

## Screening Sydney: A Select Filmography

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### Introduction

This filmography is a work in progress, and is part of a larger and ongoing research interest in representations of Sydney in all kinds of filmmaking. One hundred and forty-six films have been included here, from documentaries and celebrated shorts, to telemovies and even porn films in order to demonstrate the range of imagery and its uses over time, though in the main the focus is squarely on narrative full-length feature films. There are still many films to be explored and included, and this speaks to the limited amount of research done in this area. As it stands, this filmography is the result of weeks of reading and exploration, of memories and gossip, of canvassing exhibitions, histories and production notes, of time spent in archives and libraries, surfing the Internet, of discarded notes from my doctoral thesis which suddenly became useful, and even a “movie tour” of Sydney – which was both fascinating and productive, to say the least. Above all, this list is the result of watching films, remote in one hand, pen in the other. By far, the most useful resource for this kind of research remains Andrew Pike and Ross Cooper’s (1980) *Australian Film 1900—1977*, along with their notes kept by Screensound Australia, particularly for films from the silent era and especially those films no longer in existence. Where Pike and Cooper have been used as the primary source of information, I have marked the titles with †. Further to this, I have included a list of useful resources at the end of the filmography. I would also like to thank Screensound Australia for their initial advice on starting points for this investigation. Finally, the films are arranged alphabetically, as opposed to chronologically, in order to enable easy access to a specific title.

### The Filmography

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*Adventures of Priscilla Queen of the Desert, The* (Stephan Elliot, 1994)

The Erskineville Hotel (and its exterior) helps construct Sydney as the inclusive city that “protects” in this story of drag performers making a pilgrimage to the Australian red centre. Look for the Harbour Bridge as the “girls” leave Sydney.

*All For Gold* aka *Jumping the Claim* (Franklyn Barrett, 1911)†

Action includes a car racing with a train and a speedboat ride across the harbour as a Sydney woman tries to stop her sweetheart being swindled out of his claim on the goldfields.

*Allison’s Birthday* (Ian Coughlan, 1979)

A young girl receives eerie warnings about her family and the future as her nineteenth birthday approaches. Features the Gore Hill cemetery and the State Library of NSW.

*Assigned Servant, The* (John Gavin, 1911)†

Sydney’s National Park alternates between colonial English setting, Australian penal colony, Settler’s land and the

Australian outback in this “transportation” romance/ drama.

***Assigned to His Wife*** (John Gavin, 1911)†

Gavin again uses the bush on Sydney’s outskirts as penal colony and outback, when an Aboriginal man saves the life an innocent deportee who then clears his name and returns to England with his true love.

***Australia Calls*** (Raymond Longford, 1913)†

A xenophobic call to arms exploring the potential threat to Sydney from a mysterious “yellow peril”. A model of Sydney’s cityscape and surrounds was built (in Spencer’s Studios, Rushcutter’s Bay) and cardboard planes used to blow up most of Sydney’s landmarks.

***Australia’s Peril*** (Franklyn Barrett, 1917)†

A German raid on the Australian coast sees Sydney under fire. Eventually the Germans are driven out to sea and Sydney’s “women are safe from violation” once again.

***Babe*** (Chris Noonan, 1995)

***Babe II: Pig in the City*** (George Miller, 1998)

From transnational farm space (filmed in the Southern Highlands) in the first film to transnational city space in the second, a little pig goes a long way and transforms the “look” of both Sydney and Australian films in the process.

***Bad News Bachelors*** (Franco DiChiera, 1990)

In this twenty-six minute short, Sydney’s cafes and gay bars feature as a gay man explores his love life in flashback with a female friend.

***Beneath Clouds*** (Ivan Sen, 2002)

A picture of the Sydney Opera House, combined with the final sequence of a train moving towards Centrepont Tower, symbolises a young woman’s search for her father and a new life.

***Better than Sex*** (Jonathan Teplitzky, 2001)

The title says it all – most of the action in this love/sex story happens in doors (albeit in a Sydney loft). The ***Village Voice*** described the film as “less ***Last Tango in Sydney*** than ***When Harry met Sally***”.

***Birthday Girl*** (Jez Butterworth, 2002) Although shot mostly in Sydney, Nicole Kidman’s Russian Internet bride and Ben Chaplin’s nerdy bank manager navigate the “suburban London” setting of this romantic comedy with ease.

***Bliss*** (Ray Lawrence, 1985)

Sydney and its inhabitants can be heavenly or hellish, depending on your perspective, as a Sydney businessman finds out

after dying for four minutes. Jam-packed with evocative imagery, including the city and a very leafy North Shore.

***Boys, The*** (Rowan Woods, 1998)

Sydney's suburbs, lounge rooms and backyards have never been more chillingly depicted than in this avant-noir study of working class masculinity out of control.

***Broken Melody, The*** (Ken G. Hall, 1938)

A down-on-his-luck violinist finds love and inspiration in a makeshift cave on the foreshores of Sydney harbour, after wandering Sydney's streets as a desperate man. Eventually he finds success overseas and returns to Sydney to reconcile with his family and lost love.

