JILL BILCOCK: REVEALING THE INVISIBLE ARTIST

Recognising the creative contributions of film editors to filmmaking through biographical documentary film

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Abstract

Film editing is recognised as the conceptual innovation that, at the dawn of the twentieth century, helped transform the novelty of moving images into cinema. Despite this acknowledgment, misconceptions about the art form linger. Surprisingly, there is still limited public discussion of the contribution made by editors to creative authorship during the filmmaking process. Arguably, this absence has impeded deeper investigations of the craft and contributions of significant editors, their artistic achievements and the nature of their professional lives.

This artistic research project proposes that the essential contribution of film editors to filmmaking can begin to be better appreciated and understood by careful exploration of a prominent practitioner’s art and creative influence. Accordingly, the researcher has undertaken the production of a companion pair of long-form biographical documentary films portraying the life, career and practice of the acclaimed Australian film editor, Jill Bilcock. It is contended that use of the film medium in Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible and Jill Bilcock: The Art of Film Editing proves to be a highly effective mode of analysing a leading film editor’s finely tuned practices. Moreover, this portrait of the working life of a celebrated editor promotes greater awareness of the craft of editors and challenges more traditional, auteur-focused perceptions of filmmaking.

It also demonstrates that this independently funded two-part study benefits from the negotiated inclusion of substantial footage as visible evidence of an editor’s work. The project outcomes are designed for wide public dissemination and to circumvent normally prohibitive licensing demands, two of Bilcock’s high-profile collaborators (Baz Luhrmann and Shekhar Kapur) were recruited as intermediaries in archival negotiations. This achieved more favourable licensing terms and the development and use of this novel licensing arrangement is analysed in the study.
Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Student name ______ Axel Grigor _______

Signed ________________________________

Date ______ 29 March 2022 _______
List of Abbreviations

AACTA Australian Academy of Cinema and Television Arts
ABC Australian Broadcasting Corporation
AC Companion of the Order of Australia
AO Officer of the Order of Australia
ACE American Cinema Editors
ACMI Australian Centre for the Moving Image
AMCOS Australasian Mechanical Copyright Owners Society
APRA Australasian Performing Rights Association
ASE Australian Screen Editors’ Guild
CARI Creative Arts Research Institute
FCCA Film Critics’ Circle of Australia
GFS Griffith Film School
IDFA International Documentary Festival Amsterdam
MFN Most Favoured Nation
NFSA National Film and Sound Archive
PEP Producer Equity Program
SBS Special Broadcasting Service
SFK Föreningen Sveriges Filmklippare (Swedish film editors’ association)
VCA Victorian College of the Arts
Creative Practice – The Thesis Films

This thesis focuses on the feature-length documentary *Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible* (Grigor 2017a) and the half-hour broadcast documentary *Jill Bilcock: The Art of Film Editing* (Grigor 2017b), which together constitute the creative practice produced as part of this doctoral examination.

**It is strongly recommended to watch these films before reading the thesis.**

**Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible (2017, 1h 18 mins)**

Key credits: Director, Producer, Writer, Film Editor


**Jill Bilcock: The Art of Film Editing (2017, 28 mins)**

Key credits: Director, Producer, Writer


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**Synopsis:**

*Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible* focuses on the life and work of one of the world’s leading film artists, Academy Award–nominated film editor Jill Bilcock. Iconic Australian films *Strictly Ballroom, Muriel’s Wedding, Moulin Rouge!, Red Dog and The Dressmaker* bear the unmistakeable look and sensibility of Bilcock’s visual inventiveness, but it was her brave editing choices in Baz Luhrmann’s *Romeo + Juliet* that changed the look of cinema the world over, inspiring one Hollywood critic to dub her editing style as that of a “Russian serial killer on crack”. With a back-story as colourful and surprising as her films, and featuring commentary from Cate Blanchett, Baz Luhrmann, Jocelyn Moorhouse, Shekhar Kapur, Phillip Noyce and Fred Schepisi, this documentary is a wonderful insight into the art of editing and the profound impact it has on storytelling.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In 2008 I accepted an invitation from Senior Lecturer Nicholas Oughton to teach an undergraduate course in film editing at my alma mater, Griffith Film School (GFS), in Brisbane, Australia. At the time, I had edited two feature-length documentaries: Fahimeh’s Story (K-Rahber 2004) and Donkey in Lahore (K-Rahber 2007). While preparing one of my first lectures (The Role and Responsibilities of the Film Editor), I surveyed Griffith University’s extensive library catalogue for audio-visual materials that could effectively convey established film editors’ professional experiences to my students. Since my own editing experience was almost exclusively in non-fiction filmmaking, I felt it was imperative that students also glean useful insights from film editors who had made a name for themselves editing script-based fiction films and who had been working in the industry much longer than myself. I found that career-spanning screen portrayals of the trials and tribulations of highly regarded actors, film directors, cinematographers, producers and even screenwriters were quite easy to locate. However, this was not so when it came to film editors. Judging by the library’s video shelf, film editors seemed to be as invisible as “the hidden art” (Brownlow 1976) that they practice.

As a film editor, I have experienced first-hand the curious duality at the heart of the profession: while our work is praised for being ‘invisible’, this cloak of invisibility has the unfortunate habit of concealing the person who worked so hard to weave it. This has resulted in vague perceptions of what film editors do and who these creative people are. In turn, this diminishes discussions about how films and screen stories are made.

Thrust into the role of teaching editing, I was concerned that over one hundred years of cinema did not appear to have yielded a single audio-visual portrait of a celebrated film editor that I could share with my students. Instructors in courses focused on other key filmmaking disciplines did not face the same predicament. For example, cinematography teachers could inspire a greater interest in the craft of cinematography by screening documentaries such as Visions of Light (Glassman et al. 1992), Cameraman: The Life and Work of Jack Cardiff (McCall 2010), Light Keeps Me Company (Nykvist 2001), No Subtitles Necessary: Laszlo & Vilmos (Chressanthis 2008) or, from an Australian perspective, Show Me the Magic (2012),
Cathy Henkel’s portrait of Australian director of photography Don McAlpine. When teaching direction, teachers could press play on work such as Burden of Dreams (Les Blank 1982), Directed by Andrei Tarkovsky (Leszczyłowksi 1988), Fellini: I’m a Born Liar (Petigrew 2002) or Woody Allen: A Documentary (Weide 2012).

Looking online, I did come across two long-form documentaries that focused squarely on film editing: Cutting Edge: The Magic of Movie Editing (Apple 2004) and Edge Codes: The Art of Motion Picture Editing (Shuper 2004). Both films did an admirable job of introducing central editing concepts, including editing history and artistic milestones, but they only included fleeting moments with award-winning editors and directors. The edited films, rather than the editors themselves, were in focus. I found it astounding that no one had found it prudent or important enough to encapsulate the personal stories and craft experience of a master editor in the form of a biographical documentary film. Was this absence of in-depth documentaries about film editors the result of ignorance, market-driven reasons or perhaps an unwillingness on the part of film editors to be put in the spotlight? I began wondering what it might take to depict a film editor’s life and craft, and how a general audience could be enticed to see such a documentary film.

Seeking answers to this troubling lack of audio-visual texts about individual film editors, I agreed to help organise the 2012 academic symposium Revealing the Hidden Art: Asia-Pacific Symposium on Creative Post-Production, which gathered international film editors and academics at GFS. As the chair of the Queensland chapter of the Australian Screen Editors (ASE) guild at the time, I took it upon myself to secure the attendance of a leading Australian film editor. Having long admired the work of Australian film editor Jill Bilcock AC, ASE, ACE, whose distinctive craft had elevated such well-known films as Strictly Ballroom (Luhrmann 1992), Romeo + Juliet (Luhrmann 1996), Moulin Rouge! (Luhrmann 2001) and Muriel’s Wedding (Hogan 1994), I sent her an invitation. Enthused by the names of celebrated editors who had already agreed to attend—such as Sylvia Ingemarsdotter (Sweden), Haideh Safiyari (Iran), Mary Stephen (Canada), Yann Dedet (France) and Roberto Perpignani (Italy)—Jill and her partner Roger Savage soon agreed to participate.

In preparation for Bilcock’s visit, I lobbied the ASE and GFS to provide funds for the production of a special video tribute honouring her career and craft, which I would direct. Made within the space of two weeks, this production featured several excerpts from films Jill
had edited along with interviews with two major Australian directors she had worked with: Kriv Stenders, director of Red Dog; and Sue Brooks, director of Japanese Story. Interviews were recorded at the Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS) in Sydney and the Victorian College of Arts (VCA) Film School in Melbourne. Director Baz Luhrmann, who at the time was in post-production on The Great Gatsby (Luhrmann 2013), kindly provided a self-recorded video statement for the tribute. The inspiring process of directing and producing this secret project—Jill was not aware of its existence prior to seeing it at the symposium—indicated to me that an audio-visual inquiry of a prominent editor’s craft could be a most useful way to illuminate the importance of film editors’ contributions to filmmaking.

ASE Tribute to Jill Bilcock (Grigor 2012a)
https://vimeo.com/54503188/06b58e098b

Prior to the symposium, most well-established film editors I had met had seemed rather reserved and reticent about openly sharing tales from the editing room, let alone their private lives, in front of a room full of strangers. As author and film editor Roger Crittenden, co-curator of the 2012 symposium, observes: “Until recently it has been extremely unusual for editors and others involved in post-production to meet to celebrate their craft and share their experiences, except in their own society or craft organisations” (Crittenden 2012, 4).
Jill was different. Her stories about childhood and how she ended up starring in 1970s’ Bollywood films, her dry humour, her frank opinions about the current state of the film industry, and her vivid memories from the many cutting rooms she had worked in made the symposium’s one-on-one conversation between Crittenden and Jill memorable, entertaining, and eye-opening.

Figure 2. Jill Bilcock in conversation with Roger Crittenden at ‘Revealing The Hidden Art’.

Shortly after the symposium concluded, Jill sent me the following note:

Many thanks for making my visit so much fun. You in particular were outstanding. I am deeply touched by the tribute you and your ASE friends put together. I might need a copy to prove to my family that editors can be appreciated!

The Symposium is a great leap forward making it about Post Production. Not an area that is understood or recognised enough by producers and the general public.

(Email from Jill Bilcock to the author, 22 November 2012)

The symposium experience compelled me to look closer at Jill’s biography. We stayed in touch and in mid-2013 she invited me to Melbourne, where she was busy editing the feature film *My Mistress* (Lance 2014). In the lead-up to this visit, I began writing down my evolving research thoughts.
WHY SEE JILL…
I'm coming to see you because I want to have a conversation with you about how to make a film that helps shed some of editing's image as a hidden art, as something mysterious that can't be observed.
If there was one thing I really took away from the symposium in Brisbane it was a strong desire to elaborate on that idea. And no editor I have met has so directly expressed that sentiment as you.
(Author’s research notes, 6 June 2013)

Being permitted to observe her process in the editing room, coupled with still-fresh memories of the raucous tales she had regaled the symposium audience with, convinced me that Jill would make for an excellent and highly deserving documentary subject. Consequently, I decided to calibrate the focus of my practice-based research ambitions, declaring that I intended to conceive and direct a feature documentary about Jill Bilcock—a portrait that could at last place an in-depth audio-visual biography about a leading film editor on library shelves, thereby contributing to a much-needed demystification and increased visibility of editors’ contributions to filmmaking. The film that eventuated and my journey to make it are detailed in this doctorate.

1.2 Studio Practice through Industry Collaboration

To underline the collaborative nature underpinning my studio practice, I will now briefly outline the industry context in which the feature documentary Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible (Grigor 2017a) and its shorter TV broadcast version Jill Bilcock: The Art of Film Editing (Grigor 2017b) was developed, produced and distributed.

In September 2013, my producing partner Faramarz K-Rahber and I travelled to Melbourne to meet Jill at her home. We conducted a lengthy, filmed interview with her that touched on her upbringing, formative years and her perspective on the role of the film editor. The candid, humorous and illuminating responses she gave to my questions solidified my conviction that a documentary portrayal of Jill had the potential to transform the understanding of the editor’s contribution to the filmmaking process. Faramarz and I decided to pursue development of this project through our Queensland-based production company Faraway Productions Pty Ltd.
Aiming for my first attempt at directing a feature-length documentary to reach the largest audience possible, we reached out to experienced Melbourne-based producer Sue Maslin. Through her company Film Art Media, Sue had produced several arts-based documentaries that I greatly admired. She had also collaborated with Jill on several film projects and was about to go into production of a feature film adaptation of author Rosalie Ham’s best-selling book *The Dressmaker* (Moorhouse 2015), a film Jill was set to edit. Soon after we presented our early research materials to Sue, she agreed to be the film’s executive producer.

After a lengthy development and fund-raising period, partly conducted while I was editing two feature documentaries—*Frackman* (Todd 2015) and *Ella* (Watkin 2016)—the project received financial support from ABC, Screen Australia, Screen Queensland, Film Victoria, Film Art Media, Soundfirm and Griffith University to produce a half-hour biographical documentary about Jill. I was the film’s writer, director and producer.

During the film’s production period (2015–2017), Faramarz and I travelled to Melbourne, Sydney, London, Los Angeles and New York to conduct interviews with Jill and thirty-three directors and film industry figures she has collaborated with during her career. We also filmed Jill during her work on *The Dressmaker* (Moorhouse 2015) and invested a considerable amount of time trying to locate and secure rights to archival material that could illustrate Jill’s vibrant life and career.

The half-hour TV version we created, *Jill Bilcock: The Art of Film Editing* (Grigor 2017b), was broadcast on ABC TV in March 2017 as the opening episode of the second season of ABC Arts’ *Creatives*, a bio-doc series focusing on prominent Australian artists. This broadcast version would go on to win the Best Biographical Documentary award at the 2017 Australian Teachers of Media (ATOM) Awards, which helped generate interest in the film in the Australian secondary and tertiary media education sector.

In 2016, based on the strength of the interview and archival material gathered during development and production, we secured further support from Screen Australia, Screen Queensland, Film Victoria, Soundfirm, Film Art Media and Griffith University to also produce a theatrical, feature-length documentary about Jill Bilcock’s life and art. *Jill Bilcock:
Dancing the Invisible (Grigor 2017a) had its world premiere at the 2017 Adelaide Film Festival, winning the festival’s Audience Award for Best Documentary.

The feature-length version was nominated for the Best Feature Documentary Award at the 2018 Australian Academy of Cinema and Television Arts (AACTA) Awards and received a similar nomination at the 2018 Film Critics’ Circle of Australia Awards. In his four-star review, film critic David Stratton wrote “this informative and extremely entertaining tribute to a consummate perfectionist makes rewarding viewing for anyone interested in the art of the cinema” (Stratton 2018). Buoyed by warm industry and critical reception, opportunities to screen the film internationally came calling.

