



CANNES FILM FESTIVAL
OFFICIAL COMPETITION 1971



CANNES FILM FESTIVAL
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MADMAN ENTERTAINMENT IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE 'WAKE IN FRIGHT' TRUST,
NATIONAL FILM AND SOUND ARCHIVE AND ATLAB/DELUXE AUSTRALIA PRESENT

WAKE IN FRIGHT

SWEAT, DUST AND BEER... THERE'S NOTHING ELSE OUT HERE MATE!

DONALD PLEASANCE, GARY BOND, CHIPS RAFFERTY, SYLVIA KAY AND JACK THOMPSON IN "WAKE IN FRIGHT"
BASED ON THE NOVEL BY KENNETH COOK SCREENPLAY BY EVAN JONES MUSIC BY JOHN SCOTT EDITED BY ANTHONY BUCKLEY
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY BRIAN WEST EXECUTIVE PRODUCER MAURICE A. SINGER EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS HOWARD G. BARNES
AND BILL HARMON PRODUCED BY GEORGE WILLOUGHBY DIRECTED BY TED KOTCHEFF

wakeinfright.com



A+OM
AUSTRALIAN TEACHERS OF MEDIA

A STUDY GUIDE BY
KATY MARRINER

CONTENTS

Why Study Australian Cinema (page 2)

Narrative Structure (page 3)

Genre (page 4)

Opening (page 8)

Inciting incident (page 9)

Climax (page 10)

Resolution (page 11)

Setting (page 14)

Characters (page 15-16)

Themes (page 17)

Focus on Film Maker (page 18)

Societies Reception of the film (page 19-20)

Bibliography (page 21)

WHY STUDY

AUSTRALIAN CINEMA?

Australian cinema has been around forever. In fact the first full length film was in 1906, "The Story of the Kelly Gang" which was shot in Melbourne. Between 1910 and 1920 there were 163 films produced in Australia. But it would start to go downhill from there with the rise of American cinema leaving Australian films in the dust. In the 80s and 90s it would see a quick comeback with some classics coming out. "The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert" coming out in 1994 which received lots of love and praise at Cannes film festival, and "Crocodile Dundee" in 1986 which got \$328 million at the box office. After a quick streak of really big movies Australian cinema wouldn't ever come close to numbers like that again. In 2004 the total amount of box office takings was an abysmal \$11.9 million.



For me personally, before doing this task I didn't care for Australian cinema at all. And why should I when there are 200+ million dollar budget movies coming out of Hollywood every month? But as I started looking into it and studying "Wake in Fright" I started to appreciate it a whole lot more. Seeing these people embrace (and critic) the Australian culture really made me value what we have in the industry. Not only because it helps develop our national identity, get away from the Hollywood mass produced blockbusters and get a voice of our own telling our own stories. But it is also because it supports the Australian film industry, which is extremely lacking and giving names to new and upcoming directors like Jennifer Kent, Wayne Blair.



NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

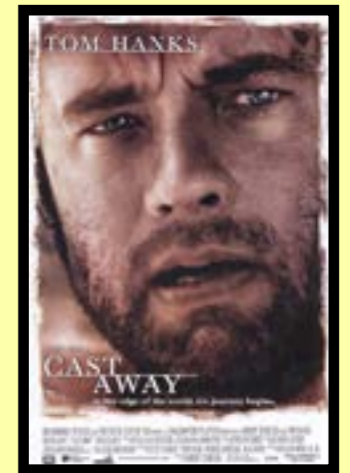


The narrative structure in *Wake in Fright* is circular. The way they go about doing this is echoing the opening shots at the end. The effect of this is to show that the structure of the world around John hasn't changed but he himself has changed and it goes unnoticed. The change in John's psych can be seen through a slight difference. In comparing the two shots, the first one the camera is a long shot and there is a yellowish filter, which is symbolic for warm and unpleasant weather. The final shot contrasts this by showing more of the world around him by expanding the shot. The colour that was there before has gone. This shows that he is climatized to the environment, much like the men that he is surrounded by in Yabba. An example of the circular narrative can also be seen in the scene where John thinks he's about to escape Yabba. In reality he is brought back to right where he was before. Another movie that uses a circular narrative is Peter Jackson's (2001-2003) "*The Lord of the Rings* Trilogy". At the start of the trilogy Frodo the protagonist goes on a journey away from simple life, who goes on a big adventure and goes through lots of hardships. Once returning he can't deal with his simple life and is changed forever. The point of view is from John throughout the whole movie. At the end it is a literal POV shot whilst Jock Crawford reads him a letter. There are several dream sequences of John thinking about his girlfriend, and at the climax of the film a montage of what has happened during his time in Yabba.