***Caddie*** (Donald Crombie, 1976)

1920s and 30s Sydney comes to life in impeccable detail through the story of a single mother who works as a barmaid during the Depression. Forty city locations were used in the reconstruction of "old" Sydney.

***Call Mr Brown*** (Scott Hicks, 1986)

Based on events that happened in Sydney in 1971, when a man pulled off a raid on Qantas airlines, then went on a spending spree whilst eluding the police. Parts of Adelaide were mocked up to substitute for Sydney in the exteriors.

***Careful He Might Hear You*** (Carl Schultz, 1983)

Sydney has a golden haze about it, and is constructed as a city of contrasting images, classes and individuals in this story of two very different women and a small boy, embroiled in a complicated family custody battle.

***Change of Heart , A*** (Rod Hay, 1998)

The Harbour Bridge and Centennial Park frame this romantic comedy about a nasty man who rediscovers his heart (in the "heart" of the city!).

***Cheaters , The*** (Paulette McDonagh, 1930)

This melodramatic tale of a family crime empire is famous for McDonagh's experimentation with sound, but it is also the first film to feature shots of the partially completed Sydney Harbour Bridge.

***Christian , The*** (Franklyn Barrett, 1911)†

Inner Sydney doubles as the slums of London as a man of the cloth must finally choose between a life of God and the woman he loves.

***Church and the Woman , The*** (Raymond Longford, 1917)†

Catholic-Protestant relations are explored against such backdrops as Sydney's Catholic Riverview College, the Sacred

Heart Church in Darlinghurst and Wentworth House in Vaucluse.

***Cold Summer, A*** (Paul Middleditch, 2003)

This “*Lantana*-esque”, Sydney ensemble drama was filmed using a handheld camera, showing its three central characters and Sydney (from alley ways to flower shops) only in natural light.

***Colleen Bawn , The*** (Gaston Mervale, 1911)†

An Irish melodrama using a cliff and cave on the Sydney Harbour foreshore as the setting for both the foiled murder and subsequent rescue of the film’s heroine.

***Cooee and the Echo*** (Alfred Rolfe, 1912)†

This story of murder, mines and romance uses Sydney’s National Park as its far North Queensland setting.

***Cosi*** (Mark Joffe, 1996)

It’s not the Australian Opera, but patients in a Sydney mental institution reworking Mozart’s *Cosi Fan Tutti* in this adaptation of Louis Nowra’s play. Living in Sydney is all about performance, and there’s a fine line between the Sydneysiders on the inside and the outside of this facility.

***Crime and the Criminal, The*** (Alfred Rolfe, 1912)†

A tale of romance and criminal activity in Sydney culminating in an explosive railway collision.

***Dangerous Game*** (Stephen Hopkins, 1988)

A teen psycho movie in which a group of Sydney University students are trapped in a high-tech department store, the target of an unhinged Irish cop. A number of scenes use Sydney University's older buildings and gardens.

***Dangerous Summer, A*** (Quentin Masters, 1982)

Luna Park, The Menzies Hotel, Kings Cross and the Blue Mountains are among the many locations used in this drama of bushfires and construction industry fraud set in the early 1980s.

***Dating the Enemy*** (Megan Simpson Huberman, 1996)

Just to make sure we know where we are, Huberman includes a bright establishing wide-shot of the Harbour Bridge before Claudia Karvan and Guy Pearce get trapped in each other’s bodies. Numerous Sydney locations throughout.

***Dark City*** (Alex Proyas, 1998)

A groundbreaking use of digital technology to create an ambiguous sense of metropolitan space belies the fact that the film was made entirely in Sydney, mostly using the fifty sets constructed at Fox Studios. A deserted beach was the only exterior, as the film deliberately emphasises the constructed nature of cityscapes.

***Dirty Deeds*** (David Caesar, 2002)

Entire streets in Kings Cross were “dressed”, shops were bought out, signs were built and big clubs were given a retro facelift to recreate Sydney of the late 1960s. This crime comedy/thriller tells of a battle between Australian and US mobs for the control of lucrative slot machines during the Vietnam era.

***Don’s Party*** (Bruce Beresford, 1976)

Shot entirely on location a house in Westleigh in Sydney’s northwest (and at night), this film looks at “party politics”, sexual politics and class politics, explored through a gathering of friends in Sydney on election night, 1969.

***Don’t Let it Get You*** (John O’Shea, 1966)

Classic New Zealand comedy with music, set mainly in Rotorua but including a few sequences set in Sydney. The film features Howard Norman and the Quin Tikis, with Kiri Te Kanawa and Normie Rowe.

***Eleventh Hour , The*** (possibly Franklyn Barrett, 1912)†

The implications of the city as modern and technological are explored through the adventures of a “girl telegraphist”. Released overseas as ***Saved by Telegram***.

***Emerald City*** (Michael Jenkins, 1988)

Sydney has clean lines, skyscrapers and a bustling pace in this film, but is populated by hustlers and cynics in a story which explores both the film industry and Sydney-Melbourne rivalry through dark comedy.

***Empty Beach , The*** (Chris Thomson, 1985)

From the well-known Chris Hardy detective fiction series, this film shows us Sydney as a cesspool of murder, fraud, drugs and gang related crime. The climactic shoot-out occurs on Bondi Beach.