To date, the film has screened at several notable international film festivals, including the 2018 Antipodean Film Festival in St Tropez, France, and the 2019 Gothenburg Film Festival in Sweden. The film had its North American premiere at New York’s Lincoln Centre as part of the 2019 Australian International Screen Forum in New York. In October 2019, American Cinema Editors (ACE) and Ausfilm arranged a special theatrical screening in Hollywood, attended by Jill Bilcock and many acclaimed American film editors.

Within academic settings, Prof Michael Renov presented a special screening of the film at the XXVI Visible Evidence conference at USC School of Cinematic Arts in August 2019. In December 2019, the film won the highly coveted Council for Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences Australia (CHASS) Distinctive Work Prize, an award sponsored by the publishing house Routledge.

Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible and Jill Bilcock: The Art of Film Editing are represented and distributed worldwide by Film Art Media.
1.3 Contribution to Knowledge

Editors are passed over by film historians because their work, when successful, is virtually unnoticeable. (Brownlow 1976, 286)

By choosing to make a long-form documentary about Jill Bilcock AC, ASE, ACE, one of Australia’s most acclaimed film editors, my aims have been to promote a wider awareness and comprehension of the craft of film editing and to clearly illustrate the considerable contributions that Bilcock has made to Australian cinema over the past five decades.

Through the making of a biographical documentary film and the accompanying research process, I also seek to develop and share a greater understanding of what the film editor’s role and responsibilities on a film production are, and how their professional lives can be represented on screen.

My practice-based research is pertinent and timely for a number of reasons. Firstly, studies of individual filmmakers have exhibited a marked tendency to focus on the idiosyncratic artistry of directors (auteurs), the deal-making acumen of producers, or the complex light-and-shadow capturing art of directors of photography. To foster strong film industries, it is imperative that accessible studies of the working lives, achievements and roles of other key film creatives are produced, disseminated and debated. As such, my research and the resulting studio work would aim to contribute valuable and accessible knowledge for areas such as film student education, film history and feminist accounts of cinema.

Secondly, given the generation who reinvented the Australian film industry in the 1960s and 1970s are coming to the end of their working lives, it is important that their knowledge and wisdom is accessed, archived and transmitted to succeeding generations. The documentary aims to encapsulate valuable creative lessons from Jill Bilcock’s impressive career. Thirdly, at a time where women’s full participation in screen industries around the world remains uneven and limited—notwithstanding the ongoing design of policies and schemes of redress—a vibrant, full-scale portrait of Jill Bilcock, as an exuberant exception, is timely and important.
Fourthly, given the demands of digital post-production workflows appear to constrict opportunities for emerging film editors and assistant editors to absorb valuable craft lessons from experienced film editors through apprenticeship, a documentary film that encapsulates the knowledge, contributions and career path of a leading practitioner is of great importance.

And finally, for copyright reasons, producing documentary film accounts of the craft contributions of significant film editors is inherently difficult and potentially prohibitively expensive. This is due in part to the complex negotiations and costly licensing involved in clearing clips, music and performances in the motion picture they have edited. My project aims to present a valuable new production model that could lead to more intimate portrayals of film editors and editing craft in the future.

1.4 Film Editing: A Personal History

The knowledge of how editing works is the absolute prerequisite of every attempt to make a film. (Crittenden 1981, ix)

In order to contextualise this exegesis’s focus on personal reflection and to illuminate how the desire to investigate Jill Bilcock’s craft and career through documentary filmmaking grew out of my own professional film editing practice, it is important to provide an account of my filmmaking journey prior to making Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible.

Before leaving my native Sweden to study film production at Griffith University in Australia, I had not given much thought to how much of a film’s authorship might rely on the efforts of other key creatives. In the film history course I took at Skövde University in Sweden as part of a bachelor’s degree in media production, there was no major consideration given to the impact a film editor might have on the larger filmmaking process. Rather, any analysis of a film’s supposed greatness always seemed to be attributed to a solitary genius, a visionary ‘auteur’ (Bazin 1957) at the heart of the film’s creation. While appreciating that the visual flourishes and technical polish of particularly memorable films involved skilful contributions from individual crafts persons, my fellow students and I rarely had an opportunity to explore how such film artistry could constitute original authorship in and of itself. Put simply: I was under the impression that great filmmaking was a direct result of great direction. With this
naïve and limited view of the realities of filmmaking, I left for Australia in 1999, harbouring dreams of becoming a director myself.

In the final year of my Bachelor in Screen Production at Griffith University, I wrote and directed the short comedy film *McAllister Field* (Grigor 2000). At the latter end of the film’s post-production period, the film’s editor suddenly had to withdraw from our project to rescue another student project. I assumed it would not be a complicated issue to finalise what he’d started. After all, I knew the rushes well, could confidently operate the Media100 non-linear editing software and, most importantly, I felt I had a firm grasp of what remained to be done to ensure that the film felt, looked and sounded like I had always intended. So I decided to take over the editing duties. But as I began going through my ‘to-do’ list (trimming dialogue, replacing shots in the opening montage to create a better ‘flow’, adjusting scene transitions that I felt were not working as well as they should, etc.) a seemingly endless amount of new structural and storytelling opportunities opened up. With a dropped word here, an added glance there, a new off-screen sound cue here, a different music choice there, suddenly a scene or sequence would look and feel completely different. As I progressed from fine cut to picture lock stage, I began to realise how much power the editor has over a film’s story and emotional impact. It felt as if I had stumbled across a new “film language” (Fairservice 2001, 2), one that had been hiding in plain sight and whose grammar needed careful study and much practice to master.

![Author instructing actor Peter Condon during production of McAllister Field.](image-url)

Figure 3. Author instructing actor Peter Condon during production of *McAllister Field*. 

*Figure 3. Author instructing actor Peter Condon during production of McAllister Field.*
Following film school, my first professional job as an editor was the feature documentary *Fahimeh’s Story* (K-Rahber 2004). Despite the fact that I had no long-form editing experience, Ned Lander (commissioning editor at SBS Independent at the time) agreed to let me edit the film purely based on the strength of the film’s promotional reel and the insistence of the film’s director Faramarz K-Rahber and producer Ian Lang that I be the film’s editor. Faramarz and I knew each other from film school. To ensure our control and ownership of the production, we formed Faraway Productions Pty Ltd.

Editing of this predominantly fly-on-the-wall, cinema verité–style documentary was carried out in many stages during the film’s two-year production period. Alongside my editing duties, I also acted as the film’s line producer. Managing production finances, scheduling, and day-to-day communications with the film’s producer and investors greatly enhanced my understanding of how the business of filmmaking directly influences what an editor and director are able to achieve in the editing room.

Editing *Fahimeh's Story* made me realise why it is often stated that in documentary films “the story is created in the editing room” (Bricca 2018, xi). There were no established guidelines for how a scene should play out, where in the overall narrative it should occur, or even if it was required at all. As editor, it was my task to write the film into existence. Through a process of distilling vast amounts of observational documentary material into manageable narrative pieces, Faramarz and I were able to engage deeply in a discussion about characters’ motivations, interactions and potential storylines. A constant, inquisitive and constructive dialogue between the two of us ensured that the filming and editing process moved forward. This mutually respectful and close collaboration became my first experience of what film editor Walter Murch has succinctly described as “dreaming in pairs” (Murch 2001, 26), a personally fulfilling and productive editor–director relationship.

For our subsequent documentary, *Donkey in Lahore* (K-Rahber 2007), our collaborative dreaming deepened. Whereas the majority of *Fahimeh’s Story* had taken place in our home base of Brisbane, enabling us to quickly and rather inexpensively respond to unfolding events in characters’ lives, *Donkey in Lahore* required Faramarz to spend many weeks and months filming by himself in Lahore, Pakistan. Facing longer periods apart and a delicate budgetary
balancing act due to the project’s international scope, we were forced to continuously assess what deserved to be captured on DVCam tape and how. Major decisions about what, when or how to film were always made in the editing room following careful scrutiny of edited assemblies and paper edits. Integrating and prioritising editing during a constantly evolving and unpredictable production process became key to achieving the film’s creative and business goals. This process would also be key ten years later when we produced Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible.

By allowing production and post-production processes to flow in tandem during the making of Donkey in Lahore, we increased our understanding of how intimately our different skillsets complemented each other. In Variety magazine’s review of the film—which went on to premiere at IDFA in 2007 and Tribeca Film Festival in 2008—their reviewer aptly described the importance of editing to our joint telling of this sprawling story: “Five years in the making, resulting in more than 200 hours of footage, the pic reps a marvel of coherent editing, with the helmer’s narration and graphics providing context and moving the story along” (Simon 2008).

While developing new documentary projects for our production company, I began seeking further opportunities to develop my creative and collaborative skills as an editor by pairing up with other directors. Marking a sharp departure from the cinema verité–style storytelling techniques used in Fahimeh’s Story and Donkey in Lahore, I agreed to edit director Peter Hegedus’s largely autobiographical documentary My America (Hegedus 2011a). This title relied on narration, animation, and the use of archival material to propel the protagonist’s story forward and to enhance emotional beats. Navigating the complexities of the director being both my creative partner in the editing room and the film’s main on-screen talent proved an exciting but difficult challenge for my need to remain a critical observer and arranger of the filmed material.

A recommendation from Brisbane-based producer Trish Lake (whom I had worked with on My America) led to a creative pairing with director Richard Todd on Frackman (Todd 2015). For this deeply political documentary film billed as “a film about ordinary people caught up in the multinational gas rush” (Frackman 2019), I was tasked to help Todd draw out an exciting and emotional structure from the hundreds of hours he had captured while following
the film’s protagonist: Queensland landowner and anti–coal seam gas campaigner Dayne ‘The Frackman’ Pratzky. The project taught me three valuable lessons about directing that were pertinent when making *Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible*: the importance of choosing a charismatic and engaging central character; not being afraid to fully engage in the social world of your subject; and championing the finished film once it circulates in the film festival arena.

The final project from my filmography I wish to highlight is *Ella* (Watkin 2016). Much of my inclination to work on this project stemmed from my wish to help director Douglas Watkin (for whom I had edited a number of shorter documentary projects) transition into feature-length territory. Crafted from a limited number of interviews, personal archive and observational moments, the film tells the story of ballet dancer Ella Havelka, a descendant of the Wiradjuri people, who in 2013 became the first Aboriginal to join the Australian Ballet. Given only limited instructions by Watkin as to how he wanted Havelka’s story to be structured, I had tremendous freedom in deciding how to best forge an emotional connection between her and the film’s audience. This accommodating experience would inspire the collaborative approach I pursued in my director–editing relationship with editor Scott Walton on the Jill Bilcock documentary, which will be discussed in Chapter 3. The ability to access a wealth of pre-existing and culturally relevant music for *Ella*, generously provided to the production by composer David Page—the long-time music director of Bangarra Dance Theatre—allowed me to create emotionally resonant transitions between Ella’s past and present life. I would replicate this editing technique when working on the feature-length version of Jill’s story.

Throughout my work on these feature-length documentaries (and countless shorter ones), I developed an enduring curiosity about—and first-hand knowledge of—film editors’ collaborative, technical and creative expertise. My editing practice has also given me ample opportunity to experience, and reflect upon, how director-focused the public and scholarly discourse around a film’s creation, storytelling and release is. While in no way seeking to diminish the leadership, time or effort that directors of long-form documentaries invest in their work, I find it curious and frustrating that the editor—the person ultimately tasked with delivering the final draft of the film—rarely gets more than a passing mention in public discussions about a documentary’s story, technical presentation or its ability to contribute to
cultural discourse. Unintentional or not, the ‘invisibility’ of my own practice is a major reason why I view my research as a potentially vital corrective.

Let’s face it. A big reason why I want to do my masters is because of my own inability to appropriately describe what I do during editing. As a teacher I talk a lot about others’ experiences, but I’ve never analysed the up and downsides of my own practice. I guess there is a fear there also. If I can’t explain to someone else what it is I do and why I love it so much, how could I have any hope of speaking on behalf of the wider editing community?

(Author’s research notes, 9 April 2013)

1.5 The Research Question

The central question underpinning my research is: How might the creative contributions of film editors to filmmaking be better illustrated through the production of a long-form biographical documentary film?

In deciding to concentrate my artistic research activity on making visible the craft and career of Australian film editor Jill Bilcock through a feature-length documentary—an objective attainable not only through vigorous engagement with my subject and members of her social world but also requiring the assistance of a professional production crew, funding partners and the gatekeepers of her artistic output—a number of sub-questions arose. These in turn, directly influenced, challenged and guided the overall research inquiry. These sub-questions are as follows:

1. What kind of biographical methods and processes should I employ or avoid when writing an audio-visual biography of Jill Bilcock?

2. How can I gain and sustain Jill Bilcock’s trust in my ability to adequately portray her craft and career through documentary filmmaking?

3. How can I secure the involvement of Jill Bilcock’s collaborators and family in a film-based exploration of her life and career?
4. How can I gain access to production finance and build the industry support required to produce a long-form biographical documentary about Jill Bilcock intended for Australian and international distribution?

5. What is required to capture observational scenes of Jill Bilcock’s present-day working practices and collaborations?

6. As an experienced film editor and line producer, what advantages and disadvantages do I have as a first-time director-producer of a biographical documentary about Jill Bilcock?

7. What production strategies are required to locate and gain access to rich and illustrative audio-visual evidence of Jill Bilcock’s past life?

8. Given the difficulty and cost involved in licensing fiction film footage, how can a low-budget, independently funded documentary film manage to secure rights to footage that will allow the film to portray the craft of a renowned motion picture editor?

Chapters 2 to 4 will reflect on and address these questions in detail.
1.6 Literature Review

To help contextualise the methods and efforts guiding my artistic research ambitions, I will now briefly review the extant documentary films and texts that provide an insight into prominent film editors’ creative lives and practice. As Jill Bilcock’s biography and filmography is central to my research, an overview of published works about her life and work is also provided. Some of the texts will be revisited in the next chapter, when I explore reasons for the historical lack of biographical texts about film editors.

1.6.1 Long-form Documentaries about Film Editing

Prior to my efforts, only three feature-length documentaries had been produced about the art of film editing. All three were produced in North America. Two of these, Cutting Edge: The Magic of Movie Editing (Apple 2004) and Edge Codes: The Art of Motion Picture Editing (Shuper 2007), focus predominantly on historical and technical aspects of the craft. Both feature interviews with many distinguished American and British film editors, such as Anne V. Coates, Dede Allen, Sally Menke and Walter Murch. Prominent directors such as Steven Spielberg, Alexander Payne, George Lucas and Jodie Foster also make an appearance through short interview grabs in which they share editing room anecdotes.

