

Star-gazing in the Arts Library



'Oh Jerry, don't let's ask for the moon; we have the stars.' These immortal words uttered by Bette Davis at the end of *Now Voyager* pretty well sum up the focus of Australian film magazines from the 1940s, 50s and 60s. Lots and lots of stars, principally of the Hollywood variety, with the moon (being the Australian film industry if we want to extend the metaphor) in almost total eclipse. Clearly Australian audiences, like the great Bette, were happy with the stars. And the stars were mainly American.

Magazines such as *Adam and Eve*, *Photoplay* and *Movie News*, whilst published locally, were essentially local reprintings of American promotional material highlighting the latest studio product, alongside puff-pieces on the great, the not-so-great and the wannabes of Hollywood. 'Fernando Lamas – Hero or Heel?' asks *Movie Life* magazine. 'No More Murders for Me' says Susan Hayward in *New Screen News*, which also confronts us with 'The Dilemma of Sandra Dee'.

Movie News, published in Australia by the Hoyts cinema chain, only occasionally allowed an Australian actor such as Rod Taylor to grace its cover (and he really qualified as an international star anyway). More substantial national content could be found in industry-based magazines such as *Film Weekly* that provided invaluable information on the business of the Australian cinema, including box office statistics and local and international production news.

Then, of course, fans could go directly to the source with magazines such as *The Lion's Roar*, a lavish publication put out by MGM Studios as a means of presenting their films and stars in tailor-made packaging. Or, to prove that not all films were made in Hollywood, the *Picture Show Annual* from England made sure that British films and celebrities rubbed shoulders with their American counterparts within its lavishly illustrated pages - even if the covers more often than not gave pride of place to the latest Hollywood release.

Which all goes to show that the more things change the more they stay the same. Certainly the Australian film industry has come out of its eclipse and magazines such as *Cinema Papers* and *Encore* present news of

the vibrant local scene on a regular (and sometimes not so regular!) basis. But the big international stars are still shining brightly and magazines such as *Premiere*, *Film Comment* and *Variety* are rarely in place on our current periodicals rack. Star-gazing remains a popular pursuit in the Arts Library and our burgeoning Film Studies collection provides ample opportunity to indulge in a passion for this most popular branch of the performing arts.

For further information contact the Arts Library on 9669 9834.

Dermot McCaul
Arts Collection Librarian