***Envy*** (Julie Money, 2001)

Sydney is defined by long, oppressively hot days and dark claustrophobic spaces in this low-budget feature about a suburban housewife who steals back a dress taken from her washing line and sets off an unforeseeable chain of events.

***Erskineville Kings*** (Alan White, 1999)

A not so pleasant coming home story set in Erskineville, but using a number of Sydney locations. Interiors are used for most of the action, with the King’s Hotel featuring. The director is famously quoted for saying the film starts “with a landscape of colourful Sydney ... ending up metaphorically and literally in the toilet”.

***Finding Nemo*** (Andrew Stanton and Lee Unkrich, 2003)

A small clownfish is taken from the Great Barrier Reef and placed in tank in a dentist’s office overlooking Sydney Harbour. His father follows the Australian Eastern Current to the harbour and saves him. The familiar range of Sydney motifs are

given new dimension in Pixar's digital hyper-colour animation.

***Finished People*** , The (Khoa Do, 2003)

Drugs, homelessness and survival in Cabramatta, shot with painful realism on digital video – car parks, busy roads, train lines and housing commission backyards construct a harsh isolating vision of contemporary Sydney.

***£500 Reward*** (Claude Fleming, 1918)†

A tugboat on Sydney Harbour and a visiting American ship are used to create a boat wreck off the Queensland coast in this kidnap-and-rescue drama.

***FJ Holden*** , *The* (Michael Thornhill, 1977)

The social realist style of this film delivers Sydney's western suburbs in the 1970s as an environment defined by masculinist individualism and a love of cars. Bankstown Square is a major location and scenes are also shot at Chullora, Revesby, Picnic Point and Homebush.

***Floating Life*** (Clara Law, 1996)

Sydney's outer west is defined by harsh light, flat greenery, barking dogs and brick veneer in Law's study of a "rootless" Hong Kong family in the days approaching the British handover of the city-state.

***Fresh Air*** (Neil Mansfield, 1999)

Shot over twenty-five days in the suburbs of Newtown and Marrickville, this tale of friendship and self-expression in a Sydney share house offers a visually different "garret style" portrait of inner-urban twenty-somethings.

***Gambler's Gold*** , (George Young, 1912)

Set in Sydney, this racing drama includes both the Sydney Cup and a motorboat chase across Sydney harbour as major points of interest.

***Garage Days*** (Alex Proyas, 2002)

Urban reality grunge is the theme of this film about a Sydney garage band struggling for their big break. Being a starving musician in Sydney seems to be no different to anywhere else, though some inventive visual "trickery" gives the Newtown location a very different feel. Scenes shot in Newtown's St Stephen's cemetery.

***Go Big*** (telemovie) (Tony Tilse, 2003)

Sydney is all designer threads and fast-talking in this film about three people trying to make fast money in the big end of town. Numerous shots of the harbour, city buildings, the Bridge and Opera House by day and night.

***Hard Word, The*** (Scott Roberts, 2002)

Three “honest” Sydney criminals are taken for a ride in this post-Tarantino black comedy set in both Sydney and Melbourne. Bondi beach features in a crime sequence early in the film.

***Hayseeds Come to Sydney , The*** aka ***Hayseeds Come to Town, The*** (Beaumont Smith, 1917)†

When the Hayseeds win the lottery, Dad takes the family to town for a holiday. Aside from the obvious comic premise, the film was able to explore Sydney’s major landmarks of the time in vivid detail.

***Heart’s Desire (Dil Chahta Hai)*** (Farhan Akter, 2001)

Bollywood film about three friends with differing ideas about love. The film is in Hindi and the action moves from Mumbai to Goa to Sydney Harbour, which, along with a sequence in Hyde Park, is lovingly and humorously rendered.

***Heatwave*** (Phillip Noyce, 1982)

Inner-city Sydney is again a place of corporate criminal activity (in the housing industry) with some very moody camera work and a sequence filmed in a Sydney sex club. Sydney is set up as an inescapably hot and sweltering place where nothing is what it seems.

***Hell Has Harbour Views*** (Peter Duncan, 2005)

Sydney’s Harbour and CBD provide the playground for power games, money grubbing and sexual indiscretions in the legal profession. Duncan brings Richard Beasley’s novel to life with Matt Day starring as the lawyer who grapples with his conscience as he moves up the corporate ladder. What price Harbour views?

***His Convict Bride*** (John Gavin, 1918)†

After being framed for a crime by a spurned lover, a young Englishwoman is transported to Botany Bay where she escapes from servant life to eventually find love and freedom. Shot mostly in Sydney itself, but includes scenes in the bush near Penrith.

***Howling III: the Marsupials*** (Philippe Mora, 1987).

An outback marsupial werewolf longs to see the Sydney Opera House when it snows, but she ends up starring in a Sydney film production and finally on the run in the bush. Multiple shots of the city and its icons, including one werewolf’s unfortunately timed transformation whilst she dances in a ballet on the Opera House stage.

***Independence Day*** (Roland Emmerich, 1996)

When the world is under attack from aliens and the Americans decide to “kick E.T.’s ass”, a quick shot of the Harbour Bridge and the Sydney Opera House with a disabled alien ship in the background indicate that all is well “down under”.