The third film, which refreshingly focuses on an individual film editor, is Murch: Walter Murch on Editing (Ichioka 2007). Presented as an intimate exploration on film and art, where the multiple Academy Award–winning film editor Walter Murch ACE can “carry the discussion wherever he chooses” (Southern 2007), this film amplifies Murch’s thoughts with clips from films he has edited throughout his career. The film does not explore Murch’s personal biography or feature testimonials from colleagues, close friends or family members. Indeed, none of these three feature-length documentary films takes a closer look at how film editors’ personal attributes and life experiences colour their evolution as film artists, their craft and choice of collaborators.

1.6.2 Texts About Jill Bilcock’s Life and Craft

Since the release of Strictly Ballroom (Luhrmann 1992), there have been a number of articles published in Australian and international media that refer to Jill’s editing craft in relation to...
specific films (e.g., Adamek 1992; Calvo 2002; Friedman 1999; Gough 1999; *The Age* 2002, 47). However, these short texts are primarily skewed towards building general awareness for an upcoming or just-released production, resulting in only a limited view of Jill’s craft contributions.

Of considerably more interest are the longer form texts about (and by) Jill that have featured in Australian film industry publications such as *Metro Magazine* (Bilcock 1993; Karena 2000), *Inside Film* (Bilcock and Kokkinos 2009; Kan 2003; Kent 2004), *Australian Screen Editor’s newsletter* (Clarkson 1997; McCleave 2006), as well as transcripts from post-production seminars (Bilcock and Savage 1998) and conference panels in which Jill has participated (Griffith Film School 2012). While these texts present intriguing anecdotes and include analysis of Jill’s editing process and/or creative outlook, they are largely tied to a specific editor–director collaboration and/or Jill’s experiences on a particular film. Nothing produced prior to this research has presented a larger view of her professional biography or has considered how it relates to her life experiences.

Jill also features in Princeton University’s excellent online resource *Edited by Women Film Editors*, a “survey of two hundred and six editors who invented, developed, fine-tuned and revolutionized the art of film editing” (Friedrich 2018). As a resource with which to discover notable women film editors (past and present) and to explore their impressive filmographies, it is a much-needed and timely initiative. Although the website rightly presents Jill as one of the world’s leading film editors—pointing to her successful collaborations with directors such as Baz Luhrmann, Jocelyn Moorhouse, Lizzie Borden and Clara Law—it does not delve into biographical territory or convey her prominent place in Australian film history.

In terms of anthologies about film editors, Declan McGrath’s *Editing and Postproduction* (2001) devotes a full chapter to Jill and her filmography, alongside thirteen other acclaimed film editors, such as Walter Murch, Anne V. Coates, Dede Allen and Pietro Scalia. While McGrath’s effort goes some way to recognise Jill’s considerable achievements and industry standing, the text does not convey how much of Jill’s personal background and personality—such as her playfulness, restlessness and emotionality—is expressed in the creative choices she makes in the editing room. While McGrath’s choice to explore Bilcock’s career through the interview format is admirable, the distillation of her contributions by way of a chapter in
an anthology leaves much to be desired for someone seeking to understand and appreciate the personal and artistic motivations behind Bilcock’s editing process.

To date, academic interest in Jill Bilcock’s film oeuvres and editing craft has also been limited. One notable exception is Jillian Holt’s PhD thesis “The ‘Art of Editing’: Creative Practice and Pedagogy” (Holt 2015). For this practice-led-based research project, Holt conducted interviews with Bilcock and six other leading Australian film editors. Holt’s project resulted in a research film designed to be used as an educational tool when teaching film editing. What sets Holt’s academic contribution apart from my own is her focus on expressing the editor’s function and creative outlook by analysing multiple film editors’ perspectives on their craft. This restricts the potential for in-depth exploration about the lessons each artist draws from their respective career. Also, the limited amount of clearances Holt secured for use of third-party content (archive film clips) in her research film—a limitation discussed at length in Chapter 4 that has bedevilled other documentary-based projects about film editing—appears to narrow the potential ability for this research film to reach a general audience. Thus, there appears to be ample scope for my creative arts research to contribute new and visible evidence of the contributions of Bilcock to Australian and world cinema.

When surveying historical video recordings focusing on Jill’s career, I came across two short Australian broadcast interviews. In the first, an interview conducted by Margaret Pomeranz for SBS TV’s Movie Show (SBS TV 1990), Jill shares insights from her editing of the films Dogs in Space (Lowenstein 1986), Evil Angels (Shepisi 1988) and Till There Was You (Seale 1991). In the second interview, a tightly crafted and quite entertaining seven-minute segment on ABC’s arts program Express (ABC 1998), Bilcock offers a number of anecdotes from film productions she had been involved in up until that point in her career. Although intriguing as audio-visual introductions to a significant artist operating within the Australian film industry, these two clips’ short and narration-led format ultimately limits the potential for a deeper understanding of Jill’s biography or of an editor’s role on a film production.

In summary, existing texts and audio-visual artefacts about Jill’s life, craft and career fail to adequately express and contextualise the evolution, breadth and visible evidence of Jill’s cinematic contributions. Descriptions and depictions of Jill’s distinctive creative outlook, her
personal traits and attributes as an editor—including her dogged devotion to the screen stories and filmmakers she chooses to engage with—exist just in flashes and fragments in the texts and recordings listed above.

What previous texts and works about Jill’s craft also largely lack is a deeper contemplation on the impact her creativity has had on individual films and Australia’s national film identity by individuals whose creative and personal lives are closely linked to hers: the assistants she has mentored, the directors she has collaborated with, the producers who have benefited from her “bogus detector” skills (Hawker 2017), the actors whose performances she has sharpened, her older brothers Tony and Carl, and of course her life partner Roger Savage. Also common to all the texts and recordings I have reviewed is that they only contain a limited display of archive and visual examples from the films Jill has edited (i.e., her artistic output).

While reviewing the limited literature and scholarship available about Jill’s and other significant Australian film editors’ careers, it also became apparent that her choice of profession represented an even greater impediment to becoming the subject of critical biographical analysis than her gender. Hence, an analysis of Jill’s industry position viewed from the perspective of feminist critique did not appear critical for my production-based research efforts. Another key reason for deciding that a gender-based review of Jill’s professional life went beyond the scope of my research arose from Jill herself, who early in the research process made it clear to me that she did not perceive her sex as having been a limiting factor to her career. She was much more concerned that inadequate knowledge and widespread misconceptions about editors’ work still prevailed.

The limited knowledge of and curiosity (public as well as academic) about Jill’s evolution as a significant film artist as well as her creative contributions to individual film titles, despite a demonstrably high standing in the Australian film industry (as detailed in the next chapter), therefore presents timely and ample opportunity to focus an in-depth exploration of an editor’s life on her professional life.
1.6.3 Relevant Print Sources—Film Editing

During my research, I was unable to locate a single book focusing on the contributions of a celebrated Australian film editor, or, for that matter, a group of Australian editors. Instead, the list of biographical books about, or by, film editors were decidedly American and European. Among the most interesting and in-depth of biographical titles were books such as Fine Cuts: The Art of European Film Editing (Crittenden 2006), Behind the Seen: How Walter Murch Edited Cold Mountain Using Apple’s Final Cut Pro and What This Means For Cinema (Koppelman 2005), Selected Takes: Film Editors On Editing (Lobrutto 1991), Cut to the Chase: Forty-Five Years of Edting America’s Favorite Movies (O’Steen 2002), First Cut: Conversations With Film Editors (Oldham 2012), The Conversations: Walter Murch and the Art of Editing Film (Ondaatje 2002), British Film Editors: The Heart of the Movie (Perkins and Stollery 2004), When the Shooting Stops, The Cutting Begins: A Film Editor’s Story (Rosenblum and Karen 1986) and Portrait of an Invisible Man: Working Life of Stewart McAllister, Film Editor (Vaughan 1983). While these texts have been, and remain, vital in the effort to make individual film editors’ art more pronounced and appreciated, they contain two major limitations: they predominantly portray the life and craft of male editors (with notable exceptions occurring in texts by Crittenden and Oldham) and readers get virtually no assistance from the author to appreciate the creative editing that is being referenced or discussed. By relying on the written word, these texts literally keep the art of the editor ‘invisible’.

Several books concerning the history, techniques and creative processes involved in film editing have of course also been published; many of the most popular are written by authors with extensive personal knowledge about editing (Chandler 2012; Crittenden 1995; Dancyger 2011; Dmytryk 1984; Fairservice 2001; Hollyn 2009; Murch 2001; Orpen 2003; Pearlman 2016; Reisz and Millar 2010; Thompson 2009). While these are very useful in expressing and explaining to students and scholars the creative and narrative dimensions of film editing, I decided early on in my research that an exploration of Jill Bilcock’s professional life ought not to attempt to illuminate her working biography through the prism of editing theories or technical minutiae. A firm basis for this choice is closely connected to Jill herself, who on many occasions has stated a displeasure for adhering to supposed ‘editing rules’. By deciding to convey the personality and practice of Jill Bilcock through documentary film, I hoped that
the eventual outcome of my studio practice would hold a mirror up to the art of Bilcock and the person being portrayed.

1.7 Research Methodology

1.7.1 Practice-Based Research

As discussed at the outset of this chapter, my wish to conduct practice-based visual arts research stems from the frustration of not being able to share high-quality audio-visual representations of individual film editors’ practice and careers with my editing students at GFS. By taking a practice-based approach to my research, I wanted to produce a screen work that could address this gap.

Practice-based research is described as “an original investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge partly by means of practice” (Candy 2006, 1). In practice-based research, claims of originality and contribution to knowledge are demonstrated through production of “artefacts such as painting, music, designs, models, digital media, or creative events such as performances, installations and exhibitions” (3) and must also include a substantial written contextualisation of the creative work. The practice of producing the artefact is not only embedded in the research process, but it can also give rise to new research questions (Candy and Edmonds 2018). This view of practice-based research holds true for this doctorate as well, where, as has previously been discussed, a number of research sub-questions emerged from, and during, the very process of creating the studio project itself.

Emerging from practice-based PhDs, which were first introduced in Australia in 1984 when the University of Wollongong and University of Technology Sydney commenced doctorates in Creative Writing (Candy 2006, 4), practice-based research in the arts “is a field that has seen a rapid development over the last few decades” (Kälvemark 2011, 21). Internationally, comprehensive reforms to higher education policies have seen an emergence of practitioner-led research programmes in countries such as Sweden and USA (Candy and Edmonds 2010). The publication of policy documents for good practice and the establishment of quality assurance regimens in many countries is also seen as a sign that practice-based research in the arts has “entered a stage of maturity” (Kälvemark 2011, 22). Additionally, the establishment
of practice-based arts research institutes at major Australian universities—such as the Creative Arts Research Institute (CARI) at Griffith University—can be viewed as further proof of this development.

However, critics of this form of research disparage the “hasty academicization of the creative practice community” in countries such as Australia, Finland, New Zealand, Sweden and the UK, stating that this development has resulted in activities that “conform to the conventions of academic research” but “do not result in a significant research activity” (Biggs and Büchler 2011, 89). Such reasoning appears to stem from a prejudiced view that traditional scientific research values—such as prediction and control—do not appear to be a guiding concern in practice-based research, leading to academic work of questionable quality.

In my exegesis I will argue that my documentary Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible does represent novel scholarship of a high quality and that its production is a significant practice-based research activity in terms of its investigative aims, academic merits and the creative output’s critical reception. Since practice-based research is “concerned with the improvement of practice, and new epistemologies of practice distilled from the insider’s understandings of action in context” (Haseman 2006, p3), it feels wholly appropriate that I, predominantly a film editor, am turning to the medium of film in order to effectively investigate how the craft of film editing and the career of a celebrated film editor (Jill Bilcock) can be depicted on screen.

1.7.2 Reflexivity

To succeed in my efforts to compellingly and appropriately illuminate the professional life of a celebrated film editor through documentary filmmaking, a persistent act of self-reflexive analysis appeared sensible. Reflexivity, which pays “analytic attention to the researcher’s role in qualitative research” (Gouldner 1971, 16, cited in Dowling 2006), is a research methodology that requires an active involvement in the research process itself and a recognition that researchers are an intrinsic part of the social world that we study (Palaganas et al. 2017). To effectively capture and present the social world and experiences of my documentary subject, a parallel journey was required—one where I paid close attention to my own accumulated editing experience and social world, while attempting to break new ground as a director-producer portraying the life of one of the world’s great film editors.
Historical recognition of reflexivity as a human phenomenon can be traced back to Plato’s writings about how personal opinions are formed by acts of introspection:

It seems to me that the soul when it thinks is simply carrying on a discussion in which it asks itself questions and answers them itself, affirms and denies. And when it arrives at something definite, either by a gradual process or a sudden leap, when it affirms one thing consistently and without divided counsel, we call this its judgment. ([c. 369 BC] Plato 1992, 65)

To skilful film editors—artists very much accustomed to engaging oneself in an inner dialogue about what constitutes an effective arrangement of images and sounds in order to create a desired effect in the audience—Plato’s words carry a ring of familiarity. A methodology built on an awareness of one’s impulses and decisions, in which the practitioner questions and answers himself by alternating between subject and object (Archer 2013), now also promised to be an effective tool in guiding my attempt to retain an editor’s creative outlook while blazing a path for myself as a director.

However, critics of using reflexivity as a method to gain new knowledge question the reliability and applicability of observations made when the thinker must constantly “divide himself into two: one who reasons and one who observes” (Comte 1975). It has also been stated that since reflexive efforts are tied to the perspective of an individual, research findings run the risk of being inadequate due to only presenting a partial account of the effects of the researcher interaction (Finlay 2002). A third charge issued against the methodology is that it is prone to individual bias and therefore unlikely to challenge underlying assumptions or to consider different perspectives (Hatton and Smith 1995). Taking a contrarian view, James Calderhead refers to the influential work of Habermas (1974) when arguing that active reflection not only helps create an awareness of one’s influence on the research, but also helps the researcher in “gaining control over the direction of these influences” (Calderhead 1989, 44). A consequent and conscious use of reflexivity appears to be key if one is to succeed in keeping personal motivations and ego from complicating the research process.
The first step of establishing a self-reflective awareness was to accept that my aspirations to make visible the craft and career—i.e., the social world—of a fellow editor was inextricably linked my own professional journey. Only by considering how my years of practice as a professional film editor affected my choices as first-time director and producer on the production of Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible could I attempt to present an informative and highly visual biographical documentary film about one of the world’s leading film editors. As evidenced by the exegesis’s reference to, and inclusion of, research diary entries and email conversations, my efforts to “understand human conduct as it unfolds through time and in relation to its meaning for the actors” (Rosaldo 1989, 37) are autoethnographic approaches that helped further my research’s reflective methodology.

