

NOW SHOWING
FINAL DAY
FAREWELL AND THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES

INTO THE SHADOWS

A **STUDY GUIDE** BY VICTORIA GIUMMARRA



<http://www.metromagazine.com.au>



<http://www.theeducationshop.com.au>



INTO THE SHADOWS

If I had the power to make some changes to re-invigorate the film industry, I think I would start on the exhibition front – engage with the people who are in the front line, get them to want to be more committed to the release of Australian films and get them to want to care about the release of Australian films. [We need to create] real business incentives for cinema owners to want to play Australian films. You think of producer rebates, well why don't we have some kind of a rebate scheme for exhibitors to want to nurture an Australian film, to want to commit to an Australian film? You know I think some of the major cinema chains in this country spend more time wanting to foster a Bollywood culture than they do on making sure an Australian film gets to be played ... [If] we make it happen at the distribution/exhibition end, I think [the benefits] will flow back to the production end.

– Andrew Scarano, director of *Into the Shadows*,
from an interview included as an extra on the Ronin DVD of the film

Please note: This study guide refers to the full-length documentary and the extras, available on the official DVD from Ronin Films.



INTRODUCTION

Into the Shadows (Andrew Scarano, 2009) is an independently produced documentary that explores Australian film production and consumption. Inspired by the 2006 closing of Electric Shadows, a local independent cinema in Canberra, the film reveals how corporate multiplex cinemas have overtaken many of the smaller independent cinemas throughout Australia and provides a glimpse into an industry that has both thrived and struggled throughout the eras.

The film is made up of six chapters that explore the many facets of the Australian film industry, from its history to its present state and, finally, its need for regeneration. *Into the Shadows* includes interviews with a range of industry professionals including filmmakers, distributors and exhibitors. The role and expectations of the audience are brought into question, as well as the responsibilities of those who hold the power over film production and distribution in Australia. At times controversial, *Into the Shadows* presents an engaging and honest account of the Australian film industry.

Into the Shadows was co-produced by Andrew Scarano (director/writer/co-producer/editor) and Phil Hignett (co-producer/editor/cameraman). Scarano was inspired to begin the project by his grandfather, Keith Mann, who worked as the chief projectionist at Electric Shadows for twenty-five years. The finished product is a well-researched piece that presents the opinions of many known Australian film identities and shows a genuine concern for an industry that contributes greatly to our national culture and identity.

CURRICULUM LINKS AND CLASSROOM USE

Into the Shadows is most suited to senior Media students. The activities within this study guide aim to provide further exploration of themes related to the film's content, including:

The history of the Australian film industry

Regulation and laws governing distribution and content

Types of media organisations and their operation

The roles and responsibilities of those working within various stages of the film production process and the film industry

Issues facing the Australian film industry

Cultural identity and the role of Australian films

The prevalence and impact of US media content in Australia

The future of film production, distribution and exhibition in Australia.

Into the Shadows would also be a relevant text to those studying Australian history and culture, and may be of interest to those exploring the management of independent small businesses.

Whilst the film is ninety minutes in duration and can be enjoyed in its entirety, its division into six self-contained chapters makes it a very accessible text for the classroom. Each chapter is outlined on the following pages and would be suitable for stand-alone use within individual lessons. The film also employs animation to help describe the sometimes complex processes of industry production and distribution in a meaningful way.





BEFORE WATCHING THE FILM

The following activities, which students may complete before viewing the film, aim to provide an introduction to some of the issues and themes that will be explored within the documentary.

Take a look at the 'Entertainment' section of a major newspaper in your city to find the film listings and session times (these are particularly well documented on weekends). Calculate how many different cinema venues there are in both your city and local area. What percentage of these cinema venues are considered major multiplexes? What percentage are smaller independent venues?

Into the Shadows is an independently made Australian film. What does this imply about its funding, connection with other media organisations and audience?

Into the Shadows is a documentary. What other documentaries have you seen, either on film or television? What are some of the conventions (common elements and repeated patterns) of this genre that you would expect to see?

List the public contexts in which you have viewed films in the past (e.g. at a multiplex cinema, outdoor cinema, a partly empty cinema, home cinema). Discuss how each of these reception contexts has impacted on your viewing, engagement and enjoyment of film.

Into the Shadows is distributed by Ronin Films. Visit the 'About Us' section of their website at <<http://www.roninfilms.com.au>> to find out more about what they do and the sorts of films they tend to promote.

Into the Shadows explores the history and present state of the Australian film industry. What Australian films have you seen? What are your opinions about Australian productions?

THE FILM

Into the Shadows begins with a brief overview of Australia's film history (beginning in 1906 with Australia's first documented feature film, *The Story of the Kelly Gang* [Charles Tait]) and establishes the 'back-story' regarding the issues of film production and distribution in Australia.