***Indonesia Calling*** (Jorg Ivens, 1948)

Agit-prop documentary dramatising the role of Australian maritime workers’ in the fight against Dutch colonial rule in Indonesia. A spectacular Sydney Harbour chase scene in which a boat carrying Indonesian exiles turns around, and the marching of workers across the Sydney Harbour Bridge are highpoints.

***In Harbour*** (Joan Long, 1952)

Long's homage to the sights and sounds of Sydney Harbour, with particular emphasis on water, rust and harbour-specific noises. This film was the first to be directed by a woman for the Commonwealth Film Unit.

***In the Last Stride*** (Martyn Keith, 1916)†

Images of Sydney's Rugby League teams, the Randwick racecourse and a speedboat chase in Sydney Harbour are central to this story of a sportsman on the run from the law.

***In the Wake of the Bounty*** (Charles Chauvel, 1933)

Chauvel's first sound film, starring Errol Flynn, uses Sydney locations such as Tahiti and Pitcairn in its recreation of the infamous mutiny led by Fletcher Christian against William Bligh in 1789.

***Jhumka*** (Michael Chinappa, 2001)

The first Fiji-Indian "Bollywood-style" film to be made in Sydney, explores the familiar clash between tradition and modernity in Hindi film. The cast and crew relocated to Sydney after political turmoil in Fiji, and this Sydney, shot on digital video, adds a sense of cultural transition to the Fiji setting.

***Joan of Arc of Loos*** (George Willoughby, 1916)†

Sydney's Tamarama Beach is used to recreate the village of Loos under German occupation in 1915, when a young peasant woman leads the allied attack.

***Keane of Kalgoorlie*** (John Gavin, 1911)†

A tale of intrigue in Sydney's gambling and racing circles. Although Perth races are used to stand in for Randwick, the Domain and the Darlinghurst Gaol are important locations in the film.

***Kid Stakes, The*** (Tal Ordell, 1927)

Based on a comic strip in the *Sydney Sunday* News, the much loved adventures of inner-city Sydney children Fatty Finn and his friends were filmed in the streets of Woolloomooloo and the Potts Point home of theatre producer Hugh Ward.

***Lady Outlaw, The*** (Alfred Rolfe, 1911)†

Sydney stars as rugged Van Diemen's Land in this story of a female escapee turned bushranger where much duelling on the beach precedes the final capture.

***Lantana*** (Ray Lawrence, 2001)

The streets of Balmain and the outskirts of Narabeen are shot in natural light and populated by actors without make up. The camerawork and intertwined narratives of relationships, betrayal and tragedy have sparked comparisons with American Beauty and Magnolia .



***Last Days of Chez Nous*** (Gillian Armstrong, 1992)

Existential angst, betrayal and familial estrangement are among the tensions structuring “Chez Nous”, a cluttered terrace house in Sydney’s Glebe. Surrounding terraces were used to house the film’s production (which briefly moved for a two week stint to Broken Hill).

***Lillian’s Story*** (Jerzy Dormaradzki, 1995)

Inspired by the life of a Sydney vagrant Bea Miles and based on Kate Grenville’s novel, this is the story of a woman confronting a horrific past and attempting to move into the future. From Sydney streets to buses and cabs – the film charts Lillian’s personal discovery of the city and its people.

***Looking for Alibrandi*** (Kate Woods, 2000)

The story of Sydney high school coming to terms with multiple cultural influences, friendships and an estranged father features sparkling shots of Sydney Harbour, the Harbour Bridge and the Opera House, whilst making the most of the houses and streets of Glebe, its central location.

***Loyal Rebel , The*** (Alfred Rolfe, 1915)†

Although a tale of the goldfields, Sydney’s sleazy underworld is again implicated in blackmail and kidnapping. The film uses both the outskirts of Sydney and Rushcutters Bay.

***Man from Hong Kong, The*** (Brian Trenchard Smith, 1975)

Australian-Hong Kong co-production which stands as a genuine contribution to the martial arts genre. A Hong Kong detective comes to Sydney to crack a drug syndicate, fighting bad guys and bedding women against the backdrop of an intoxicatingly blue harbour.

***Man-Thing*** (Brett Leonard, 2004)

For this film version of the Marvel comic, Sydney locations include Wiseman's Ferry, Serenity Cove Studios at Kurnell, and Homebush Bay where a supernatural swamp environment was created on a sound stage.

***Man Who Sued God, The*** (Mark Joffe, 2001)

Both the Governor Phillip Tower and the Governor Macquarie Tower feature, along with views of Centrepont from an apartment balcony in this story of a man who sues God when an “Act of God” destroys his houseboat.

***Martyrdom of Nurse Cavell*** (John Gavin, 1916)†

The popular story of English nurse Edith Cavell uses Sydney’s inner suburbs as Belgium during the Great War. The Darlinghurst Gaol also features.

***Matrix, The*** (Larry and Andy Wachowski, 1999)

***Matrix Reloaded*** (Larry and Andy Wachowski, 2003)

***Matrix Revolutions*** (Larry and Andy Wachowski, 2003)

Sydney becomes a transnational space in this film trilogy about computer-hacker turned universal saviour Neo and his fight against “the matrix” and evil agents of cyber-intelligence. At the same time, Sydney’s streets, buildings and cityscape are identifiable, along with scores of local actors. The trilogy’s connections with Fox Studios, groundbreaking Australian digital technology and the city of Sydney (as both tourist Mecca and Hollywood “back lot”) are now legendary.

