictions on his own life he also imposes them on the people that care for him. I chose to look at prison and the prisoner through the point of view of the loved one. How Mitchell is imprisoned by her love for Rex and the conflict it induces in both of their lives.

**Q.7** How did you become involved with Chris Oliver, the producer?

**A.** I had approached the Australian Film Commission with a treatment and was able to get money to take it to first draft. Somehow Chris read the treatment and, liking it and my previous film *GREETINGS FROM WOLLONGONG*, rang me about working together. Chris and I had vaguely known each other at Swinburne but this was our first joint venture. Chris was re-evaluating his career after having worked on a low budget exploitation movie and felt he wanted more satisfaction for the effort involved. I was feeling similar in the sense that I had to ensure an audience for my work without compromising the content. Chris and I are like chalk and cheese in some ways, but we came together on this and it's been a constructive working relationship.

**Q.8** This film is a sort of a purge. "Movie playing in my head" ...

**A.** I think the movie playing is a continuous loop, minus even intervals. At the same time *TENDER HOOKS* is the culmination of some difficult moments in my life, a way of transposing negative into positive. I watched too many people I cared about go down on self-destruct for want of some direction, love in their life. I must say some of them have had the most vibrant sense of humour that I've encountered if you're open enough to catch the joke.

# TENDER HOOKS

## GRAHAM BIDSTRUP — Music Director

**B**orn in South Australia, Graham Bidstrup started playing guitar at 8 and drums a year later. After two years of piano lessons at 14, he decided to make drums his main instrument and from then on until completion of a certificate in mechanical design ten years later, he played in many bands covering a wide range of musical styles as well as writing and recording music and jingles at leading Adelaide studios.

In 1976 after a two year working holiday overseas, he joined fledgling rock band THE ANGELS and spent the next five years writing, recording and performing in Australia, Europe and U.S. one highlight being the co-written, co-produced single "No Secrets".

An offer in 1981 to work as musical collaborator with film composer Cameron Allan gave him an opportunity to gain valuable practical experience in scoring and producing movie and television soundtracks including HOODWINK and HEATWAVE where he played nearly all the instruments in the score and co-wrote several pieces. It was at this time Graham met Mary Callaghan and composed some music for her film GREETINGS FROM WOOLLONGONG. During this time he gained a good working knowledge of audio engineering as well as producing records for several bands, and his distinctive drumming was heard on records by Mondo Rock, Richard Clapton, Australian Crawl and Jimmy Barnes.

In 1984 he was Associate Music Director for the ABC TV series SWEET AND SOUR before forming a new band, GANGgajang, co-writing and producing their successful debut album. Other fun projects include THE STETSONS who had a Graham Bidstrup produced instrumental in CROCODILE DUNDEE 2.

## The Music in the Film

**G**raham Bidstrup was engaged as the musical director of TENDER HOOKS before filming began and so had the unusual chance to consult with Mary from script to final edit. Both wanted as much original music as possible recorded to create a unique atmosphere for the score. The choice of pre-recorded music was made on merit to the film, not potential chart success and the result is a distinctive soundtrack, featuring music by GANGgajang, THE STETSONS, THE FESTER BROTHERS and THE BOGMEN. The soundtrack also features tracks written by well-know artists like Paul Kelly, Martin Plaza and Reg Mombassa (who appears briefly in the film).

The music finally used in the film includes:

### 'Live This Way'

Written by Martin Plaza. Published by Syray Music.  
Performed by The Stetsons. Courtesy of Spunfund.

### 'Hammer On Your Head'

Written and Performed by Peter O'Doherty.  
Published by Syray Music.  
Peter O'Doherty appears courtesy of CBS Records.

### 'I Hate To See You Cry'

Written by Paul Burton. Published by Control.

### 'Action Speaks Louder Than Words'

Courtesy of Ian Mortimer and Steve Tripp.

### 'Boiler Room' 'Music Went Wild'

Courtesy of The Bogmen

### 'Gimme Some Lovin'

Written by Graham Bidstrup & Mark Callaghan.  
Published by MCA/Bilbey.  
GANGgajang appears courtesy of  
Polygram Records.