In The Reflective Practitioner, Donald Schön (1983) states that professionals are often unaware of the expertise they apply in their practice. Schön refers to the unreflective manner in which highly skilled professionals apply their skills in order to achieve a desired outcome as a tacit “knowing-in-practice” (Schön 1983, viii). As professionals are accustomed to carry out their work in an automated fashion, without the need to pause and reflect on the internalised process that guides their decisions, it is often difficult for them to make their competencies explicit. It is not hard to relate these ideas to my experiences from the professional realm of film editing. While I have generally found it easy to articulate and discuss how certain editorial techniques or strategies might help strengthen the audience’s investment in film characters’ plight or the overall story, it is a challenge to explain or re-trace the many steps (and missteps) that led to a particular result. Reflecting on how my editing expertise intersects with more personal aspects—family and cultural background, present-day life, formative professional experiences, personal temperament etc.—is a harder task still.

Schön outlines two distinct ways in which professionals can reflect on their professional practice: reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Reflection-in-action occurs when the professional is in the midst of performing their practice and an unexpected event takes place that forces them to pause and reflect on what has happened. Reflection-in-action “hinges on the experience of surprise” (Schön 1983, 33) and is bound by the “action-present”, the time period in which making an action has the power to affect the present situation. With reflection-on-action, however, professionals “think back on a project they have undertaken, a situation they have lived through, and they explore the understandings they have brought to
their handling of the case” (36). Through an examination of the critical instances that forced a calibration of my creative practice in the action-present—i.e., during production of *Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible*—as well as through the lens of hindsight, I aim to investigate key filmmaking strategies from both reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action perspectives.

By adopting a practice-based and self-reflexive approach to my research, I feel empowered and emboldened in my aim to make an editor’s tacit knowledge (the ‘invisible art’ I refer to at the beginning of this chapter) explicit by way of documentary filmmaking processes.
1.8 Structure of Exegesis

The explicit goal of Chapters 2–4 is to offer detailed insight into the processes involved in developing, directing and producing an Australian documentary intended to illustrate the working life and creative contributions of acclaimed film editor Jill Bilcock.

In Chapter 2: Writing the Life of a Film Editor, I address the first research sub-question. I examine how I decided on using a biographical method to guide my research into the life and career of Jill Bilcock and to explore why Bilcock’s biography and rich creative contributions to the art of film editing make her a suitable subject for a dedicated long-form biographical documentary. Reasons for the historical lack of texts and documentaries that delve deep into individual film editors’ creative lives are discussed, before concluding the chapter by demonstrating why an exploration of Jill Bilcock’s creativity and collaborative approaches is enhanced by testimonies from film directors who have worked closely with her.

In Chapter 3: Strategies in Audio-visual Representation of Jill Bilcock’s Life and Craft, I address research sub-questions two through six. I discuss documentary filmmaking methods central to the gathering and filming of audio-visual artefacts that could exemplify Bilcock’s personal and professional journey. After exploring the phenomenon of editors who (like me) decide to try their hand at directing, I present how crucial industry and financial support for Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible was managed. The process of capturing stories and visible evidence related to Jill’s past and present-day life is explored, followed by a study of methods involved in interviewing many of Jill’s closest collaborators—including directors, actors, producers, assistants and composers. A look at the picture editorial processes involved in the creation of the documentary’s broadcast and theatrical versions rounds out this chapter.

Chapter 4: Archival Pursuits, addresses sub-questions seven and eight. Here I present the methods used to unearth and secure access to the audio-visual and music archive included in the studio work. The chapter commences with a description of the search for vision that could informatively and entertainingly illustrate Jill Bilcock’s evolution as a film artist and her place at the nexus of the revival of Australian cinema in the 1960 and 1970s. I outline the processes involved in gaining access to rare and previously unseen behind-the-scenes footage of Bilcock editing. The chapter then examines the process involved in securing access to over forty minutes of fiction film archive from thirteen of the feature films she has edited.
Strategies for securing rights to use over fifty minutes of commercial music in the documentary ends this archive-focused chapter.

Finally, in the Conclusion, I summarise how my research and production processes—with an acknowledgement of the archival licensing strategies that allowed a rich array of film footage and commercial music to be included in the studio work—contribute vital new knowledge about how individual film editors’ creative lives and contribution to filmmaking can be better recognised, appreciated, and—crucially—made more visible. I also point towards the possibilities and limitations for future researchers who seek to investigate film editors’ biographies through the production of a long-form documentary.
CHAPTER 2: WRITING THE LIFE OF A FILM EDITOR

Most film biographies fail not because the authors do not know how to write, or have not done their homework, but because they do not have a strong knowledge of the medium in which their subject works. (Eliot in Beauchamp et al. 2013, 21)

Much of the initial trust placed in me by Jill Bilock relied on our shared view that editing craft was not being afforded nearly enough attention in discussions about how films are made. Yet, this common ground would not be enough to sustain a lengthy biographer–subject relationship. To produce a documentary about her, I needed to prove—to her as well as to myself—that putting her life in the spotlight was the key to unlocking a richer debate about film editing.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the 2012 editing symposium at GFS had shown that Jill thoroughly enjoyed an audience. She had the ability—rare in editors—to vividly share insightful twists and turns from her own life and career with a group of total strangers. In a creative domain where it is not unusual for even the most successful of editors to be described as “an introverted and cautious individual” (Rosenblum and Karen 1986, 2) who prefer to display their mastery of craft discreetly rather than publicly, Jill certainly stood out. When interviewing her on camera for the first time, it also became evident that her stage presence could be successfully translated to the screen.

Yet, while her personality and work seemed to glow with confidence and fearlessness, she did not shy away from admitting to her own insecurities as an editor, openly confiding that “editing a film is nothing short of terrifying” (Friedman 1999, 21). This unexpected mix of behind-the-scenes trepidation and extrovert candour—one of her public masterclasses had even been described as being “liberally juiced with on-set gossip and anecdotes” (The Sydney Morning Herald 1997, 57)—certainly intrigued me. Adding to this intrigue were early, tantalising hints from Jill’s collaborators that her choice of occupation was intrinsically linked to her personality. In an email, Elizabeth (1998) director Shekhar Kapur wrote to me about his experiences working with Jill: “No one knows better how to turn the chaos of life into a series of recognizable patterns and finally into the harmony of a complete story. Perhaps it is
because Jill is still trying to find the pieces of her life and making sense of them” (Kapur, email to the author, 27 October 2012). Such evocative observations, hinting at a potentially potent interplay between Bilcock’s biography and her artistic expression, further signalled that a deeper exploration of her craft was warranted.

Creating discernible and instructive patterns from such an eventful life and a multi-faceted career that spans five decades and has (so far) yielded over forty feature films was quite the task. But I felt that the years I had spent in an editing room—quietly but intensely studying and interpreting people’s behaviour, organising and obsessing over captured intricacies of unrehearsed moments of life—would serve me well when attempting to synthesise Jill Bilcock’s sprawling story. However, before I could retreat to the relative safety of an editing room to conjure up an insightful illustration of Jill’s creative practice, I first had to locate, generate and capture the many audio-visual pieces required to write her life on the screen.

As someone primarily used to responding to and shaping the visions and materials of others, I anxiously approached the unfamiliar responsibility of hunting and gathering the many “light-gleams of reality” (Lee 2009, 57) required to write a distinctive screen biography of Jill. Showcasing clear audio-visual evidence of her creativity also meant negotiating for archival access with film producers, Hollywood studios and litigious-prone music rights owners. Doubts and questions accumulated. What processes and collaboration would I need in order to translate raw, initial enthusiasm for my subject into a sustained, serious and industry-supported documentary enquiry? Having been told by a top Australian TV commissioning editor that “watching an editor work is boring”, what production financing avenues should I explore? What strategies would help convince Jill’s collaborators it was worthwhile to step into my documentary’s confession booth? How would I ensure that my fascination for Jill’s work and persona did not get mired in hagiography and professional specificity only appealing to those already ‘in the know’?

In short, what kind of biographer did I want to be?
2.1 The Purposes and Dangers of Biography

The word *biography* is a merger of the Greek words *bios* (life) and *graphia* (writing). Despite its seeming straightforwardness (i.e., ‘life writing’), it has been defined in many and various ways throughout history. Since rather quaint beginnings in 1683—“the history of individual men, as a branch of literature” (*Oxford English Dictionary* 1971)—more recent definitions of biography hint at new and varied ways of sharing the story of individual lives with an audience, including by way of documentary filmmaking.

Nigel Hamilton, in describing biography as “creative and non-fictional output devoted to recording and interpreting real lives” (2007, 1), alludes to the fact that stories about real people’s lives are today being disseminated through many other means than published texts. With biographies ranking high on book bestseller charts and featuring prominently on video-on-demand services ‘most popular’ lists, it is unsurprising that the “transmission of personality” (Hamilton 2007, 15) is now seen as “the dominant narrative mould of our times” (Lee 2009, 17). The popularity of historical ‘bio-pics’ that dramatise the lives of the famous (and infamous), film documentaries about significant public figures (bio-docs), television channels devoted solely to biographical content, and the prominence of ‘real lives’ strands on streaming services and international film festivals clearly show that there is an enormous appetite for experiencing and consuming biography in non-literary ways.

When Samuel Johnson, the “philosopher-father of literary biography” (Hamilton 2007, 88), described biography’s purpose as allowing the audience to “empathise with, or project onto, the life portrayed” (89), he unknowingly provided a beautifully prescient description of what lies at the core of the film editor’s experience. As I reflect on the feature documentaries I have edited and produced since graduating film school, it is humbling to consider that I owe my career to our time’s insatiable interest for biographical content. Formulating and making sense of the lives of others has given shape and purpose to my own. Each documentary I have edited has been a highly collaborative attempt at condensing and presenting fascinating lives, be it that of an Iranian refugee, an elderly Australian war veteran, a love-struck puppeteer, a filmmaker searching for his childhood heroes, an Aboriginal ballet dancer, a non-conformist Catholic priest, or a farmer fighting to keep mining companies off his land. Revealing, packaging and presenting lives was, in fact, my life. And yet, in attempting to encourage
audiences to relate to Jill’s professional life, a new and unfamiliar balancing-act presented itself: How could I illustrate a film editor’s contribution to filmmaking through a long-form biographical documentary film—the question at the centre of my research—without my deep affinity for my subject’s craft resulting in a project appealing only to the initiated?

With Johnson’s empathetical purpose of biography comes tension: a “tug-of-war between idealisation and critical interpretation” (Hamilton 2007, 32). Throughout history, heroic commemoration of individual lives has been used as propaganda to forge national, religious and social identity. Medieval authors of hagiographies—the biography of saints—resorted to mythologizing individual lives to trumpet religious values. Roman biographers lauded past figures to reinforce a steely belief in the empire’s visions. In the present day, political and commercial interests often influence the commissioning, shape and content of biographies. However, the yearning for real and relatable lived experiences as a way to understand our own lives has continuously acted as a counterbalance to the authoring of purely idealistic biographical portraits. By subjecting an individual life to rigorous critical study, and inviting multiple perspectives, it is hoped that the motives behind a person’s actions can be more fully understood.

In Biography and Education: A Reader (Erben 1998), the purpose of biographical research is framed as having both general and specific purposes. The general purpose of biographical research is to provide a greater insight into “the nature and meaning of individual lives or groups of lives”, whereas the specific purpose of such research is to analyse a “particular life or lives for some designated reason” (4). Exactly how I could define and pursue general and specific purposes in terms of a writing of Jill Bilcock’s life weighed heavily on my mind during development and production of Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible.

I do not want doc to seem ‘worthy’ or [to be] preaching to the choir. How [can I] open up the subject of editing so the [film editor’s] process can come across as exhilarating and adventurous as it really is? (Author’s research notes, 1 April 2013)

Although I knew from the outset that it would be a challenge to entice international, non-cinephile audiences to pay attention to a documentary about a relatively unknown Australian film editor, I felt that Bilcock’s charismatic personality and her association with so many
well-known films and notable film professionals would help in this regard. Hence, the general purpose felt clear and achievable. Much more difficult, however, would be having audiences emerge from a screening of the documentary with a deeper understanding of what film editors actually do in the editing room. This I designated as my specific purpose. But how could I do justice to Jill’s professional journey, while simultaneously conveying critical insights about film editing? Achieving a symbiotic relationship between general and specific purposes seemed key to my efforts.

As Bilcock’s audio-visual biographer—the agent through which her life was being filtered and written—I set out to strike a balance between the four guiding biographical forces that Johnson and Erben proposed. To succeed, my portrait would need to combine commemoration and critical interpretation of Jill’s life, without losing track of the general and specific purposes that drew me to her craft.

To shed her ‘invisibility’ as a film editor would clearly require a forceful display of her extraordinary artistry and pronounced evidence of her venerated industry standing, but if I sung her praises too loudly, my efforts could easily be waved off as superficial hagiography. Sensing a saintly treatment might be on the cards, Jill in fact expressed her scepticism to me in an early interview:

I’m not sure why I am doing this. But hopefully it is good to show what an editor can do with a story. And also because there’s so much in the backroom; it shows how much influence you can have and also just gives a bit more kudos to a job that I think is a little underrated. (Bilcock in Grigor 2012)

As discussed at the outset of this chapter, allowing frank exchanges regarding the raison d’etre for the whole project were crucial in gaining Jill’s trust in me as her biographer. It has been argued that the writing of a life is not done primarily to generate a “human record but debate” (Hamilton 2007, 33). Through Jill’s frequent pushback to my occasional hagiographical tendencies, I kept being reminded of the instigating force behind my research interest: using long-form documentary to open a wider public discussion about the film editor’s influence on, and authorship of, the motion picture experience.
As mentioned in the literature review in Chapter 1, out of the three previous feature-length documentaries that have been produced about film editors and their art, only one is devoted to a discussion about a singular editor’s professional methods and experience: *Murch: Walter Murch on Editing* (Ichioka 2007). Constructed mainly out of “an extended interview with Murch at his Paris home” (Valentin 2007), Murch’s professorial tone and the film’s sole reliance on its subject’s ideas makes the viewer feel as though they “are sitting in school” (Rietvink 2007). While undoubtedly fascinating to those already aware and deeply appreciative of Murch’s great contributions to the fields of picture and sound editing, the film lacked the level of witness accounts and layman’s accessibility that I wanted my biography of Jill Bilcock to aim for, and that I felt her industry position deserved.

2.2 The Case for Jill

The decision to centre my practice-based research efforts on producing an audio-visual biography of Jill Bilcock’s career and craft is pertinent from personal, industrial and cultural standpoints.