Using the dates given in this section of the film, create a timeline of both major developments and declines in the Australian film industry.

Research some of the events noted on your timeline and document these in more detail.

What was 'The Combine' and what effect did it have on Australian production, distribution and exhibition of Australian films?

What other developments were happening in film around the world at these times? How did the Australian film industry compare to those around the globe?

Research the 1927 Royal Commission into the film industry in Australia and consider its effectiveness. Is any of the evidence still relevant to today?

ABOVE (L-R): ANDREW PIKE, EXHIBITOR AND DISTRIBUTOR; BRENDAN COWELL, ACTOR; GLENYS ROWE, PRODUCER



CHAPTER 1 – THE RENAISSANCE

After the barren post-war decades, a new generation of Australian filmmakers emerged. New lightweight cameras allowed them to experiment in ways never before possible. In the 1970s this youthful movement swelled, and these innovative filmmakers laid the foundations for the 'New Wave' of Australian cinema.

– Into the Shadows

This section of the film explores the revival of Australian film production in the 1970s. This came about from the popularity of Australian theatre at the time and the belief that Australia had its own unique stories to tell. This period was, however, not without its challenges, as there was little interest shown in Australian film by the government, the ABC, distributors or the major exhibitors at the time, Hoyts and Greater Union. This period also saw the emergence of independent exhibitors and cinemas, who, out of both a nationalistic desire and the excitement of showing a 'first run' movie before any other cinema did, would screen newly created Australian films.

What initiatives helped to give the production of Australian films a push in the right direction during this period?

The animated sequence, 'Distribution 1970s Australia', summarises the distribution trends of the period. Explain what this cartoon says about distribution in Australia at the time and what affect this had on the exhibition of Australian-produced films.

This section of the film mentions many of the smaller independent cinemas that once existed across Australia, such as Electric Shadows, Valhalla, Carlton Movie-House and the Chauvel. Speak to some adults you know. Did they ever attend these cinemas or know of people who did? If so, what were these venues like? If not, what does their experience suggest about the typical audiences of these venues?

Can you draw up a list of some of the key filmmakers in Australia from the 1960s to the 1980s and compare the stories they told to the subjects chosen by today's Australian filmmakers. What similarities do you notice, and what changes? Why do you think changes may or may not have occurred?



CHAPTER 2 – THE MULTIPLEX FACTOR

In the late 1980s competition from home entertainment was growing. While independent exhibitors sought to recapture audiences through innovative programming, major exhibitors took cinema from the city to the suburbs, with the development of the multiplex.

– *Into the Shadows*

This section of the film explores the 1980s trend of moving from small, city-based independent cinemas (with one or two screens) to suburban multiplexes.

The 'Multiplex Revolution' cartoon and many of the interviews in this section explore reasons why multiplex cinemas were so popular. What are some of these? Why might you visit a multiplex cinema, as opposed to a smaller cinema, these days?

What is an art-house film? Have you seen one? What might the audience demographics for these films be?

A code of conduct was developed by the government and put into place by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) at this time. You can find the code on-line. What did this code aim to promote? What views did exhibitors hold towards the code? What are your opinions of it?

Having independent cinemas along with commercially driven multiplexes ensures that a broader range of films can be exhibited. What would be the disadvantages of having an exhibitor monopoly (that is, having all cinema exhibition controlled by just one organisation)?

Compare the issues raised in Chapter 2 with issues facing other industries in Australia – supermarket chains versus the local family-run grocery store, etc.

CHAPTER 3 – THE SACRED TEMPLE

Iconic cinemas that had fostered Australian filmmaking talent and an alternative cinematic voice were dying. By 2006 the Valhalla and Longford had closed, the Chauvel was fighting to stay open and Electric Shadows had announced that it would close by the end of the year.

– *Into the Shadows*

This section of the film explores the appeal of the independent cinema as both a non-mainstream exhibitor and a more intimate, individual setting for the viewing of films. The Electric Shadows venue in Canberra (which closed in 2006) is used as a case study, highlighting the role of the independent cinema and its demise in society.

Dr Paolo Cherchi Usai (the former director of the National Film and Sound Archive) describes the Electric Shadows venue as a 'typical non-institutionalised venue.' In the film,



we see the physical contrast between the 'rustic' Electric Shadows and the new Dendy Canberra cinema complex. What changes do you notice take place?

Actor/writer Brendan Cowell talks about the 'romance' of attending a cinema to see a film, rather than viewing it in some other context. In your opinion, what are the highlights of a cinema experience as opposed to watching a film on DVD at home or online?

Producer Anthony Buckley mentions the lack of 'showmanship' that exists in film exhibition, especially at a multiplex cinema. How does the footage shown of the Cremorne Orpheum cinema compare with the cinema you normally attend? What are the differences?