GENRE

The genre of "*Wake in Fright*" is a psychological thriller. Psychological Thrillers are often very dark and depressive films that usually are character study on either one person or a small group of people. They depict the breakdown of someone's psyche and push them to their limits. *Wake in Fright* focuses on the downward spiral of one man, John Grant. Other movies that focus on similar story conventions would be Martin Scorsese's 1976 classic, "*Taxi Driver*" which follows Travis Bickle, played by Robert DeNiro, who like John, are overexerted and are sick with the current situation they are stuck in. *Wake in Fright's* setting however is more focused on isolation both internally and in the environment they are in, much like "*Cast Away*" from 2000 directed by Robert Zemeckis.





OPENING



John Grant is seen at the start of the film looking extremely bored waiting for class to be over. Which helps show that he just wants to get out of where he is and that he isn't happy with what he is doing. The window is framed next to his head. The presence of it next to his head is to slowly introduce us to John's soon to be, worst nightmare. The colour palette is a child-like shirbit green and blue. Which contrasts against the desolate and bland orange waste land of the desert. The lighting is very soft and quite dull, which is very opposing to the harsh chiaroscuro lighting which is used at the climax of the film. The room is silent. So silent you can hear a pin drop. This is a nice way of showing John's life where he is at the start. Being very uninspired, compared to the later loud abrasiveness of the pubs in Yabba. It's uneventful and boring, further showing that John needs change. The presence of children echoes John's innocence and how unaware of what the outbacks true colours.



INCITING INCIDENT



The shot is a two shot. It introduces another character into John's life. The two conflicting colour palettes show the introduction to the corruption in John's life. This is communicated through the child-like oranges and yellow on the bottom half of the frame. Contrasted against the dark gritty and industrial colour of the top half of the frame. The framing of Doc's head is looking through a doorway. The doorway leads into the gambling game which provokes John's downward spiral, with Doc being the introduction of it all. When they first meet Doc says "All the little devils are proud of hell". This foreshadows the nightmarish events that will occur throughout the film.



CLIMAX



The camera is a big mid shot. It makes John feel very claustrophobic and alone which relates to the situation he is in at this point in time. The use of hard shadows adds a scary and looming atmosphere. The harsh shadow on his face helps draw your eye to the intended subject (his face). This shot echoes the inciting incident with John backing himself into a corner or against the wall. The colours are unsaturated dark green and bleak which give off a very sickly feel which is paralleling to how John is feeling at this point in time. His environment is broken and grungy again resembling his beat down his mental state. At the start of the movie John jokes that suicide is a “good way to get out of town” foreshadowing this scene where John tries to take his own life because he can deal with the limbo he is stuck in. The sound leading up until this point is horrifying laughter of the men at the pub, along with docs laughing. A high pitched ear shatters synth. These sounds combined with the quick flashing of shots throughout the film in a fast paced montage sequence make for really a frightening way of showing Johns mental state completely shatter which is quickly stopped when he enters Docs house. This quick abrupt stop in all of the crazy action is reminiscent of the scene in “Silence of the Lambs” (1991) where Jody Foster’s character Clarice Starling is going to meet Hannibal Lecter played by Anthony Hopkins. As she walks past the cells leading up to him the cell mates progressively get more and more erratic until she is met by complete silence at the end of the cells. Both showing that the characters are beyond and sanity at the time.



RESOLUTION



A common convention for a nihilistic movie like this is that in the end no progress is made. The character ends up where they began with little progress being made and the character being changed into a broken and empathetic character. Other examples can be seen in movies like “The Master” (2012) with Joaquin Phoenix’s character Freddy Quill. They both are taken in by an ideology/ way of life that completely sucks them in and takes control of them. John coming out of the hospital after taking his life is very symbolic for birth or resurrection. His clothes go from destroyed and tattered to clean once again. The colours compared to the scene previously were dark and gritty where as now, like his clothes they are crisp and pure. As he walks down the stairs the camera tracks along with him coming out from the shadows in a bright golden sunlight and he looks out onto a bright green landscape full of trees, similar to him waking up in hospital to fresh new life. This contrasts against the griminess from the previous scene beforehand. The shot is quite a long shot with it going for 1 minute and 32 seconds. This again completely separates it from the quick nightmarish editing from the scene where John tries to take his own life which separates it and again shows that he has moved onto a new start.