***Me Myself I*** (Pip Karmel, 1999)

Sydney is the city of the single woman in this comedy about parallel universes and alternate lives which pits marriage and motherhood against lonely careering. The city is bright and the central apartment has views down to the harbour.

***Midnight Wedding , The*** (Raymond Longford, 1912)†

A British palace recreated in Spencer’s studios at Rushcutter’s Bay, quite a hub of filmmaking activity at the time.

***Mission: Impossible 2*** (John Woo, 2001)

Sydney has never looked better as Sydney (from the harbour to the city buildings) or as Spain (shot in the “Boomerang” mansion at Elizabeth Bay) in this sequel to the earlier film version of the popular television series.

***Monkey’s Mask, The*** (Samantha Lang, 2000)

A lesbian private eye is drawn into Sydney’s academic and alternative poetry scenes. An atmospheric style attempts to construct Sydney in the vein of the darkened film noir city, the seedy back streets played off against the Blue Mountains. In Porter’s original poem Sydney is described as a “glittering tart”.

***Moulin Rouge*** (Baz Luhrman, 2002)

Shot entirely in Sydney at Fox Studios, this vibrant post-modern musical recreates the days of the Moulin Rouge in Paris, mixing comedy, tragedy and endless refrains of pop music interwoven within a surreal (Sydney-less) setting.

***Mr Accident*** (Yahoo Serious, 2000)

An accident-prone man living in a cartoon like Sydney finds love amidst the numerous colourful, angled shots of city buildings the Harbour Bridge and the Opera House.

***Mr Reliable*** (Nadia Tass, 1996)

Not technically Sydney, the semi-rural area of Glenfield, on the city’s outskirts is the setting for this 1968 “misunderstanding”, which develops into a very public hostage drama and ends up as a happy romance.

***My Mother Frank*** (Mark Lamprell, 2000)

A mother returns to university as a student, much to her son’s embarrassment. The family home used in the film actually housed the German Consulate in Sydney until 1939. An Elizabeth Bay mansion and Sydney University provide the other

major locations in the film.

***Muriel's Wedding*** (PJ Hogan, 1994)

A video store on Oxford St and an Eastern suburbs church signify Muriel's new life in Sydney away from Porpoise Spit, the coastal town where Muriel grows up in a dysfunctional family, listening to ABBA and dreaming of a perfect wedding.

***Newsfront*** (Phillip Noyce, 1977)

The social and political landscape of the 1950s forms the real backdrop of this story about newsreel cameramen in Sydney. The film is shot in and around Sydney and Narabeen, but these locations get tough competition from the Melbourne Olympics and the Maitland Floods.

***Nice Coloured Girls*** (Tracey Moffat, 1987)

Three Aboriginal women in the urban landscape anchor Moffat's visual exploration of colonial and race relations. Kings Cross features, but one of the most potent images is a black hand spray painting over a European landscape drawing of Sydney Cove.

***Night the Prowler, The*** (Jim Sharman, 1978)

Another dysfunctional Australian family, the daughter of which takes on the role of a cat burglar after a home invasion. Prowling through houses around Centennial Park and the park itself, she explores her sexuality and identity. The framing of the park is almost mythical. Look for the legendary "Eternity" slogan.

***Night We Called it a Day, The*** (Paul Goldman, 2003)

Frank Sinatra's turbulent Australian tour in 1974, in which he was bailed up in his hotel room after making disparaging remarks about a female journalist. All the usual Sydney motifs are present, but the focus is squarely on the Sydney Boulevard Hotel, which Sinatra leaves after Bob Hawke brokers a peace deal.

***Nostradamus Kid, The*** (Bob Ellis, 1992)

A young Seventh Day Adventist comes to Sydney in 1962 to attend university, anticipating an apocalypse which never comes. Bondi Beach, Paddington, Point Piper, the Opera House and Sydney University are filmed with peculiar angularity to maintain an accurate period setting.

***No Worries*** (David Elfick, 1993)

A young girl is heartbroken when her family's livelihood is destroyed by drought and they are forced to move to Sydney – which she hates. She meets a young Vietnamese girl who shares her sense of isolation.

***Octoroon, The*** (George Young, 1912)†

Sydney's waterways are transformed into the Mississippi River in this story of slavery and romance. Paddle steamer the *Narrabeen* is an American riverboat.

***Odd Angry Shot, The*** (1979)

The final scene in this tragi-comedy about the Vietnam War has the key protagonists drinking in silence in a bar overlooking Sydney Harbour. Centrepoint Tower, completed in 1981, is visible in the shot and it would not have been part of the Sydney these troops came home to.

***One Night Stand*** (John Duigan, 1984)

Nuclear drama about a group of young people trapped in Sydney Opera House when World War Three breaks out.