Former film exhibitor Andrew Pike believes that even if art-house and independent cinema exhibitors don't exist in the future, filmmakers will solve the problems of where and how to show their films. What evidence can you already see of 'media makers' getting their work out to the public?

Have changes in cinema ownership affected the value of the 'shared' cinema experience compared with private viewing arrangements (via television or computer) in your own home?

CHAPTER 4 – THE GREAT DISCONNECT

In today's digital age, mainstream cinemas continue to draw large crowds. In 2008, Australians spent a massive \$945.4 million at the box office. But only 3.8 per cent that year was spent on Australian films.

– Into the Shadows

This section of the film explores Australian film production. It begins with a quote from actor Chris Haywood, who describes the years 1997–2007 as the 'dark age' of Australian film, during which little content was produced and seen on the cinema screen. Through a series of interviews with Australian actors, writers and directors, this section of the film examines and attempts to explain the lack of interest shown towards Australian film by local and international audiences. Teachers should note that this section of the film includes some coarse language.

Whilst Australian television production is strongly supported by audiences, there is an evident lack of interest in watching Australian film. Why do you think this is the case? Do you agree with this statement?

Some of those interviewed within this section point out that a flaw of Australian film is the focus on anti-heroes and



failure. Can you think of any Australian films like this? Why might this be unappealing to an audience?

In the documentary, distributor Alan Finney states 'there would be no local production industry without federal and state funding.' The animated sequence in this section, 'Government Funding', attempts to outline how funding is issued and how particular films come to be made. What is this cartoon really saying about the funding process and production of Australian films? What is controversial or problematic about this process?

Look at the application processes, requirements and fees for the major filmmaking courses in Australia (e.g. VCA, AFTRS, Sydney Film School). Are these processes fair? Who do these courses appeal to? Who do they exclude?

Director Shane Abbess states that the Australian film industry needs a commercially thinking film studio that will produce what Australian audiences want to see. Producer Sue Maslin believes that the one thing needed for a healthy and productive Australian film industry is diversification of content. Founder of the Melbourne Underground Film Festival, Richard Wolstencroft, believes that the Australian films that resonate most with audiences overseas are not the 'polite, politically correct art movies that no one knows', but those that are more appealing to a broader audience, such as *Wolf Creek* (Gary McLean, 2005) and *Romper Stomper* (Geoffrey Wright, 1992). With these thoughts in mind, what sorts of films do you think Australia should be producing?

The bottom dollar

This section of the film also points out how little money is made from Australian films. The animated *Terms of Trade* sequence indicates that little revenue finds its way from the box office to filmmakers and their cast and crew, after exhibitors and distributors take their slice. With the average Australian film only making between \$1–2 million dollars,

the possibility of making a livelihood in the Australian film industry is challenging. With the lack of financial support in Australia, much of the filmmaking talent moves offshore to locations such as Los Angeles, where there is greater funding and a larger industry.

What is the impact of losing so much of our local filmmaking talent to the overseas market? Consider what the affect of this is for the Australian film industry both immediately (now) and ultimately (later).

How does the Australian system of government finance for film production compare with such systems in other countries such as the USA, Britain, France and Japan?

Many filmmakers claim that, even if their film is successful, money doesn't flow on to the producer. What changes to the standard terms of trade could be made to create a better flow of box-office earnings?

Becoming 'Yankeefied'

The film asks the question 'has Australian film culture lost its importance?' and blames the prevalence of American programming on our television and cinema screens for the lack of Australian content.

Find a list of the current movies screening at your local cinema. What is the country of production for each film being shown? Display these as percentages. Compare these to the 2007 Australian box office statistics shown in the film (where USA has 77%, Australia 4% and Other 18.3% of the market).

Actor/director Anthony Hayes comments that 'people eat what they're fed.' Think about the ways in which our media consumption patterns drive production. Can you think of any examples where this is particularly evident?

ABOVE (L–R): CLAYTON JACOBSON, PRODUCER;
NATALIE MILLER, DISTRIBUTOR AND EXHIBITOR



CHAPTER 5 – THE NEW FRONTIER

Australia is not alone. Independent filmmakers across the world are struggling to find new ways of connecting with their local audiences. A new breed of DIY filmmakers have not lost hope and are challenging traditional ways of producing and exhibiting their work.

– *Into the Shadows*

This section of the film examines the practice of DIY (do-it-yourself) filmmaking, which is also known as guerrilla filmmaking. This term is used to refer to the production of low-budget, often self-funded independent films. These films aim to prove that it is possible to create a quality film without institutional finance. *Into the Shadows* itself was largely self-financed and the filmmakers did not get paid for their work. Common ways of cutting costs include the use of available resources only, shooting with digital video (not film), less professional camera techniques and equipment (e.g. no cranes and dolly grips), and fewer crew members.