My early development as a filmmaker owes a large debt to the Australian-produced feature films that beamed onto Swedish cinema screens in the 1990s. The joyful, rebellious and narratively dangerous streak found in films like *Strictly Ballroom, Muriel’s Wedding, Romeo + Juliet, Priscilla: Queen of the Desert, Bad Boy Bubby* and *Shine* appealed to me enormously. As a film student beginning to look closer at film editing, I noticed that Jill Bilcock’s name featured in the opening credits of many of the Australian titles I had enjoyed. Her decisive, musical, innovative editing felt like something to aspire to in my own work.

While cutting several montage sequences in *Donkey in Lahore* (K-Rahber 2007) I tried emulating her display of fast editing in film such as *Romeo + Juliet* and *Moulin Rouge!*

During the cutting of some of the zanier scenes in *My America* (Hegedus 2011), Jill’s comedic timing in *Muriel’s Wedding* were also an inspiring touchstone. Admiration soon turned into professional curiosity. What processes did she employ to create her beautiful coherence from the chaos of material that arrives in the editing room? How were her editing skills developed and honed?
Noted for her “daring and ingenuity, and ability to win the hearts and trust of every director she has worked with” (Gilson 2012), Jill Bilcock AC is widely regarded as one of Australia’s most influential film editors. Having edited six of the twenty highest grossing Australian feature films of all time (Screen Australia 2020), she is also one of the country’s most commercially successful film editors.

She has been nominated for an Academy Award (in 2002, for her editing of *Moulin Rouge!*), received four BAFTA Awards nominations, and won the prestigious ACE award in 2002 for *Moulin Rouge!* She has been the recipient of several lifetime achievement awards, including the AFI Byron Kennedy Award, AFI International Award and IF Awards Lifetime Achievement Award. The year following the theatrical release of my documentary about her, she was appointed a Companion of the Order of Australia in recognition of her eminent contributions to the nation.

For eminent service to the Australian motion picture industry as a film editor, to the promotion and development of the profession, as a role model, and through creative contributions to the nation’s cultural identity. (Governor-General 2018)
Bilcock’s role in the re-emergence of an Australian feature film industry in the late 1960s and 1970s adds a further layer of urgency to the telling of her story. With many of Australia’s ‘new wave’ cinema pioneers of the 1960s and 1970s now aged in their seventies and eighties, the time to collect their personal histories and industry perspectives is fast running out. To safeguard the future development of the nation’s film industry, seeking new ways to engage in the creative act of recording and passing on film pioneers’ personal stories and knowledge is key.

Although I wanted my biography about Jill to focus predominantly on her professional life, I felt that in order for the audience to appreciate her standing as a pathbreaker in the Australian film industry, it also needed to touch on more personal aspects. Key to understanding her artistic evolution is the fact that she was part of the group of students who, in 1968, graduated from Australia’s first film course at Swinburne Technical College in Melbourne. With a curriculum designed by film lecturer Brian Robinson to create strong, resourceful artistic egos, where limited equipment “was handed to students to do as they liked” (Paterson 1996, 49), Jill charted a highly experimental path through Swinburne, culminating in the production of her short film *Human Rights*, which she finished cutting at home on the kitchen table (Gilson 2012). This project brought her to the attention of film director Fred Schepisi, who promptly invited her to join his commercial film production company The Film House, which was housed in an old church in Fitzroy, Melbourne. Paid thirty dollars a week and told by Schepisi that she was free to “do whatever you like” (Bilcock in Grigor 2017), Jill would soon gravitate towards the responsibilities of the editing room, preferring its visual and rhythmical environment over the jumble of production demands faced by crews out on location and in the studio.

Bilcock’s steadfast employment at The Film House during the 1960s and 1970s placed her in the front row of the explosive cinematic creativity that would later be dubbed the “Australian new wave” (Sheckels 1998). During this period, she edited hundreds of television and cinema commercials—for Schepisi and others—and made important contributions to landmark Australian feature films such as *The Devil’s Playground* (Schepisi 1976) and *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* (Schepisi 1978). Establishing an appreciation for her development as a filmmaker and editor during these ‘renegade’ years would thus appear crucial when attempting to decode her “audacious and daring” (Pearlman 2016, 216) editing choices on
display in the big-budget feature films—such as Romeo + Juliet, Moulin Rouge! and Road to Perdition—that she would craft several decades later.

Despite her intimate association with a long list of successful and visible productions, coupled with her track record of successfully teaming up with directors of such varying creative temperament, it is frustrating to read that Jill “remains relatively unknown outside the film community” (IMDb.com 2022). The following section will demonstrate that the historical reasons for film editors’ ‘invisibility’ are varied and troubling, but when considering that a leading Australian film producer regards Bilcock as “one of the most significant Australian screen practitioners ever” (Maslin in Grigor 2016e), the limited spotlight on her life and contributions takes on a further dimension of neglect.

2.3 Film Editors’ Biographical Invisibility

Given that the film editor is regarded, along with the director and cinematographer, as “one of the three major contributors to the quality of a motion picture” (Brownlow 1976, 280), and film editing has been called the invention “that allowed film to take off” (Murch in Apple 2004), the historical lack of literary and non-literary texts about the creative lives of individual film editors is troubling.

The realisation that “the editor’s craft has been mostly unimagined and certainly overlooked” (Ondaatje 2002, xi), coupled with his intimate observation of a master film editor at work, is what led Michael Ondaatje to write The Conversations: Walter Murch and the Art of Editing. In seeking to establish a historical cause for editors’ low visibility in texts about the act of filmmaking, Ondaatje borrows a poignant quote from Dai Vaughan’s Portrait of an Invisible Man: The Working Life of Stewart McAllister, Film Editor (1983), arguably one of the most forceful literary attempts at rescuing an editor from obscurity: “There was no tradition to draw upon, no corpus of received wisdom: simply no way of talking about films which would enable the editor’s work to be mentioned” (Vaughan 1983, 6). A further reason for editors’ anonymity on biographical shelves can, in turn, be gleaned in Roger Crittenden’s review of Dai Vaughan’s experimental biography of Stewart McAllister: “It is surprising to see a book by a film editor about another film editor, because the work of the editor has never been given
the status which would justify a book on the subject” (Crittenden 1984). Unfortunately, the book is now out of print.

Gabriella Oldham, who, like Crittenden, has written several interview-based books that reveal the experiences of highly regarded film editors, indicates that a lack of celebrity status and misconceptions about editors’ work plays a part in their low visibility: “Many people cannot define what film editors are or do. This is understandable, for editors have never been celebrities” (Oldham 1992, 1). Oldham notes that the poor name recognition of film editors also is due to “inadequate perceptions of the industry and audience—as well as some of the practitioners themselves” (4). One of the possible exceptions is Walter Murch, owing to his influential and oft-referenced texts about film editing and sound design, as well as his close association with American filmmakers such as George Lucas and Francis Ford Coppola.

In one of the few articles Jill Bilcock has written about her work, she confirms that basic misconceptions swirl around the editor’s work, and that she often gets asked “So what exactly do you do? Do you cut out the bad bits, you know, the rude bits?” (Bilcock in Metro 1993, 53). Danish film editor Vinca Wiedemann confirms that blatant ignorance of editors’ contributions can also be found closer to home, writing that “it is a cause of frequent amusement and/or irritation, that film reviewers are never able to point out the editor’s contribution” (Wiedemann 1998), a fact I have frequently heard bemoaned by my fellow Australian film editors at informal ASE gatherings.

While many film editors have speculated that the key reason for their profound obscurity is a result of being dedicated servants to “the art that conceals art” (Trombetta in Hullfish 2013, 274), there are also those who point out that their job tends to “overlap the director’s” (Rosenblum and Karen 1986, 66–67). Following our first meeting at the symposium in Brisbane, Jill offered her thoughts on why ignorance of the editor’s contributions persevered: “I think it is the director who wants the editor’s craft to be a hidden art, nobody else! Because they feel that it takes a little bit away from their leadership in this area” (Bilcock in Grigor 2012). Voicing his own frustrations about the lack of acknowledgement for editors’ ‘hidden’ contributions, Australian film editor Jason Ballantine has stated:
I do have a love/hate relationship with one aspect: I love the fact of my knowingness, that I'm the only one who knows the internal structure of the film. My frustration is that everyone, apart from the director, will never fully be able to appreciate it. (Ballantine in Hohnberg 2007)

Similarly, American film editor Christopher Rouse has stated that unlike many other aspects of filmmaking, editing cannot be judged at face value, because “you do not know what the totality of the material was, and you do not know the working dynamic between a director and an editor” (Rouse 2008). A much closer scrutiny of this collaborative process appeared to be key in bringing individual editors’ names out into the light. As shown in the next chapter, reaching out to as many of Jill’s directors as possible become central to my biographical approach.

The shadow cast by directors over the contributions of editors and other key film creatives is also noticeable in the world of academia. In David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson’s widely used and influential textbook Film Art: An Introduction (Thompson and Bordwell 1993), it is acknowledged that editing “shapes viewers’ experiences” (247) and that “certain studio workers leave recognizable and unique traces on the films they make” (30). The authors make it clear, however, that they ultimately hold the director’s influence over a film’s creative outcome in a special regard, stating that “the principal creative decisions rest with the filmmaker” (22). The prevalence of director-skewed filmmaking discussions at film schools is noted by Joseph McBride, who writes that “most academic curricula are still organized around directors, and screenwriters and other collaborators rarely get the discussion they should have in schools” (McBride in Beauchamp et al. 2013, 22). Indeed, this ‘auteur-focused’ tendency had marked my experience as a film student as well.

Vaughan (1983) argues that film auteurism—ascribing a film’s authorship primarily to that of the director (Bazin 1957)—is a major reason why film editors have largely been relegated to the sidelines in critical discussions about filmmaking. He feels that the avid championing of the director-as-author narrative, espoused by influential theorists and critics such as André Bazin, Andrew Sarris and Pauline Kael, has “set the seal of academic approval upon the exclusion of ‘technicians’ from all other discourses: and film, the most collaborative of the arts, is stuck with a literature which cannot at any level handle the idea of collaboration”
Acclaimed British film editor Anthony Gibbs (*Fiddler on the Roof, A Bridge Too Far, Tom Jones*) argues that auteurism’s fixation on the director’s contribution has outlived its usefulness due to filmmaking’s increasingly collaborative nature:

The auteur situation, I do not think it really works today, because there is just so much collaboration and there is so much technicality involved in all of it, and you can not expect any director today to know what every section of every department is doing. (Gibbs, quoted in Perkins and Stollery 2004, 118)

Refreshingly, it is not difficult finding directors who align themselves with the anti-auteur position asserted by Vaughan and Gibbs. In his autobiography, director Michael Powell laments that all the “yapping over the years about the film director, the film auteur” (Powell 1986, 315) has made it very difficult for the public to realise that much of a film’s success stems from the intricate work taking place after the camera stops rolling. Director Paul Greengrass has stated that “film editors are authors, they are filmmakers, they are at the heart of the process” (Greengrass quoted in Deadline 2014). In my interview with him, director Kriv Stenders echoed this view when describing Jill’s far-reaching authorial influence on the films that she edits: “I think Jill’s what I call a total filmmaker. She knows so much about everything. She has the ability to have a holistic view and at the same time a very precise one” (Stenders in Grigor 2012b).

To address the lingering and counter-productive invisibility of film editors by way of biography, a willingness from both directors and editors to share intimate details from their joint authoring process appeared crucial.

### 2.4 Revealing the Collaborative Film Editor

If I try to choose from the content, it never works for me. It has to be: can I work with that director? (Bilcock in Grigor 2013)

Karen Pearlman has described editing as “the skill that transforms any mass of material to a coherent story” (Pearlman 2016, ix). *How* this skill gets applied, however, is inherently bound
to the individual editor’s prior professional experiences and the unique set of technical, creative and interpersonal factors that the editor encounters on any given project. Although a script, treatment or even footage might exist before an editor agrees to join a film production, the collaborative rules of engagement in the editing room can be vastly different from one project to the next.

A successful director–editor relationship frequently gets compared to a marriage (DGA 2004), owing to the trust and time that directors and editors invest into their intense collaboration. Once coupled, such partnerships can last many films and span several decades. As demonstrated by her diverse filmography, Bilcock has successfully managed this collaborative balancing act time and time again. As she puts it: “Every film is a new experience and you have to go into it to try and find how that director would like to express themselves first before you start adding your own bits of information or style or ideas” (Bilcock in Siemienowicz 2009). Jill’s longstanding collaboration with director Baz Luhrmann, resulting in the films Strictly Ballroom, Romeo + Juliet and Moulin Rouge!, has rightly received much attention. Less known is that Jill has consistently throughout her career sought to collaborate with directors embarking on their very first feature film. As will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3, elevating the stories of new talent—for example, Richard Lowenstein, Baz Luhrmann, P. J. Hogan, Ana Kokkinos—and enabling them to gain a foothold within the industry is a recurring theme in her professional life.

In my interview with director Ana Kokkinos, Bilcock’s ability to modulate her approach depending on the needs of the director was highlighted: “I think she works differently with every director. For the period of the film, it’s kind of like we’re sort of joined at the hip” (Kokkinos in Grigor 2016b). Bilcock has stated that “in many ways editing is trying to understand what the director’s vision is and then to surprise them by going further than their vision” (McGrath 2001, 145). When showcasing her collaborative skills, her ability to modulate and accentuate the visions of many different filmmakers would be important. Pearlman playfully refers to the coalescing of the editor’s and the director’s minds during the intense process of film editing as the “Vulcan Mind Meld” (Pearlman 2016, 220). In a close, synchronous collaboration, it is as if the editor has the power to tap into the mind of the director—akin to the Vulcan character Spock’s abilities in Star Trek (Roddenberry 1966)—sensing immediately what is required to achieve the director’s vision. Schepisi, whom Bilcock
has referred to as one of her most important early mentors (Bilcock in Grigor 2013), has expressed a great admiration for Jill’s ability to guide promising new talent without imposing her own will on their filmmaking vision (Schepisi in Grigor 2016c). Bilcock’s nurturing of talent also extends to the many editing assistants she has employed over the years. To convey what has driven Jill’s editing decision-making in particular films, as well as her choice of projects throughout her career, Jill’s love of mentoring and teaching new talent felt important to express on screen.

