



Sam Neill and Judy Davis, lead actors in *My Brilliant Career*, simulate driving a sulky during a tracking shot in a forest south of Sydney

accessible and entertaining as well as searching and innovative. Audiences who are tired of the formula fare from Hollywood studios and the more impenetrable art films from Europe will find a breath of new life in these films from Down Under." So far so good, but in all this goodwill there is the faint but sickly scent of condescension. For the time being, novelty is on the side of Australian films.

Of the 16 Australian films being shown at Cannes this month, three (*Blue Fin*, *Money Movers* and *Dawn*) have failed to excite Australian audiences. *The Odd Angry Shot*, on the other hand, confounded the critical consensus and set some house records when it opened late in March, and there are no doubts about the success of *Mad Max*. Of the rest, there is interest in *My Brilliant Career* (now accepted in the main Cannes competition) Margaret Fink's richly designed and dressed production from Miles Franklin's novel, directed by Gill Armstrong; *Cathy's Child*, from a true story about a child custody case, directed by Don Crombie; Michael Thornhill's *The Journalist*, and *The Last*

of the Knucklemen. Tim Burstall's first film as a director since *Eliza Fraser*. As well, there are hopes for *Dimboola*, directed by John Duigan, whose low-budget feature, *Mouth to Mouth* has been one of the best films to come out of the industry's revival.

A sense of anticipation is in the air, but there is also the memory of last year. Sixteen films went to Cannes in 1978. The critics were warm and the publicity copious but the Australian box-office failed to respond with anything better than mild appreciation. To find a film which cost more than \$200,000 and made a profit on the home market it is necessary to look back to mid-1977 and *Storm Boy*. Even the producers of *Newsfront*, which struck enthusiasm everywhere it was shown, are still about \$100,000 short of breaking even.

So what is the financial state of the industry? The question is perhaps more difficult to answer than it's ever been. The economics are so complex that most of the time the film-makers themselves seem to be struggling to reach a conclusion. Few figures are made public. The following list of films which have

grossed more than \$200,000 in film hire on the domestic market is from information circulated among all the major distributors except the Greater Union Organisation and so includes neither Greater Union product nor a number of independently distributed films. As well, Hoyts, which became a distributor of Australian product only last year, has not contributed:

Title	Budget \$	Year of Release	Gross Film* Hire \$
			31/12/78
<i>Alvin Purple</i>	202 000	1974	1 687 135
<i>Caddie</i>	415 000	1976	904 778
<i>Storm Boy</i>	354 000	1977	887 266
<i>Alvin Rides Again</i>	300 000	1975	710 745
<i>Eliza Fraser</i>	1 200 000	1977	654 431
<i>Petersen</i>	226 000	1974	509 643
<i>Bazza Holds His Own</i>	450 000	1975	492 000
<i>Sunday Too Far Away</i>	271 000	1974	469 328
<i>Last Wave</i>	825 000	1977	386 730
<i>End Play</i>	294 000	1975	368 322
<i>The Getting of Wisdom</i>	550 000	1977	327 456
<i>High Rolling</i>	350 000 (est.)	1977	324 833
<i>Newsfront</i>	600 000	1978	319 743
<i>The Box</i>	315 000	1975	297 173
<i>Don's Party</i>	275 000	1977	279 139
<i>Australia After Dark</i>	50 000	1975	270 347

*The figures in the fourth column are