A common issue with DIY filmmaking is the inability to get the film distributed and seen in cinemas. This requires the filmmakers to be more creative in how they access their audience. What are some of the methods we see and hear about in this film which allow filmmakers to get their work out ‘to the people’?

The animated sequence in this section of the film, ‘Traditional Distribution’, explains how Australian films have typically been shared (or not) with the world. What are some of the problems with this model? How can this be rectified so that future generations of filmmakers are able to access a global audience?

The film suggests that the internet is a possible new platform for media makers to distribute and exhibit their work. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the internet platform, compared with traditional cinema-oriented distribution and exhibition?

**ABOVE (L-R): SHANE ABBESS, DIRECTOR;
ANTHONY BUCKLEY, PRODUCER**

CHAPTER 6 – THE ROAD AHEAD

Some things never change ... Australian producers are still battling to get their films onto the cinema screen. Many filmmakers and distributors remain determined to find ways of bypassing the gatekeepers and shining fresh light on an old problem.

– *Into the Shadows*

This section of the film provides a conclusion by examining the practices of film distribution, exhibition and promotion. It looks at the determination needed by filmmakers to not only create a film, but to get it out to audiences. The film suggests that, in many cases, the relationship needed with exhibitors is a personal one. If you can find exhibitors who care enough about your project and will take it on because they believe in it, then they will be more likely to promote it and find the right audience (e.g. session times, length of the run).

The film ends with the following Ken G. Hall quote from 1966:

There won't be a future unless, or until, men with initiative and drive, who are basically and essentially showmen, arise or come forward. Showmanship is the whole answer to film production.

How essential do you believe it is for the filmmaker to be a showman and a promoter of their own work?

Clayton Jacobson in *Into the Shadows* suggests that exhibitors are the best at knowing the taste of local audiences. What are some of the ways in which producers and exhibitors might be able to work together?

In the quote at the beginning of this study guide, the director, Andrew Scarano, says that he would start any analysis of the film industry by looking at distribution and exhibition. Is this the view of the government film financing bodies? How widely held is Scarano's view? What attempts have the film funding agencies made to analyse and understand distribution and exhibition issues? Have they done enough? Could they do more? Is *Into the Shadows* right in placing so much emphasis on distribution and exhibition questions?



FURTHER ACTIVITIES

During *Into the Shadows*, producer Phillip Adams argues that Australian films are important in that they offer Australians a sense of identity, along with some understanding and knowledge of our own country and people. To what extent do you agree with this statement?

Screen Australia is a newly established government agency that provides funding for the development of Australian media productions. Visit their website at <<http://www.screenaustralia.gov.au>> to find out about the types of productions they support and how exactly they do this.

What sorts of regulations and laws exist concerning the amount of Australian content present in media programming? Visit the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) website at <<http://www.acma.gov.au>> to find out the expectations placed on television and radio broadcasters.

Explore the work of one of the many well-known producers/directors seen in this film. What has their contribution to the Australian film industry been?

RELEVANT WEBSITES

Ronin Films <<http://www.roninfilms.com.au>>

Screen Australia <<http://www.screenaustralia.gov.au>>

Into the Shadows <<http://www.intotheshadowsmovie.com>>

Australian Communications and Media Authority
<<http://www.acma.gov.au>>

Film in Australia
<<http://www.cultureandrecreation.gov.au/articles/film>>

australian screen <<http://aso.gov.au>>

Independent Cinemas Association of Australia
<<http://www.independentcinemas.com.au>>

ABOVE (L-R): ANDREW SCARANO, DIRECTOR OF *INTO THE SHADOWS*; PHILLIP ADAMS, PRODUCER
RIGHT: ANDREW SCARANO

Victoria Giummarra is a secondary Media and Drama teacher and a board member of ATOM. She has written a variety of published works, including a VCE Media (Year 11) textbook, and is currently completing a Masters in Educational Leadership and Administration.

Into the Shadows is available on DVD from Ronin Films.

Ronin Films

PO Box 1005
Civic Square
ACT 2608 Australia
Phone: (02) 6248 0851
Fax: (02) 6249 1640





Into the Shadows is available on DVD from Ronin Films.

PO Box 1005
Civic Square
ACT 2608 Australia

Phone: (02) 6248 0851
Fax: (02) 6249 1640



This study guide was produced by **ATOM**. (© ATOM 2010)
editor@atom.org.au

For more information on **SCREEN EDUCATION** magazine,
or to download other study guides for assessment,
visit <<http://www.metromagazine.com.au>>.

Join ATOM's email broadcast list for invitations
to free screenings, conferences, seminars, etc.
Sign up now at <<http://www.atom.asn.au/lists/>>.

For hundreds of articles on Film as Text,
Screen Literacy, Multiliteracy and Media Studies,
visit <<http://www.theeducationshop.com.au>>.