In my own editing practice, I have often questioned why the connection between successful end results and an open, mutually respectful and inquisitive director–editor dialogue has not been more widely interrogated in post-release discussion about a film’s birthing process. By placing this creative relationship at the heart of my investigation of Bilcock’s life and approaching the writing of her biography in the ways an editor does a film project—as a collaboration that builds on the skills and voices of others—I hoped to contribute a rich, visible and widely accessible representation of not just a life but an artform deserving wider recognition. With the origin and objectives of my biographical pursuits defined, and sensing that the medium of documentary held great promise for an attempt to make visible Bilcock’s working life, it was time to fully immerse myself in the tasks of directing.
CHAPTER 3: STRATEGIES IN AUDIOVISUAL REPRESENTATION OF
JILL BILCOCK’S LIFE AND CRAFT

People always think if you start out as a film editor, you shoot less footage. Actually, just the opposite is true. I tend to grab as much coverage as I can because as a former editor I know how important it is to have those few frames. (Robert Wise in Keenan 2007, 172)

3.1 The Editor as Director

As a film editor, my development as a storyteller and craftsperson has been closely tied to the visions, ambitions and temperament of the directors I have worked with. But to represent Jill Bilcock’s life on screen, a dramatic shift was needed. This time, I would no longer be the recipient, the shaper of someone else’s raw materials. I had to be the primary generator. To reach my end goal, I needed to transition from editor to director, while ensuring that my accumulated knowledge as an editor informed my actions and decisions in the field. The steps I took in order to overcome this hurdle during the production and post-production of Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible are the focus of this chapter.

Cutting rooms have been called “easily the finest grounding for film direction” (Sloman 1999). Film history contains many great examples of editors who have successfully transitioned to the director’s chair. Dorothy Arzner’s (uncredited!) editing ingenuity on Rudolph Valentino–starrer Blood and Sand (Niblo 1922) led to a successful, five-decade-long career as a Hollywood film director and her becoming the first woman to join the Directors Guild of America. Robert Wise, editor of Citizen Kane (Welles 1941) and The Magnificent Ambersons (Welles 1942), would go on to win Best Director Academy Awards for both West Side Story (1961) and The Sound of Music (1965). Before directing cinematic landmarks such as Bridge on the River Kwai (1957) and Lawrence of Arabia (1962), David Lean’s expertise in the editing room made him known as “a sort of film doctor” (Brownlow 1996, 85), with director Michael Powell referring to him as “the best editor I have ever worked with—or should I say worked for?” (Powell 1986, 379). If we add further well-known editor-turned-director names to this hallowed list—such as Hal Ashby, Edward Dmytryk, George Lucas and
Don Siegel—it is clear that a deep and practical understanding of how the mosaic art of cinema springs alive in the editing room is very beneficial to a new director.

Ken Dancyger points to an aptitude for establishing narrative clarity and pace in a film as defining reasons why editors often succeed as directors (Dancyger 2002, 82). He argues that film editors’ fluency in the visual language of cinema—knowing how individual shots are effectively put together to create compelling scenes—explains why they often find it easier to transition to directing, when compared to screenwriters and cinematographers. Film editor Joe Bini, the long-time collaborator of Werner Herzog, echoes this view: “I look at cinema as a language, and we editors are the people who are the most proficient in that language. We speak it the best” (Bini in Oldham 2012, 129). By being skilful at translating narrative ideas into effective editing solutions—sensing the effects of the final audio-visual artefact while it is being composed—it seems an editor-turned-director can be a valuable asset during a film’s principal photography.

However, succeeding as a director—regardless of entering a fiction or non-fiction arena—requires more than a well-developed knack for interpreting and conversing in cinema’s native tongue. Apart from pure cinematic knowhow, directors should also be able to impart a vision succinctly and successfully to cast and crew, through both word and performance (Rea and Irving 2015, 247). Whereas editors have a penchant for creating in relative isolation, directors must take charge and lead a large group of people in a variety of places, and often in unpredictable situations. When fiction directors try to convey the essence of their job, analogies such as being “the captain of a ship” or that directing is like “planning a battle” (Weir 1981) abound. Using less hawkish jargon, Angelina Jolie has said that “the multi-tasking of motherhood transfers very well to being a director […] I think you’re compassionate.” (Jolie in Radish 2011). Regardless of the metaphor used, the type of creative and interpersonal leadership skills required on a fiction film set differs in scope and temperament from what is normally needed in a sparsely populated editing room. In my first interview with Jill Bilcock, she made no mystery of her admiration for directors’ leadership skills and why she much prefers being an editor, calling the difficult task of controlling the behaviour of cast and crew “a horrific job” (Bilcock in Grigor 2013). Although directors in the non-fiction domain might face leadership challenges on another scale than what’s required by fiction directors, both are equally expected to display a high level of competency in
shepherding a vision from idea to completion. Taking this into account, while also considering that editors are known to gravitate towards editing because the solitary and analytical nature of editing suits their contemplative personality (Angelo Carrao in Oldham 2012, 37), it is clear that one needs more than technical and storytelling aptitude to successfully transition from editing to directing.

Within the observational documentary realm I was accustomed to operating in—where production teams often total no more than two or three people (Rabiger 2015, 5), where budgets are relatively small, and where production schedules can stretch over several years—asserting directorial control becomes less about leading a vast army into organised battle and more about having an ability to nurture intimate creative relationships robust enough to survive a drawn-out campaign. For some documentary directors, asserting leadership on a project means they need to incorporate responsibilities traditionally associated with other key creatives’ skillsets into their own practice. This weighed heavily on my mind as I began this project.

Alan Berliner has stated that an editor’s mindset is an integral part of his overall filmmaking approach, stating that “over the years, my process for generating ideas, and enacting them, and putting them together has become extremely integrated and fluid” (Berliner in Oldham 2012, 172). In Writing, Directing, and Producing Documentary Films and Digital Videos, Rosenthal and Eckhart (2015) go one step further, declaring that “most directors of any worth are also apt to be competent editors” (209). The widely held view that documentary stories are essentially created in the editing room (Bricca 2018, xi) also means that documentary editors-turned-directors can bring a writer’s acumen to the directorial chair. Film editor Jonathan Oppenheim refers to the writing function of a documentary editor as being one of the most thrilling aspects of the job, going as far as to argue that in documentary “the editor is the screenwriter” (Oppenheim in Oldham 2012, 103). This realisation—that advanced practical editing experience can form the backbone of successful forays into documentary direction—was great comfort to me as my team and I sought to attract financial support for this project.
3.2 Attracting Support and Funds

As detailed in the opening chapter, on major documentary projects produced by Faraway Productions, the production company I run together with my filmmaking partner Faramarz K-Rahber, the two of us typically share the producer credit. The same model was applied on Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible. Hence, my metamorphosis involved not just going from editor to director, but also to that of director-producer. An exploration of key production strategies required to put Jill Bilcock’s life on the screen must therefore be viewed through this wider context.

Dear Sue,

I write to inform you that Jill Bilcock has kindly given me the green light to depict her colourful life, extraordinary career and approach to editing craft in a long-form documentary. As a fellow editor and fan of her work I could not be more thrilled about this opportunity.

A major aim of the project is to take viewers inside her editing room, to see her craft and collaborative processes in action. She speaks very highly of you and Jocelyn [Moorehouse] and has suggested that 'The Dressmaker' would be the perfect opportunity to do this.

(Email from the author to Sue Maslin, 2 November 2013)

The adage that you are only as good as your team was at the forefront of my mind when Faramarz and I paid a visit to Melbourne-based film producer Sue Maslin in November 2013. Although Faramarz and I had produced a number of broadcast projects, we felt that a more experienced hand, preferably based in Jill’s home state of Victoria, was required in order to guide our efforts and help raise production finance of the scale needed for this project.

Maslin’s own mission in documentary filmmaking resonated with us:

When you're working with real people, it’s not enough just to be curious about their story, there is also another layer that is about caring enough about their story to hopefully peel away the mythologies and the surface memories to really get to below the surface about what it is that actually really happened and tap into why they now
want to tell you that story. And why you’ve been given the privilege of being able to communicate that story to others. (Maslin in Argall 2012)

Sue had collaborated with Jill multiple times in the past—most notably on the AFI-winning *Japanese Story* (Brooks 2003), which Jill cut and Sue produced—and I knew that they were scheduled to join forces again on the feature film adaptation of Rosalie Ham’s celebrated book *The Dressmaker* (Moorhouse 2015). Sue’s long and close affiliation with Jill, the extraordinary quality and reach of the documentaries she had produced through her and Daryl Dellora’s production company Film Art Media—including titles such as *The Edge of The Possible* (Dellora 1988), *Hunt Angels* (Morgan 2006) and *Celebrity: Dominick Dunne* (de Garis and Jolley 2008)—plus the exciting prospect that she might help us gain access to Jill’s editing room on *The Dressmaker* compelled us to seek a formal collaboration with her on *Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible*.

After meeting us and inspecting some of the archive material we had gathered about Jill’s life, she felt confident that the unique relationship I had developed with Jill would “ensure the access essential for a compelling film” (Maslin 2013). She formally confirmed her interest to executive produce the documentary through a Letter of Interest, in which she specified that her contribution to the project would consist of:

1. Offering advice during the development phase of the project, including script and financing;
2. Reviewing the budget and advising on Producer Offset process;
3. Offering advice on production;
4. Providing assistance with filming access to *The Dressmaker* and negotiation of clip rights.

As will be detailed in Chapter 4, Sue’s advice and assistance regarding the clearance of clip rights would be particularly important when we realised exactly how much the completion and delivery of the documentary depended on showing extended passages from feature films Jill has edited.
With Sue committed to the project, it felt time to approach Mandy Chang, arts commissioning editor at the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) at the time. After receiving my two-page proposal (included as an appendix), along with the ASE Tribute to Jill (Grigor 2012a), portions of the filmed interview with Jill recorded in September 2013, as well as a selection of my previous documentary work, Mandy responded that she was happy to provide a Letter of Interest.

The ABC is interested in commissioning your documentary ‘Dancing the Invisible’ (length tbc) that will tell the story of one of Australia’s most accomplished and talented, but also unsung film editors, Jill Bilcock. As Jill edits her latest feature film based on the best-selling novel, The Dressmaker, starring Kate Winslet and Judy Davis and directed by Jocelyn Moorhouse, the film will reveal first-hand how she weaves her magic in the cutting room. We also discover how its story parallels her extraordinary life.

(Excerpt from Letter of Interest by Mandy Chang, ABC Arts Commissioning Editor, 2 December 2013)

In her letter, Mandy also specified that the ABC expected the documentary to include interviews with high-profile directors who had worked with Jill and that the film would feature a range of footage that unpacked shot-by-shot how some of her most famous scenes were put together.

Although Mandy made it clear in a follow-up email that the ABC would not be able to formally commit to commissioning the film until the following financial year, her letter did trigger the ability for us to apply for development funding from national film funding body Screen Australia, as well as state funding agencies Screen Queensland and Film Victoria. Up to this point, all development costs had been borne by my and Faramarz’s credit cards and private savings.

Although ABC’s Letter of Interest enabled us to attract $25,500 in development funding from the three funding bodies, it soon became clear that the broadcaster’s was wavering in their support for the film:
At this stage I think it is unlikely we would commission this film, despite Jill being a truly exceptional editor. Part of the issue is that the actual process of editing is not something that is exciting to watch unlike say cinematography—so the film relies much more on Jill herself and her story, which whilst interesting is not a portrait that we feel will sustain an hour.

(Email from Katrina Sedgwick, ABC Head of Arts, 20 January 2014)

This email from ABC’s Head of Arts, Mandy’s superior, highlighted my research problem. How do you make a biographical feature film portrait of a film editor, and a consummate one at that, while the craft of editing remains (unjustly!) perceived as less exciting to portray on screen? This short but pithy email message would keep cropping up in my discussions with Sue and Faramarz during the production period, reminding us that we were attempting to achieve something novel and that Jill’s story afforded us tremendous opportunity to change people’s minds about how editing and editors are perceived.

It would take another two years before a licence agreement could finally be signed with the ABC, but when we did it was only for a half-hour version that would eventually become part of a documentary series spotlighting significant Australian artists. The initial disappointment and frustrations that Faramarz, Sue, and I felt regarding this cautious, narrow stance by our national broadcaster only furthered our resolve to find alternate ways to finance and complete a feature-length version of the film.

Working within our minimal means—usually restricting the production crew to just myself (director) and Faramarz (cinematographer and sound recordist), relying on technical facilities and equipment I had access to via GFS thanks to my higher degree research studies, the continuous goodwill of Jill Bilcock and her partner Roger Savage, and having producers of other documentary projects I was editing accommodate my Jill-related absences—the two-year development period (2014–2015) saw us complete many of the interviews and observational filming that would eventually end up in both the half-hour ABC cut and the theatrical version.

By eventually positioning the film to meet the requirements of Screen Australia’s Producer Equity Program (PEP), we were able to raise a final budget of $231,060 for the ABC half-
hour version. Thanks to Sue’s persistent championing of a theatrical release, we managed to attract additional production funding from Screen Australia, Screen Queensland, Film Victoria, Film Art Media and Soundfirm in 2017. This allowed us to complete the feature-length version that, while produced on a budget much smaller than an ABC-commissioned feature documentary, premiered at the Adelaide Film Festival in October 2017—where it won the Audience Award—and received a theatrical national cinema release in July 2018.

3.3 Gathering Evidence of Jill’s Past

As discussed in the previous section, a critical aspect to the project gaining industry traction and financial support was providing clear proof to prospective collaborators that Jill had indeed placed her trust in me and was willing to provide us with previously unseen and unheard audio-visual evidence of her early life and formative years as a filmmaker. As her biographer, I also realised that without sufficient access to her private archives and engaging testimonials—by Jill, her close relatives and early mentors—about her irreverent early filmmaking days and adventures on the 1970s ‘hippie trail’, I would not be able to succeed in illustrating an effective account of her creative evolution and contributions to cinema through documentary filmmaking.