***Oscar and Lucinda*** (Gillian Armstrong, 1997) A gambling minister and an Australian heiress bet on the possibility of moving a glass church from Sydney to the outback. Armstrong's version of Peter Carey's unconventional love story recreates nineteenth century "Old Sydney Town". Look for St. Jude's Anglican church in Randwick. ***Over the Hill*** (George Miller, 1992)

An elderly American woman discovers the outback, but not before flying in over the Harbour Bridge and the Opera House. The house in Sydney's Glebe that she runs away from becomes the final scene for reconciliation between mother and daughter.

***Palm Beach*** (Albi Thoms, 1980)

A cinema-verite style exploration of the suburban surf subculture in Sydney's northern beaches.

***Powder Burn*** (Stephen Prime, 1999)

A burst condom full of heroin takes the action from Sydney to the central Australian desert in the little known, "no-budget" indie film. The director released the film himself at Sydney's Valhalla cinema.

***Projectionist, The*** (Michael Bates, 2003)

Bates' short film about a projectionist walking home through The Rocks offers a strange yet poetic vision of the Harbour Bridge, city buildings, an abandoned factory and the State Theatre within its depiction of an old yet changing Sydney.

***Puberty Blues*** (Bruce Beresford, 1981)

This examination of Aussie teen-surf culture paints a dark picture of Australian youth, but uses numerous long shots of Sydney's southern beaches to maximum effect.

***Rage in Placid Lake, The*** (Tony McNamara, 2003)

Sydney's northern suburbs provide the backdrop for a "universal" story about the very different young man who is determined to fit in (as the tag line says) "even if it kills him".

***Red Planet*** (Antony Hoffman, 2000)

Another film that uses Sydney's Fox Studios to create futuristic interiors, though the film is mainly set on Mars (the

exteriors alternate between Jordan and the Australian outback).

***Resonance*** (Stephen Cummins, 1991)

A gay bashing in Sydney's inner city back streets provoke an exploration of the relationship between misogyny and homophobia, through dance and cutting edge cinematography in this celebrated short film.

***Risk*** (Alan White, 2001)

Sydney envelops its characters as they work and play beneath a glowing Harbour Bridge and between pristine buildings of glass and steel in this tale of insurance fraud attached to a bizarre love triangle.

***Roly Poly Man, The*** (Bill Young, 1994)

Sydney's seedy back streets (Darlinghurst and Pyrmont), as well as the Callan Park mental hospital, are all part of a day's work for a low-rent, chain smoking private investigator in this grotesque comedy about a man who digs to too deep.

***Romantic Story of Margaret Catchpole*** (Raymond Longford, 1911)

Botany Bay, Sydney coastlines and cliffs are used to maximum effect for scenes in England (the surviving 23mins) and Australia in this "true story" of an infamous female convict, who stole a horse dressed as a man.

***Russian Doll*** (Stavros Kazantzidis, 2000)

At the insistence of a philandering David Wenham, Hugo Weaving's lonely private detective marries a Russian woman to help her stay in the country. Kazantzidis explores Bondi's colourful enclave of tourists, surfies and Jewish culture. Bondi Beach and The Temple Emanuel are key locations.

***Sailor in Sydney*** (Kristen Bjorn, 1990)

Cult gay porn film in which a group of sailors hook up with men on Circular Quay and then proceed to a nearby hotel room. Action unfolds with expansive views of the Opera House, Harbour Bridge and The Rocks in the background.

***Sample People*** (Clinton Smith, 1999)

48hrs in the lives of twelve Sydney-siders who live on the hip end of Sydney's rave and drug culture. Part thriller, part study of Australian counter-culture, the lack of Sydney iconicity is explained by the fact that most of the filming was done in Adelaide.

***Satan in Sydney*** (Beaumont Smith, 1918)†

Sydney is a city of gambling houses, opium dens and grog shops in this wartime melodrama about a nasty German and a good girl from the country.

***Sea Dogs of Australia*** (Martyn Keith, 1913)†

An Australian navy lieutenant steals a formula and hatches a plot to attack the HMAS Sydney. Sydney Harbour is the place of action and intrigue for many early films.

***Siege of Pinchgut, The*** (Harry Watt, 1960)

An escaped prisoner and his henchmen take refuge in the small island of Pinchgut in Sydney Harbour, and making hostages of the island's inhabitants. He threatens to detonate an ammunition ship in the harbour by firing an old naval gun still located on the island.

***Sentimental Bloke, The*** (Raymond Longford, 1919)

Widely known as the most popular film of the silent era, and the quintessential Sydney film from that time, the adventures of Ginger Mick, the Bloke, Doreen and the Straw Hatted Koot, made working class Woolloomooloo (the streets, and the nearby Botanic Gardens) an iconic Australian cinematic location.

***Seven Little Australians*** (Arthur Greville Collins, 1939)

Based on Ethel Turner's 1894 book, long recognised as an Australian classic, the story follows the (seven) Woolcot children and their attempts to melt the heart of their seemingly uncaring father. Collins' adaptation was filmed in Sydney at the Commonwealth Film Laboratories and locations around Camden.

***Silence of Dean Maitland , The*** (Raymond Longford, 1913)†

The interior and exterior of the Gladesville Mental Asylum become the English setting for the multiple crimes and eventual confession of a guilty clergyman.