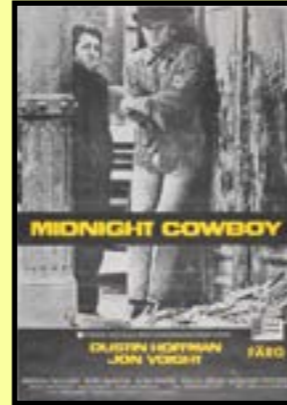


SETTING

The settings in Wake in Fright are new challenges that John has to struggle his way out of. They all share a common theme of being lost. The bar is a sea of bodies with little to no individuality that John gets sucked into. The outback is a vast land that goes on forever. Docs house is a forlorn place to John with him never seeing such a broken dump before.



THE BAR



The bar in its establishing shots shows how massive it is. People are shoulder to shoulder. It is a clear way of separating John from the rest of the crowd. In the shot he sticks his arm in the air. His white suit contrasts against the dark and dirty greens of the rest of the pub. This shot is reminiscent of the very influential shot in "Midnight Cowboy" (1969) of the main character walking in a crowd of people but not fitting in with them. This effect makes them seem like outsiders and that they don't belong. It also is a subconscious reminder to John on what the typical man looks like and how they act.

THE OUTBACK



The outback is a character on its own. It is larger than life and very overwhelming. In the opening shot the camera does a full 360° spin to show the scale of it compared to the shops nearby. The desert goes hand in hand with the circular narrative with it not knowing where it ends and where it starts. The mood that the desert sets is very hopeless and quite scary. The landscape feels very lonely which parallels how John feels.

DOCS HOUSE



Docs house is completely run down and destroyed which is a huge part of the mise en scene. Like clothing, your house is a reflection of your personality. Docs house is one that's been given up on. It's one that has been forgotten and left to rot.

The house scares John because it is a reminder that this is what his life will amount to if he doesn't get out. When he's inside the house he is surrounded by Docs legacy, which is one of alcoholism and depression that will be forgotten. It makes sense

CHARACTERS

John Grant

Gary Bond as John Grant- John Grant played by Gary Bond, who had previously starred in 2 other films "Zulu" (1965) and "Anne of the Thousand Days" (1969), plays a school teacher stuck in a tiny remote town Tiboonda in the middle of the Australian outback. His character is fed up with the life that he has and reminisces of his girlfriend in Sydney, with his motive being to lose his job and get out of the two year contract he has at the school and get back to his girlfriend. John Grant develops from a soft spoken and shy man to one of rage and alcoholism, filled with revenge and angst from the Bundanyabba or "Yabba" which is like a hellish purgatory for him. His character alters his personality with him adapting to the careless and depraved lifestyle of the people around him. When he first appears at the pub in Yabba he is met by Jock Crawford, played by Chips Rafferty, who is the gateway to his downward spiral. John feels compelled to keep up with the breakneck pace of the locals consumption of alcohol. His development can be seen not only through his drastic personality change but also seen through his appearance (a common trope in the thriller genre which can be seen in other movies like "Get Out" 2017). Like real life the clothing John Grant wears is a reflection of his personality i.e. clean, white and pristine. As the movie goes along and John starts to deteriorate, his mental state is projected onto his clothing with the white suit being stained with the filth and grunge from the desert, torn apart, covered in sweat, dirt and losing its purity.



THEMES



Clarence F. "Doc" Tydon

Donald Pleasence is a well respected actor and has been in many movies before and after Wake in Fright. Pleasence is known for his roles in the halloween franchise (1978-1995), "You Only Live Twice" (1967) and "Escape From New York", which is an 80s cult classic. Pleasence plays Clarence F. "Doc" Tydon in "Wake In Fright". Doc could be described as a man who has accepted his fate. This can be seen through his costume which is a ragged and dirty suit and the manner in how he acts. He is introduced as a friendly man but also somewhat menacing. His first bit of dialogue being "All the little devils are proud of hell". This separates him from the rest of the men that John has encountered so far. He is self aware and realises that yabba isn't "the greatest place on earth". His character is very similar to Johns, Both men who were in respectable jobs that ended up in Yabba. They also make advancements to the same woman, Janette Hynes, played by Sylvia Kay. The difference between them however is Doc is what would have happened to John if he didnt escape. His life is completely shattered by Yabba causing him to become a nihilistic alcoholic. Doc could be considered the catalyst and helper to John's downfall with him introducing John to the gambling game, which is the beginning of the end for john.