### 'Capital Punishment'

Written and Performed by Reg Mombassa.  
Published by Syray Music.  
Reg Mombassa appears courtesy of CBS Records.

### 'Gaye's Blues'

Written by Wayne Goodwin.  
Published by Leo Songs.

### 'Memories'

Written by Kayellen Bee and Graham Bidstrup.  
Published by MCA/Gilbey.

### 'Rubber Dinghies'

Written by Graham Bidstrup and Peter Ware.  
Published by MCA/Gilbey.

### 'Train In My Head'

Written by Reg Mombassa.  
Published by Syray Music.  
Performed by The Stetsons. Courtesy of Spunfund.

### 'Back From The Desert'

Written by Steve Martin, Bill Quarry  
and Andrew Johnson.  
Performed by The Fester Brothers.

### 'Little Decisions'

Written by Paul Kelly.  
Performed by Paul Kelly & The Messengers.  
Courtesy of Mushroom Music and  
Mushroom Records.

# TENDER HOOKS

## JO KENNEDY — Mitch



Jo shot to international prominence when she won the coveted prize for Best Actress at the 1985 Berlin Film Festival, for her leading role as a burnt-out drug addict in the Australian independent feature, *WRONG WORLD*. Her previous screen roles were very different — especially her starring role in the rock musical *STAR-STRUCK*. On the stage, she has featured in numerous plays including *THE KID* (Nimrod Theatre), *MACBETH* (Anthill Theatre) and *CUCKOO'S COUNTRY* (Sydney Theatre Co.). Her television roles include *PACK OF WOMEN* and *POKER FACE* (for the ABC) and the telemovie *VIVIAN BULLWINKEL*.

## NIQUE NEEDLES — Rex



Nique's acting career is short but distinguished: in 1984, he won the Australian Film Institute Award for Best Supporting Actor, for his role in the feature *THE BOY WHO HAD EVERYTHING*. His films include *BLISS*, *DOGS IN SPACE*, *AFRAID TO DANCE* and the sci-fi comedy, *AS TIME GOES BY*. On stage, he co-starred with Jo Kennedy in *THE KID* for the Nimrod Theatre Company, and he was musical director for the Off-Broadway Theatre production, *TERROR AT TERROR PALMS*. For television, he has acted in several mini-series including *COWRA BREAKOUT*, *SWORD OF HONOUR*, *SHOUT! THE STORY OF JOHNNY O'KEEFE* (in which he played the part of Col Joye) and *THE FOUR-MINUTE MILE* (as John Landy).



## TENDER HOOKS (M)

Directed by Mary Callaghan

Starring Jo Kennedy, Nique Needles,  
Anna Phillips, Robert Menzies

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TENDER HOOKS fulfills one of the nicest aspects of movie-going. Unsuspecting, you wander in, not expecting much of anything and are confronted by an infectiously exuberant gem of a film which is warm, witty and wise.

Most viewers will suddenly rediscover the truly relaxing pleasures of watching a well made, home grown movie which is grounded in a familiar, realistic background.

TENDER HOOKS is the story of the romance between down to earth suburban girl, Mitch (Kennedy) and free-wheeling dreamer Rex (Needles). Neither circumstances — his jail record — or their friends — her prostitute girlfriend Gaye, his pill addicted mate Yawn — help smooth the path of this romance. Yet somehow, despite a lack of money, a grubby inner city flat and a sudden disaster, they stay together.

Much of TENDER HOOKS has the relaxed casual air of ad libbed conversation. Like all the best films that's because it is so well written. Writer/Director Callaghan has fine tuned a cleverly constructed script which keeps the story moving along without audiences being aware of it. Yet TENDER HOOKS certainly doesn't feel lethargic. Emotionally appealing characters and the audience's involvement with them give the story pace, as does Callaghan's sharp, almost abrupt, editing. This is also one of those rare films in which the actors are not miscast. Kennedy, who has been consistently dazzling ever since STARSTRUCK some years ago, offers another wonderful performance. Rex describes Mitch as "staunch" in one scene. As Kennedy plays it, she is - a warm, sensitive likeable character who is still nobody's fool.