Prior attempts to introduce Jill to a larger audience—such as the aforementioned segments on SBS’s Movie Show and ABC’s arts programme Express—had not required Jill to invest a huge amount of her own time and energy into production. Tellingly, when asked on ABC TV’s ABC Breakfast morning show a few days before the 2018 cinema release of Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible, this is how she chose to describe my pursuit of her story:

Poor old Axel. He chased me around quarters. I thought I was going to do a weekend of, you know, one interview, and he ran after me for two years. He turned up in India, turned up in England, he slept in my studio. He was always there [laughs]. (Bilcock on ABC, 3 July 2018)

As stated in the introductory chapter, when I first approached Jill with the idea of making a documentary about her, I did not offer a grand vision of the project’s scope or what the endeavour would require of her in terms of access to her life and work processes. My
enthusiasm for learning more about Jill’s background and her contributions to the films I adored, overpowered my ability to think as a good producer. In hindsight, a relaxed approach turned out to be key in gaining her trust. Since our director–subject connection was forged from a shared love of editing it made sense to build a closer relationship on such grounds. A few weeks after the first filmed interview, I explained to her that I was not keen on moving too fast:

It definitely cannot be a quickie. Production would involve a series of shooting periods, spread out over at least a year. There will be observational shoots—several days in a row that we'll be embedded with you—as well as more formal sit-down interview sessions, with you and with people whose careers and films you've helped shape. (Email from author to Jill Bilcock, 28 September 2013)

I knew that it would take time to attract adequate development and production funding—money that we desperately needed to afford the amount of interstate and international travel required to film Jill at work, visit various archives and conduct interviews with her many collaborators—yet budgetary concerns were not my primary reason for seeking a longer production schedule. My experience in shaping long-form documentary narratives had repeatedly demonstrated that a successful long-term relationship between director and subject, built on a shared, open-minded and sustained enquiry about events in the subject’s past and present life, often seemed to generate extremely rich and expansive material. This arduous process was, in turn, intrinsically linked to my ability as editor to help the director create and effect meaning in the editing room. It only made sense to pursue a similar director–subject relationship with Jill.
On our second visit to Jill’s home in Melbourne, in early November 2013, the Sony FS5 we had borrowed from GFS barely left the camera bag. Whereas the first trip had focused on interviewing her about her past—discussing her childhood, arts background, formative film industry experiences, collaborations with directors and her approach to editing—the goal of this visit was to become closely acquainted with her private archives. Although we had planned to film her going through these papers and photos, it soon became clear that she preferred to discuss and rummage through her records off camera in order to protect the privacy of friends and collaborators.

In various print interviews and during the 2012 Revealing the Invisible Artist symposium, Jill had mentioned that travelling was integral to her development as film editor, that there was a special place in her heart for India and that she had acted in old Bollywood films. But exact details about where she had been and what she had experienced were scarce. So it was extraordinary to now see her fill her living room table with a vast amount of photos, by and of her, taken in India and on the South-East Asian ‘hippie trail’ during the early 1970s. Hearing her read passages from the thin aerogram letters she had sent to her mother and various friends underscored how deeply her stays in places like Bombay, Kerala, Calcutta, Khyber Pass, Kabul and Tehran had affected her. She kindly allowed me to borrow much of this material, which I consequently spent an entire night digitising in our hotel room using a
rapidly purchased scanner. In the years that followed, these letters and gorgeous black-and-white photos became a touchstone for my continued investigation of her life and creative temperament. It is entirely fitting that one of the photos of her that she showed me that day—a black-and-white profile headshot taken during her student days at Swinburne College—eventually wound up as the film’s key poster art.

Towards the end of 2013, my understanding of the role India plays in Jill’s life deepened when GFS funded my research trip to the 2013 Mumbai Film Festival, where Jill had been invited to serve as a jury member and guest of honour. Collaborating with two students from

Figure 6. Example items from Jill Bilcock’s private archive.
Mumbai’s Whistling Woods International film school, I managed to capture a few observational moments, such as Jill’s visit to the backpackers’ quarters where she stayed as a 20-year-old hippie, her being interviewed by local media and walking the red carpet together with her partner Roger Savage on the festival’s closing night. The various observational sequences I filmed of Jill and Roger in Mumbai would later prove extremely useful when illustrating Jill’s spoken description of Roger as an important stabilising force in a restless creative life.

Spending time with Jill and Roger in Mumbai also opened my eyes to how closely linked the couple’s professional careers are. As one of Australia’s most successful sound engineers and owner of Australian post-production facility Soundfirm—the place where Jill usually cuts her films—Roger has mixed most of the films Jill has edited. I learned that they had known each other since Jill’s days at The Film House, and that they were each other’s longest collaborator. Although Roger had initially resisted my proposition for an interview, our days together in Mumbai made me resolve that his perspective of Jill’s craft and creative temperament was crucial to include in the film.
Fortuitously, the India trip also afforded me the opportunity to interview Academy Award–winning film directors Bruce Beresford and Asghar Farhadi, who, like Jill, both served on the Mumbai festival’s jury that year. Since neither filmmaker had a professional affiliation with Jill—both interviews were conducted as part of a separate academic remit—they only appear fleetingly in the documentary: Beresford contributes a valuable statement about Jill’s venerated industry standing in the opening sequence, and Farhadi can be seen standing next to Jill at a Mumbai jury presentation. Regardless of their limited screen time in the film, hearing both men reflect on their early development as filmmakers helped reinforce the value of investigating established film artists’ professional journeys in a documentary milieu.

But it was not only her professional and romantic life I wanted to know about. Jill’s two brothers, Anthony (Tony) and Carl Stevenson, helped me fill in important details about her early years and their rather tumultuous upbringing in Horsham, Bairnsdale and Box Hill. When I interviewed them in Melbourne in May 2014, they provided family photos from the 1950s and 1960s that I had not come across in Jill’s private archive. Throughout the production and particularly during the editing, I would frequently turn to Tony whenever questions about the family timeline, the relationship the siblings had with their parents and how the family viewed Jill’s chosen career path arose.

During the development and production period (2014–2017), we recorded three additional, extensive interviews with Jill. The purpose of these interviews was mainly to gain more
precise insights into her contributions on specific films and the various editor–director relationships she had experienced, but it also gave us the chance to discuss the direction the documentary was heading in. Since Jill is an expert storyteller who easily smells a narrative rat—Baz Luhrmann has referred to her as his “bogus detector” (Urban 2004)—it made perfect sense to engage her in a dialogue about which aspects of the project that excited each of us the most.

Each interview with Jill followed a period of interviewing actors, directors, producers and directors with strong links to her career. Having heard their perspectives—of Jill, her craft and specific film moments—I was then able to pinpoint aspects of her life and craft that we had not previously discussed, or that had not been explored rigorously enough. Working this way, I hoped to ensure that Jill’s versions of events would be easily accessible during the editing of the documentary, and I would not have to rely solely on her collaborators’ memories to express certain ideas. Previous experience from editing interview-driven documentaries had also taught me that having access to multiple people’s perspectives on central themes and defining events in a key character’s life allowed me to edit dynamic sequences where interviewees appeared to evolve the narrative in concert. As director, I did not want to deny Scott Walton (who would edit the broadcast version) the opportunity to do the same when it came to advancing the audience’s understanding of Jill’s craft.

In addition to these interviews, I also secured full access to footage of a longer interview with Jill, conducted by Mandy Chang in London 2016, filmed for the ABC-supported documentary series David Stratton: A Cinematic Life (Aitken 2017). This was neatly arranged via a ‘quid pro quo’ deal that I struck with Stranger Than Fiction Films’ Jo-anne McGowan, producer of the Stratton series. We agreed that Faraway Productions would film and provide, free of charge, Baz Luhrmann’s replies to some questions penned by Sally Aitken while we were filming an interview for our project and in return, Stranger Than Fiction would give us complete access to their interview with Jill. This cooperative effort yielded some delightful anecdotes by Jill about the making of Strictly Ballroom (Luhrmann 1992), Muriel’s Wedding (Hogan 1994) and insights into her approach when editing comedy. In this way, being a producer as well as a director on the project was critical, as will be discussed further in the next chapter.
3.4 Observing Jill in the Present

The colourful and fascinating chapters in Jill’s personal and professional past might have sparked my desire to make a biographical documentary about her, but unless the documentary also managed to show that she remains an in-demand, hard-working and dynamic film editor, I felt I would fall short of my biographical and directorial goals.

As I will detail in the next chapter, the exorbitant costs of licensing motion picture and associated music archive material makes it extremely difficult for documentary filmmakers to reveal and do justice to film editors’ artistic imprint on cinema. The nerve-wracking uncertainties I faced regarding the production’s ability to access and afford footage from the films Jill had edited underscored the importance of not relying solely on interviews and archive to propel the story forward. Observational scenes of Jill in the present promised to ease this financial burden. Australian geography, however, complicated matters. Faramarz and I were based in Brisbane, 1500 kilometres north-east of Jill’s home in Melbourne. The cost of air travel, local transport and accommodation meant that impromptu or lengthy periods of observational filming would be much more expensive and logistically tricky than what we were accustomed to when documenting the lives of documentary subjects living in our own backyard.

Figure 10. Jill’s home and editing/guest studio in East Brunswick, Melbourne. Photo by author
As the project gained industry traction in 2014, Jill began voicing her unease with the film focusing so sharply on her. It was a delicate situation. Jill’s biography and perspective on editing was the prism through which I sought to dispel misconceptions about editing craft, but unless she felt comfortable that my intended observation of her served this larger aim, I feared her belief in the project’s aim would dissipate. A further, unforeseen barrier for observing Jill at work became obvious during my second interview with her. She stated, “I am very nervous about being on camera. Don’t like it. Don’t like to read reviews, or about myself. I’m not sure why I am doing this” (Bilcock in Grigor 2014).

Lest I would waste time, funds or Jill’s trust in me, I had to tread carefully. I had to find a way to proceed that would allow us to capture her working while respecting her feelings about how she wished to be portrayed and observed. As I expressed in my research notes at the time:

   We need to strike the right balance of intrusion when it comes to seeing Jill edit. I feel that being around all the time when she edits would really annoy her. And it would distract her. She needs her space to just create. But at the same time, we need to capture moments that give us a true insight into what editing is.

(Author’s research notes, 19 February 2014)

Given Jill’s busy schedule and her discomfort of being the subject of indiscriminate observational filming, I felt that a solution would be to focus on, and at times even design, real-time events that both Jill and I felt offered a valuable opportunity to expand knowledge and understanding of the editor’s contributions to the filmmaking process. The first chance to do this would present itself during post-production of the motion picture The Dressmaker (Moorhouse 2015).
With Jill and Sue having already expressed their support for my wish to document the editing process on *The Dressmaker*, I decided to reach out to director Jocelyn Moorhouse. To explain the project’s aim and secure her involvement in the documentary, Faramarz and I visited Jocelyn and P. J. Hogan’s Sydney home in May 2014. Having maintained a close friendship with Jill ever since the production of *Muriel’s Wedding* (Hogan 1994), Jocelyn was delighted that Jill’s story was being told and agreed to let us film her and Jill working together.

At last, it seemed possible to film Jill in action. During principal photography on *The Dressmaker* (17 October 2014–13 December 2014), we had a relatively easy time documenting Jill and her editing assistant Caitlin Spiller as they were reviewing, organising and assembling the incoming footage. But as filming wrapped and Jill began working more closely with Jocelyn, her camera reluctance returned. As Jocelyn’s availability was extremely limited during the editing period—family commitments meant she had to review much of Jill’s work from Sydney rather than in person—Jill became fiercely protective of the time they did have together in the edit suite at Soundfirm in Port Melbourne. In this time-pressured environment, our cameras were suddenly an unwanted distraction.

As much as this rejection pained me as a director and caused me to question whether I had been forthright enough about the level of editing room access I desired, the film editor in me could relate to her situation. I recognised and respected Jill’s need to be fully absorbed in her
work to deliver on *The Dressmaker*’s unusual blend of Australian comedy and Western-like revenge narrative. The tight schedule meant she was under a lot of stress to deliver a film that Jocelyn would be proud of and that audiences would embrace. And since I had many layers of Jill’s biography left to explore at the time, I did not want to risk our relationship by pushing her too hard. I resolved to use our behind-the-scenes editing footage from *The Dressmaker* to fashion entry and exit points in her contemporary story, and to identify other opportunities where we could observe Jill’s active engagement with a director.

![Figure 12. Camera operator Davi Soesilo films Jill Bilcock during editing of *The Dressmaker*, November 2014.](image)

The more I talked to Jill’s collaborators—an activity that I explore in the next section—I realised that a notable motif in her career was a preference for helping and encouraging new talent. Many of the first-time directors she has taken under her editorial wing have become established, highly influential filmmakers in their own right. Debut feature films such as *Strikebound* (Lowenstein 1984), *Strictly Ballroom* (Luhrmann 1992), *Muriel’s Wedding* (Hogan 1994) and *Head On* (Kokkinos 1998) are all proof of Jill’s passion for elevating the daring visions of new directing talent. In my first interview with her, she described her affinity for collaborating with first-time filmmakers:

> When you first meet someone, and it is the first film they are going to make, you can get this extraordinary enthusiasm. You just know they will fight to get this made and they will do it really well. And you might be able to do it even better than they thought. (Bilcock in Grigor 2013)
For the audience to fully appreciate how instilling confidence and courage in new filmmakers lies at the heart of her practice, Faramarz and I initially invested considerable effort into exploring how an observational mode of storytelling could capture this important aspect of Jill’s creativity. After all, the act of capturing “lived experience spontaneously” (Nichols 2017, 132) was a form of filmmaking we had considerable experience in, through productions like *Fahimeh’s Story* (K-Rahber 2004) and *Donkey in Lahore* (K-Rahber 2007). The fuse for this undertaking was lit during our second in-depth interview with Jill, when she mentioned that, as a young woman, she was convinced that her travel lust and an abiding interest in human rights issues would one day see her “end up in a third world country doing something more worthwhile” (Bilcock in Grigor 2014). Sensing Jill’s enthusiasm for embarking on a documentary journey that would demand more of her than to sit in a chair answering a bunch of questions, we set about researching a very different biographical film journey than the one I had originally envisaged.

With Jill’s enthusiastic blessing, we began looking into the possibility of making a film that would see Jill travel to Afghanistan, India and Kenya, where she would collaborate with new filmmaking talent and help tell stories about hidden lives in underprivileged communities. However, after an intense period of consulting colleagues and film school connections in Asia, the Middle East and Africa, as well as writing an extended treatment (included as an appendix) that attempted to fuse an exploration of Jill’s own filmography with a magic carpet ride-like filmmaking journey to three faraway countries, this ambitious angle received lukewarm enthusiasm from commissioning editors in Europe and Australia. Mandy Chang at ABC rather aptly summed up the broadcaster’s stance in her reply to my email after presenting her with the new trailer I had just cut, writing that “This looks great... although it feels a bit like two different films” (email from Mandy Chang to author, 10 August 2015). She felt that my attempt to layer in international and social issues overshadowed my original focus of revealing the life and work of a great, but largely unknown, cinema artist. The promo sent to Mandy Chang in August 2015 can be viewed here: https://vimeo.com/133295421/000086eb47.

The decision to postpone ambitions for a grand tour with Jill forced a recalibration of plans, setting the stage for the production of one of the documentary’s most crucial, revealing and
collaborative passages. Rather than risk taking a logistically hazardous journey overseas, we decided to scale things down. Through Faramarz’s connections in Brisbane’s Afghani Hazara ethnic community, we managed to introduce Jill to Arwin Arwin, an Afghan-born poet and filmmaker. Meeting this young refugee and reading his poetry led to Jill enthusiastically agreeing to mentor him during production of his experimental short film Hello (Arwin 2018). In turn, Arwin agreed to allow our production company to be the film’s producer. Taking the reins of this short production enabled us to shield Arwin’s and Jill’s creative collaboration from outside influence and to capture it for the documentary. Since the film was shot in Queensland, we could also do most of this work in our own backyard.