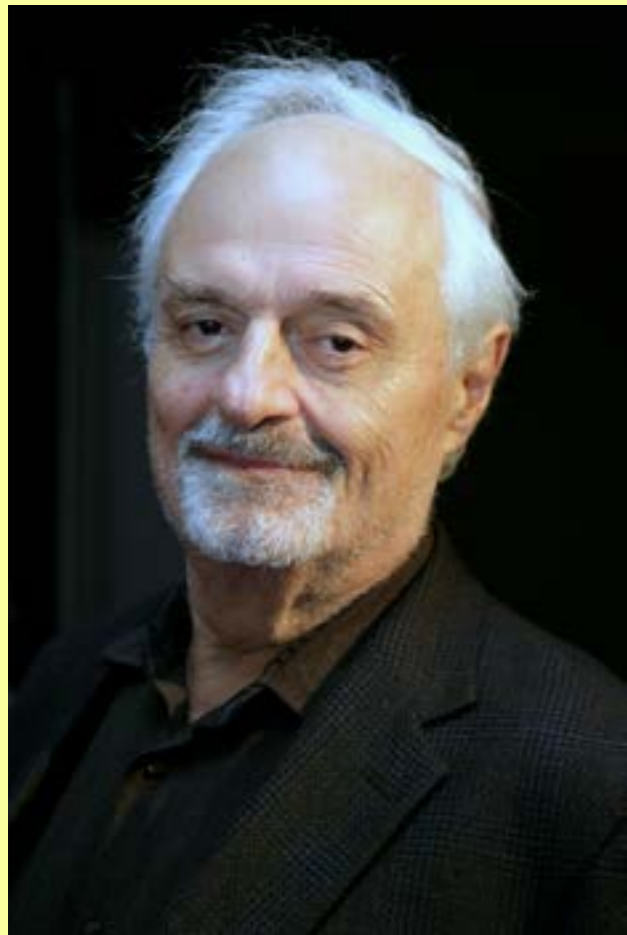


Wake in fright is about addiction and all of the vile impacts it can have on someone's life. It is presented in a nightmarish way which leaves little up to the imagination of the viewer. It shows how easy people can get corrupted by it. The alcohol in "Wake in Fright" is shown in an extremely attractive way. The beer glasses shiny and cold and the beer itself is golden. The contrast between the dry and desolate wasteland that is the australian outback and the eye catching cold glow of the beer makes it very hard for the characters to not want to drink it. It's usually shot in close ups to show the significance of it and how it is like a siren call to all of the people in the film. This is similar to any type of addiction whether it be alcohol, an addiction to food or even a phone. When they are around us we pay special attention to them with them always standing out in the back of our heads. The insert shots of the alcohol is a similar way of showing how it creeps into our minds.

Paired with the examination of watching someone slowly lose their humanity. It also explores the "mateship" of the stereotypical australian man and how it's an extremely dangerous lifestyle. The men are all shown to be best friends with each other and look after each other when in reality they are the cause of each other's downfall, always trying to one up each other or encourage the other to try and do more and drink more. In the first pub scene in Yabba Jock Crawford is constantly egg on John to keep drinking the same amount as him at the same pace as him. They constantly are putting John down for not being masculine enough. This can be seen in the scene at Tim Hynes, played by Al Thomas, with the other men there making fun of John for hanging out with Janette Hynes rather than them. It shows up again in the notorious kangaroo scene. The same men again belittle John for not being able to kill the kangaroos very well. With him going back and forwards in his head whether or not he wants to kill the kangaroo or not.

Throughout the film John is constantly depicted failing. He fails at gambling. He fails at keeping up with the same drinking pace as everyone. He fails at having sex with Janette. He fails killing the kangaroos. He fails at escaping from Yabba. He fails at seeing his girlfriend. And most tragically he fails at ending his life. All of these failures make John a very empathetic character with you constantly feeling bad for him and wanting him to succeed. This helps show how savage and unpredictable the binge drinking lifestyle can be. It exhibits the parallels that endless drinking and failure have with each other, with them going hand in