***6000 miles from Hollywood*** (Billy Milionis, forthcoming 2004)

Targeted for completion in December 2004, this independent film traces the story of a down and out US actor who takes an acting role in Sydney thinking it will be his ticket to fame, but everything falls apart and he's a long, long way from home. The poster features a pair of male legs with the Opera House and Harbour Bridge between them. The very funny website [6000miles.com](http://6000miles.com) allows you to track the film's development.

***Son is Born, A*** (Eric Porter, 1946)

Melodrama set in WWII Sydney about woman who leaves her violent husband after years of abuse. Later she finds her son is vengeful and bitter and sets about reconciling with him. When war breaks out he is sent to New Guinea.

***Son of Mask*** (Larry Guterman, 2005)

Filmed on the streets of the city and on location in Neutral Bay, this is the sequel to the Jim Carey blockbuster, based on the comic book character. During filming in March 2004, the intersection of Hunter and Pitt Sts was transformed into New York, with Yellow Cabs and American number plates used to complete the scene.

***Starstruck*** (Gillian Armstrong, 1982)

This story of a young woman, Jackie, desperate to be a pop star and her scheming sidekick Angus, features inner suburban

pubs and streets, finishing off with the fireworks exploding over the Sydney Opera House during the end credits.

*Star Wars Episode I – The Phantom Menace* (George Lucas, 1999)

*Star Wars Episode II – Attack of the Clones* (George Lucas, 2002)

*Star Wars Episode III* (George Lucas, forthcoming 2005)

Unlike the *Matrix* films, these prequels to the original *Star Wars* trilogy have not really made their presence in Sydney felt – nor do the final films show any hint of Sydney. Each one has been filmed mostly within the confines of Fox Studios, using six sound stages and the latest in visual effects technology. Whilst some Australian outdoor locations are said to have been used, the producers have favoured Tunisia, Spain and Italy for continuity with the earlier films.

*Stealth* (Rob Cohen, 2005) An Artificial Intelligence pilot program goes horribly wrong in this nearly completed film, which uses Sydney streets and the Schofields Aerodrome. More famously, filming in environmentally sensitive areas of the Blue Mountains enraged protesters and forced the State Government to change the law to stop any further shooting here.

*Strange Planet* (Emma-Kate Croghan, 1999)

New Year's Eve in Sydney and three women living together find romance with three male friends as New Year's Day begins. Skyline shots feature Centrepoint and harbour sequences feature the Jeffrey St Wharf at Kirribilli. The main quadrangle and clock tower arch from Sydney University are also used.

*Strictly Ballroom* (Baz Luhrmann, 1993)

Champion ballroom dancer teams up with a left-footed ugly duckling to dance “new steps”, dividing his family and the close-knit dancing community to which they belong. Set in inner-suburban Sydney, Pyrmont Point provided many memorable exterior shots, though most of the buildings were lost to the construction of Sydney's Star City Casino.

*Strike Me Lucky* (Ken G. Hall, 1934)

Hall's 1934 comedy stars Roy Rene, the popular prewar Australian Jewish vaudeville comedian. *Strike Me Lucky* is composed of a plethora of separate comedy sketches that parody a number of different film genres and character types. As such its Sydney location is less noticeable than the borderline anti-Semitism in some of the jokes, which still manage to arouse discomfort.

*Stolen Eye, The* (Jane Elliott, 2002)

Viewed by many as a “training video”, *The Stolen Eye* documents Elliott's “blue eyed/brown eyed” diversity training exercise. Filmed in Sydney in late 2001, Elliott brings together a group of Aborigines and white Australians for an unusually dramatic and candid encounter exploring the expropriation of Aboriginal lands and the deliberate attempts to destroy their culture through government-sponsored assimilation programs.

*Sum of Us, The* (Kevin Dowling and Geoff Burton, 1994)

A working class gay man and his father living together in inner-Sydney find out just how unique their relationship is when they both try their hand at love, but even more so when the father suffers a stroke. Balmain at the harbour's edge again takes centre stage, and despite an establishing shot of the Harbour Bridge, the icons in this film are clearly Russell Crowe and Jack Thompson.

***Summer City*** (Christopher Fraser, 1976)

This teen surf movie, also released as *Coast of Terror*, is best known as the movie Mel Gibson would rather forget. In the early 1960s, four Sydney “bucks” head to the beaches of Northern New South Wales for a weekend of women, booze and surf. Things turn sour when the father of one of their conquests goes a little crazy.

***Summer of the Seventeenth Doll, The*** (Leslie Norman, 1959)

Lawler’s classic Australian play is filmed by Norman with international stars playing the hardworking cane-cutters who travel back to Sydney to their long suffering women each year during the off season. Locations include the harbour and many parts of North Sydney. The familiar “face” of Luna Park looms large.

***Sweet Nell of Old Drury*** (Raymond Longford, 1911)†

Sydney’s mansions become the Restoration court of Charles II, where a young actress’s popularity with the king makes her the target of a devious plot.

***Sweetie*** (Jane Campion, 1990)

Disturbing, darkly comic exploration of a dysfunctional suburban Sydney family, centring around the delightfully delusional and overweight “Sweetie” and her relationship with her sister. Sydney is surprisingly bright, defined more explicitly by cracked pavements, floral carpets and backyard pools than by harbour vistas.