TENDER HOOKS is also tailor made for another rising Aussie star. Although Needles mightn't hide Rex's bad points or his weaknesses, he still delivers a charming rogue whose carefree sense of humour will win you despite yourself.

Among the funny/sad supporting performances - where have all these talents been hiding? - two standouts are Phillips as the gentle doomed prostitute and Menzies evocative portrayal of the equally tragic Yawn. TENDER HOOKS offers audiences a richly observed slice of life drama. Its not just for those who are familiar with the lifestyles depicted in the film, its for viewers interested in seeing not only fascinating aspects of modern Australia but also sparkling entertainment which labels everyone associated with it as major talents to watch out for.

*THE SUN-HERALD*  
26th February, 1989



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Rob Lowing  
*Sun-Herald*  
26th February, 1989

**TENDER HOOKS** is something special, a new Australian film of exceptional charm and assurance, made with slender resources and an unfailing lightness of touch. A rare gem indeed!

The director is Mary Callaghan, who also wrote the screenplay, and it would be nice if we could hail her as a brand new local talent. In fact she has been around for years. Her prize-winning short **GREETINGS FROM WOLLONGONG**, warmly reviewed in these pages in 1982, still lingers in the memory, but to my knowledge she's made nothing since. At least, not until now.

**TENDER HOOKS** is her first feature, a work so precociously confident and definitely accomplished that a few of our better-known directors with heavy weight reputations should be quickly rounded up to see it.

We are back in territory that Callaghan knows well and cares about: the fringes of big-city life, among the drifters and the unemployed. Its been studied before, of course - local films like Hayden Keenan's **GOING DOWN** and John Duigan's **MOUTH TO MOUTH** having explored it admirably.

But never, I think, as appealingly as Callaghan has done.

She has given us a comedy always the most difficult films to bring off - with exquisite reverberations, tenderness and apprehension. And she has done it in a style of her own, with genuine freshness and originality.

Mitch, the heroine (Jo Kennedy), is something of a rebel, a girl from a nice suburban background who works in a hair salon and lives in a huge, garish boarding house somewhere in Sydney. She takes in Rex (Nique Needles) as a room-mate. Rex has criminal mates, but behind his larrikin ways is a certain code of loyalty and fair play. Unfortunately, it isn't long before Rex is back into crime, knocking off shops and doctors' apartments.

Mitch's other friend is Gaye, a prostitute with the usual troubles of her calling who heads off to the United States in pursuit of some forlorn romantic dream. Mitch and Rex make a new start together, Rex is arrested and sent to jail; both in the end face difficult choices and decisions.

It all sounds ordinary enough, and it's hard in a brief summary to explain the film's appeal. Its been made with such artless and effortless skills that its deeper implications may easily be lost. Callaghan is never out to bludgeon us with a message; she lets the story tell itself, and what comes through is a quiet, releasing optimism.

Her characters are so strong, so unfashionably and inwardly happy, that somehow they cease to be victims. Yet the harshness and irony of life is never far away.

The film has a wonderfully freaky and inventive surface, crammed with bright reflective colours and offbeat locations. The sight gags, always unobtrusive, suggest a whole world of disparate improvisation:

Mitch stitching a dress together with an office stapler; Rex pinching the milk from the cat's saucer, or riding off in the night on a passing garbage truck; the television is propped on its side to be watched while lying down.

Callaghan has a way of telling us that life is funny and precious even in its worst extremes. Its a truly joyful film, and in its prankishness, its lurking humour, its sadder truths are made more real...

There is scarcely a false note in **TENDER HOOKS**; not a scene is laboured, not a moment is pretentious or dull. I haven't had much praise for Australian films of late, but this is one to be thankful for. Don't expect to be deeply shaken or swept away with tears or laughter; expect to be quietly pleased, lightly amused, and sent off a little wiser. More, please, Mary.

Evan Williams,  
*The Australian*  
25th February, 1989