FOCUS ON THE FILM MAKER



Ted Kotcheff is a Canadian director known for his films "First Blood" an action movie classic and from 1982 "Weekend At Bernie's", a buddy comedy from 1989. He graduated from university of Toronto. At the age of 24 he got his first directing job at the Canadian broadcasting station. He was at the time the youngest ever person to get a directing job there. The shows he worked on were General Motors Theatre (1958), an anthology series which would go from romance to adventure to mystery stories, First Performance (1956-1958) and On Camera (1954-1958) which was another anthology series. From there he would go on to work in England. With experience on working on other anthology series he was hired to help work on Armchair Theatre by Sydney Newman. He worked on it between 1958 to 1960. He would go on to direct his first feature film, Tiara Tahiti (1962). Other movies of note were "A Human Voice" a TV movie from 1966 starring Ingrid Bergman, daughter of Ingma Bergman, "Of Mice And Men" (1968) and "Wake In Fright" (1971) being his first mainstream movie. It received lots of critical acclaim and was entered into the Cannes film festival. After spending some time in Australia he was inspired by the dryness and never ending outback. While in Australia he felt like an outsider next to the larger than life personalities of the average Australian man. This would motivate him in the construction of the story. Later in the same year he would release the inebriated woman which won him the British Academy Television Award for Best Director. Kotcheff went back to Canada to direct The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz (1974) which was a novel that his friend Mordecai Richler wrote the novel for. This would win Kotcheff the Golden Bear at the Berlin Film Festival. He moved to Hollywood and in 1977 he directed "Fun with Dick and Jane" starring Jane Fonda and George Segal. Kotcheff would go on to direct many more smaller movies. Then in 1982 he would have his biggest hit yet "First Blood" starring Sylvester Stallone which to this day still has a massive cult following. In 1989 Kotcheff released another massive cult following movie "Weekend at Bernie's", which is still referenced in today's tv shows and other forms of media. From "it's always sunny in Philadelphia" (2005-2019) to "regular show" (2005-2016).

SOCIETY'S RECEPTION ON THE FILM THEN & NOW

In the US where it was first released under the name "Outback", the reception of the film was fantastic from critics point of view. Martin Scorsese, director of Taxi Driver 1976, King of Comedy 1982 and Goodfellas 1990, said when the restored version that came out in 2009 went on to say, "Wake in Fright is a deeply -- and I mean deeply -- unsettling and disturbing movie. I saw it when it premiered at Cannes in 1971, and it left me speechless." Robert Ebert also said "It's not dated. It is powerful, genuinely shocking and rather amazing. It comes billed as a 'horror film' and contains a great deal of horror, but all of the horror is human and brutally realistic." It was nominated for the Palme d'Or at Cannes Film Festival. Despite the good reception from the critics at the time it didn't sit well with audiences getting \$321,323 at the Australian box office, with a budget of \$800,000. In response to the poor reception Kotcheff said "perhaps too uncomfortably direct and uncompromising to draw large Australian audiences" and closed after one weekend in Brisbane. Maggie Dence who plays the receptionist says in relation to the audience reception, "at the end of it there was just total silence. Nobody said a word. Nobody clapped." she then later goes on to say after people have gotten out of the theater "nobody was saying anything"

Compared to the critical reception the audience reception was very bad. In one of the cinemas that was screening it at the time someone in the crowd got up and said "That's not us!". Adding to the already poor reception, to make things worse the notorious kangaroo hunting scene didn't go down well with anyone. So bad in fact the producer put out a statement saying "The hunting scenes depicted in this film were taken during an actual kangaroo hunt by professional licensed hunters. For this reason and because the survival of the Australian kangaroo is seriously threatened, these scenes were shown uncut after consultation with the leading animal welfare organisations in Australia and the United Kingdom." The scene is quite horrific, but also very effective in showing how vile the characters are. Kotcheff went on record to say that he didn't want any animals to feel any harm with him going on to say "The very first thing I want to make clear that absolutely no kangaroo was injured or killed for my film, WAKE IN FRIGHT." The Australian Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals told Kotcheff to show as much blood and gore to make sure that there wouldn't be anymore kangaroo hunts with barbaric hunters. In relation to the hunters Kotcheff told a story saying, "One of the hunters said to me, "Where do you want me to shoot them?" And I asked him what he meant. He said, "I can shoot them in the heart or the kidney or the brain." And I said, "what's the difference?" "If it's the kidneys they drop dead immediately," he explained. "Shoot them in the heart, they leap around for four or five jumps and in the brain, they spin for a couple of seconds and then they die." the kangaroo scene, shooting scene, went on from 6:00PM to 2:00AM. As the filming went on the hunters started drinking bottles of whisky, making them miss the dead shots and hitting them in non lethal spots, like the arm and legs.

Today's society sees *Wake in Fright* as a cult classic. With websites and apps giving it all very high scores. With a 7.7/10 on IMDb, 4.0/5 on Letterboxd, 85% critic score and a 72% audience score on Metacritic and 96% critic score and a 82% audience score on Rotten Tomatoes. With all knowledge on the behind the scenes of *Wake in Fright*

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“The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert” 1994

“Crocodile Dundee” 1986

“Taxi Driver” 1976

“Cast Away” 2000

“Silence of the Lambs” 1991

“The Master” 2012

“Get Out” 2017

“Lord of the Rings Trilogy” 2001-2003

“Midnight Cowboy” 1969