***Swimming Upstream*** (2003)

Two brothers in Brisbane compete for swimming honours under the guidance of an abusive father. The national championships in Sydney feature the Harbour Bridge framing the pool where the boys meet Dawn Fraser.

***Taken Down Under*** (Chi Chi LaRue, 2000)

An American tourist loses his bag and literally works his way through Sydney trying to find it in this gay porn flick. Includes St. James Station, the Opera House, and a group sex scene on a boat in Sydney Harbour with full cityscape.

***Temporarily Yours*** (Michael Egan, 2003)

Independent feature about an out of work actor who takes a temp job to tide him over and falls for the status obsessed solicitor he works for. Shot in the city and Eastern suburbs, featuring a huge cocktail party in Strickland House, Vaucluse.

***Three In One*** (Cecil Holmes, 1957)

This masterwork from ethnographer and filmmaker Holmes – with three separate stories – focused its final act on *The City*. With the working title “Young Love”, based on a story by Ralph Petersen, the sequences of a couple wandering through Sydney are particularly memorable for the shadowy night-time exteriors shot exclusively around The Rocks area.

***They're a Weird Mob*** (Williamson-Powell, 1967)



An Italian man's journey to Sydney is turned upside down when he realises his cousin has disappeared and so has his job. After some initial cultural friction he becomes an "Aussie bloke", finding love and the Australian dream in Sydney. Spectacular harbour, beach and cityscape sequences throughout – and the first film to feature the Opera House under construction.

***Tim*** (Michael Pate, 1979)

A romantic relationship develops between an older businesswomen and a younger intellectually challenged man. She's from America, he's from the brick pits around Artarmon. Northern beaches, northern suburbs and the Royal North Shore Hospital make appearances.

***Two Hands*** (Gregor Jordan, 1999)

Kings Cross, Potts Point, Bondi Beach and Haymarket are among the more obvious settings in this truly "Sydney" film about a boy who gets himself in too deep with an underworld figure and is in a race against time to set things right.

***Vacant Possession*** (Margot Nash, 1996)

Botany Bay is the site of the family home and an unresolved past, the complexities of human relationships, history and reconciliation come to the fore as the home is destroyed in a fierce storm.

***Wake in Fright*** (Ted Kotcheff, 1971)

A schoolteacher, working in the outback, leaves for his summer vacation in Sydney but gets sidetracked in the Australian "wasteland". In the process he gets trapped in a cycle of drinking, gambling and savage masculinity. We see flashes of his girlfriend on Bondi Beach, though he never makes it to her during the film.

***Walkabout*** (Nicholas Roeg, 1971)

The early moments of the film establish Sydney as a fast paced city of bricks and concrete. The apartment of the key protagonists looks across the water to the Harbour Bridge – the antithesis of the dry, yet colourful outback, where a teenage girl and her brother navigate the desert with the help of an Aboriginal male.

***Walking on Water*** (Tony Ayres, 2002)

A house in Vacluse, exteriors in Maroubra and Bronte, as well as alleyways behind Oxford St are among the Sydney locations for this tale of friendship, AIDS, grief and loss.

***Whipping Boy , The*** (telemovie) (Di Drew, 1996)

A female lawyer heads a taskforce trying to crack a paedophile ring in Sydney, which comes across as an impersonal city of sharp contrasts (between harsh light and eerie darkness).

***Winter of our Dreams*** (John Duigan, 1981)

Australian icons Judy Davis, Baz Luhrman and Bryan Brown compete with Sydney's icons in this doomed romance between a heroin addict and a trendy, selfish suburbanite. Includes a memorable shot of bleach-blonde Davis against a wire

fence with the Sydney Harbour Bridge hovering over her.

*Yachts and Hearts* aka *The Opium Smugglers* (Charles Byers Coates, 1918)†

Based loosely on an opium smuggling case in Sydney at the time, the action includes an explosive car chase through Sydney and a yacht race on the Sydney Harbour.

*You Can't Stop the Murders* (Anthony Mir, 2003)

Sydney is more of an influence than an image: A police officer in a sleepy coastal town attempts to solve the serial murders of Village People look-alikes. His journalist girlfriend dreams of moving to Sydney, and a Sydney detective who thinks he's in an episode of *Miami Vice* might just steal the limelight from him.

### Some Further Resources:

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Internet Movie Database (Film database is searchable by location) <http://www.imdb.com>

On Location: Sydney (2001 Exhibition of film and photographic locations at the

Museum of Sydney) [http:// www.hht.net.au/news\\_room/media\\_releases/exhibitions/past\\_exhibitions\\_and\\_events/museum\\_sydney](http://www.hht.net.au/news_room/media_releases/exhibitions/past_exhibitions_and_events/museum_sydney)

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Sabine, James. (ed.) (1995) *A Century of Australian Cinema*, Melbourne: Australian Film Institute.

Screensound Australia (National Film and Sound Archive) <http://www.screensound.gov.au>

Sydney Movie Tours (Bus Tour of Sydney film locations)

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

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*Scan is a project of the Media Department @ Macquarie University, Sydney*