At last, by controlling and protecting all the vital production parameters, we were finally able to record wonderful and intimate observational documentary material that showcased Jill’s working relationship with an exciting new directing talent. The poetic short film Hello can be viewed here: https://vimeo.com/179717857/4f7d3f99f1

To the joy and credit of all involved—including a number of students and recent alumni from GFS—Hello received a special premiere at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) in Melbourne in August 2016 and won a SIPFest award at the 2018 Gold Coast Film Festival.
The third and final aspect of my wish for the documentary to give audiences a taste of Jill’s contemporary life concerned her close bond with her brothers, Tony and Carl. As stated previously, I wanted the main thrust of my biography of Jill to contribute to an elevated understanding of her many contributions to editing. But as interviews with Jill and her brothers had indicated that her evolution as an artist bore links to the siblings’ self-sufficient and restless upbringing—having to fend largely for themselves in their younger years while their single mother paved a pioneering path as Melbourne’s “first female principal of a co-ed school” (Bilcock in Grigor 2013)—an effective depiction of their present-day relationship felt essential to include in the documentary’s third act.

In December 2016, with Jill newly returned from London after over a year working on drama series *Will* (Kapur et al. 2017), I ensured that our cameras would be present to capture the siblings’ first reunion in ages. Their giddy excitement over finally being able to spend time together afforded us the perfect way to conclude the documentary’s purposefully sparse observation of her present-day private life. Captured expertly by Faramarz’s observational camera eye, images of the siblings hugging, bantering and sharing a meal in Jill’s backyard perfectly and simply encapsulates their life-long relationship.

3.5 Capturing Collaborators’ and Editors’ Perspectives

To help connect the stories and achievements of Jill’s biographical past with her elevated position in Australian cinema in the present, I wanted to collect rich and previously unheard testimonies from film professionals who have known Jill Bilcock since she was a young film student, as well as from filmmakers who have come to know her more recently. Film historian Kevin Brownlow’s approach when authoring his 1996 tome on editor-turned-director David Lean aligned closely with my own biographical ambitions regarding Jill:

> Whenever I see names listed in the acknowledgements of biographies—particularly those dealing with films—I am disappointed that while the facts may be there, the voices are not. So I have made sure that at least in this book, those who knew and worked with David [Lean] are given close-ups and not merely long-shots. (Brownlow 1996, xvi)
As established in the previous chapter, a major reason for editors’ obscurity throughout cinema history is a lack of texts, particularly of the audio-visual variety, in which individual editors’ contributions are disseminated and elevated to the same level of importance as that of directors, cinematographers and producers. A key reason for this lack of rigorous and public acknowledgement of individual editors’ achievements is that directors only rarely go on record with intimate details of the unique artistic qualities and solutions the editor brings to a specific film. In producing my audio-visual biography of Jill Bilcock, it therefore felt pertinent to invest much time and effort to encourage Jill’s closest collaborators and friends—directors in particular—to help tell her story. I also decided to pursue interviews with ‘editing experts’ who, although they had not collaborated directly with Jill, could add extra weight to the argument that the editor and editorial craft is at the heart of filmmaking. By encouraging a communal approach to raising the profile of Jill, I hoped to gather nuanced perspectives, uncover new information and entertaining anecdotes that, in turn, would make Jill’s recollections and stories shine even brighter. Through their stories of her, Jill’s story would become part of a larger story about excellence and creativity in filmmaking.

I’m in the process of interviewing many of the directors who have worked with her over the years, but I also want to include comments from the actors and actresses whose performances she’s spent so much time perfecting in her editing room. I find this hidden creative dance between film editor and performer absolutely fascinating and would love to hear your thoughts on how Jill’s craft has impacted yours, particularly around the two ‘Elizabeth’ films. I’m also curious about how you feel her work has contributed to the visibility of Australian stories around the world.

(Letter from the author to Cate Blanchett, March 2014)

As examined in Chapter 2, hagiography tends to obstruct the writing of a relatable life. To limit the amount of time each interviewee would spend on singing Jill’s praises, my questioning focused on capturing personal observations about film editing and gaining fresh insights into Jill’s contributions on specific films and sequences. This approach also helped me identify which film titles, scenes and music tracks should be prioritised in the nerve- and budget-wracking quest for archival rights. Naturally, I knew quite early on that it would be remiss of me to not feature some of Jill’s tremendous work in well-known films such as
Romeo + Juliet (Luhrmann 1996), Elizabeth (Kapur 1998) and Moulin Rouge! (Luhrmann 2000)—Jill even made it clear on numerous occasions that she was particularly pleased with her work in the opening sequence of Romeo + Juliet, the rehearsal scene in Elizabeth and the tango sequences in Moulin Rouge!—but I also hoped that by engaging with her collaborators, I would identify passages in less high-profile film projects just as worthy of scrutiny.

To allow as many ‘happy discoveries’ as possible to occur, collaborators’ interviews were approached not just as an information-gathering exercise about their relationship with Jill, but also as an opportunity to learn about the interviewees’ professional development, creative outlook and perspective on editing. By investigating each person’s artistic and collaborative preferences, I felt I would be better placed to understand Jill’s ability to excel in the editing room regardless of whether she is crafting a comedy or tragedy, editing a low-budget Australian film or a big studio picture.
I approached the preparation, execution and post-assessment of each interview not just as a director tasked to gather as many useful and poignant moments as possible, but also as an editor entrusted to discern patterns in and between interviews—recognising connective tissues and descriptions of Jill’s editing craft that might spark opportunities for creative interpretation in the editing room down the track. As will be discussed in the next section—where I focus on how the documentary’s structure and rhythm was established in the editing room—being able to juggle the separate-but-connected tasks of directing and editing would prove to be enormously instructive and helpful.

The filming of interviews with Jill’s collaborators spanned the entire period of development and production. Between 2012 and 2016, we filmed a total of thirty-three interviews—a third of them with directors—in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, London, Los Angeles and New York. The people who we ended up pursuing were chosen partly out of calculated design (name recognition and/or a demonstrably close and noteworthy connection to Jill’s filmography) and partly out of a desire to expand my evolving understanding of filmmaking experiences Jill deemed formative or highly memorable. For example, Anton Monsted, Kate Williams, Brian Kavanagh and Cezary Skubiszewski only emerged as high priority interview candidates after hearing Jill and others extol their importance to her development and practice as a film editor, or their contributions on particular films.
While securing an interview time sometimes proved challenging—mainly due to scheduling conflicts and our budgetary need to cluster several interviews within one or several days—most people I approached were very happy to participate. One example of a highly productive interview period took place during a trip to see Jill in London in June 2016, during her editing of the drama series *Will* (Kapur et al. 2017). Within the span of two days, we conducted not only an in-depth interview with Jill, but also sat down with director Shekhar Kapur, screenwriter Craig Pearce, film editor Jane Moran, assistant editor Caitlin Spiller and veteran US film editor Alan Heim, ACE.

To her great credit, Cate Blanchett was one of the first people to offer me a time to share her thoughts about Jill and editing, being interviewed in Sydney in September 2014. Her early support of the project proved enormously helpful during initial fundraising and when contacting other prospective interviewees. Industry organisations such as ASE, ACE, and the AACTA graciously helped me connect with many interviewees. Talent agencies were usually my first point of contact when reaching out to actors. Jill Bilcock and our executive producer Sue Maslin were also highly instrumental in introducing me to many key creatives whom Jill has worked with.

For reasons still unknown, two major directors on my wish-list proved elusive, despite numerous attempts to convince them of the project’s merits: P. J. Hogan (director of *Muriel’s Wedding*) and Sam Mendes (director of *Road to Perdition*).
During interview shoots, Faramarz handled camera, lighting and sound aspects while I briefed interviewees about the aims of the project and conducted the interview. To allow for easy and cheap transport of equipment from our base in Brisbane to each location, we generally only brought what our economy air tickets would allow in terms of carry-on and standard check-in luggage weight. Our standard interview equipment list included a single camera (Sony FS5), a set of portable Dedo lights, one lite-panel, two reflectors, a zoom audio recorder, one K6 microphone, one Sennheiser radio microphone kit and various portable stands. This minimal, yet highly modular equipment allowed Faramarz to quickly adapt and execute technical setups that suited local conditions—an important aspect when operating with limited prior knowledge of the layout at each location and time is of the essence. Interviews generally lasted between 45 to 60 minutes.

The following table lists the thirty-three collaborators and editing experts who were interviewed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Recording date</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alan Heim</td>
<td>Film editor</td>
<td>June 2016</td>
<td>London, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ana Kokkinos</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>July 2016</td>
<td>Melbourne, Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anton Monsted</td>
<td>Music executive</td>
<td>Sept 2016</td>
<td>Los Angeles, USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arwin Arwin</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Feb 2016</td>
<td>Brisbane, Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baz Luhrmann</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Sept 2016</td>
<td>New York, USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian Kavanagh</td>
<td>Film editor</td>
<td>June 2016</td>
<td>Melbourne, Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caitlin Spiller</td>
<td>Editing assistant</td>
<td>June 2016</td>
<td>London, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cate Blanchett</td>
<td>Actor</td>
<td>Sept 2014</td>
<td>Sydney, Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cezary Skubiszewski</td>
<td>Composer</td>
<td>Sept 2016</td>
<td>New York, USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craig Pearce</td>
<td>Writer</td>
<td>June 2016</td>
<td>London, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Hirschfelder</td>
<td>Composer</td>
<td>Oct 2016</td>
<td>Melbourne, Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don McAlpine</td>
<td>Cinematographer</td>
<td>June 2016</td>
<td>Sydney, Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fred Chandler</td>
<td>Fox executive</td>
<td>Sept 2016</td>
<td>Los Angeles, USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fred Schepisi</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>June 2016</td>
<td>Melbourne, Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glenys Rowe</td>
<td>Producer</td>
<td>June 2016</td>
<td>Sydney, Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Mercurio</td>
<td>Actor</td>
<td>Aug 2016</td>
<td>Melbourne, Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane Moran</td>
<td>Editor</td>
<td>June 2016</td>
<td>London, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jocelyn Moorhouse</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>June 2016</td>
<td>Sydney, Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John ‘Cha Cha’ O’Connell</td>
<td>Choreographer</td>
<td>Oct 2016</td>
<td>Sydney, Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen Pearlman</td>
<td>Editor and author</td>
<td>June 2016</td>
<td>Sydney, Australia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Guided by the multiple interviews conducted with Jill throughout the production period—along with my conversations with the collaborators listed above—the writing of Jill’s working biography by way of editing could commence. This work would, as is examined in Chapter 4, be carried out alongside extensive efforts to secure access and rights to necessary archival footage and music.

3.6 Editing the Broadcast Version

The director is not the best person to deliver his film. He delivers what he thinks is best, but he does not know it all. The greatest directors have always worked with editors. (Agnes Guillemot in Crittenden 2006, 7)

I now turn to a description of key strategies that were used during the post-production phase to arrange the gathered materials into a cohesive and illuminating audio-visual portrayal of Jill Bilcock’s editing biography.

In September 2016, while final interviews were still being conducted and access to much critical archival material was still being negotiated, the offline editing phase of the half-hour documentary needed to commence. While much of the editorial work carried out during the
editing of the half-hour version—which would eventually air under the title *Jill Bilcock: The Art of Film Editing* (Grigor 2017b)—a title chosen to differentiate the broadcast title from its theatrical-length version—prepared the ground for the subsequent cutting of the longer *Jill Bilcock: Dancing The Invisible* (Grigor 2017a), dreams of presenting a more extensive telling of Jill’s biography as an editor had to be put on hold while ensuring that our broadcast obligations to ABC were met.

Dr Phoebe Hart has researched the creative and practical challenges faced by independent Australian documentary filmmakers producing long-form documentaries who are required by networks to edit and deliver shorter versions of their projects in order to secure a broadcast slot. In her journal article “Re-Writing Theatrical Documentaries: The Broadcast Version” (Hart 2019), she highlights that broadcasters’ preference for shepherding commissioned content into marketable programming strands means that Australian television audiences often experience reduced versions of Australian-produced documentary projects rather than their original, feature-length versions. She states that this development stems from government funding initiatives, such as the Producer Offset or Producer Equity Programs administered by Screen Australia, which require producers to demonstrate “a firm ‘path to audience’ in the form of distribution plan, distribution agreement and/or a broadcaster pre-sale” (Hart 2019, 167). As discussed earlier in this chapter, this scenario also applied to our project, which eventually became a recipient of Producer Equity Program (PEP) funding thanks to broadcast interest from the ABC for a half-hour biographical documentary. Despite our budget being forced to adhere to tight broadcast conditions, ambitions for a longer re-versioning never left my sights, a fact which I continually communicated to Jill, interviewees and industry supporters throughout the production period. This dual position—being forced to deliver a compact story of Jill’s life and craft, while simultaneously identifying opportunities for a re-versioning that would more respectfully convey Jill’s contributions and filmography—was a recurring topic in the many conversations I had with experienced Brisbane-based film editor Scott Walton between September 2016 and February 2017.

The decision to engage Walton to cut the half-hour version felt prudent and logical for creative, personal and financial reasons. Scott and I had recently successfully collaborated during the final stages of editing Australian feature documentary *Frackman* (Todd 2015). Scott’s ability to quickly comprehend director Richard Todd’s vision and become familiar...
with the film’s vast pool of observational material had impressed me greatly. And for financial reasons—Screen Queensland’s financing of Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible was largely built on us spending the bulk of offline editing funds within the state—hiring an experienced Queensland editor was crucial for the budget bottom-line. The fact that Scott’s custom-built editing studio was only a short drive from my own home also offered a welcome respite to my hectic schedule.

With Scott committed to the project, I was jolted by an additional, hitherto unfamiliar experience. After three years of chasing interviews and financing, combatting internal doubts and collecting a wide swathe of visible evidence of Jill’s past and present-day life, I suddenly felt incredibly vulnerable. In his book Documentary Editing, Jacob Bricca (2018) writes that when a director hands over footage to an editor it represents “an act of extraordinary faith” (27), and he notes that a successful relationship between director and editor is primarily built on mutual trust. Despite knowing that Scott was creatively and technically more than capable of completing the task, handing over all my hours of hard-won, still-shapeless material made me feel utterly exposed. I was used to being the receiver of footage, not the provider. What and who did Scott need me to be during the process? How could I best convey my intentions and opinions to him so he could interpret and structure my thoughts into not only something deliverable, but into an experience infused with his own creative expression and understanding of film editing?

**JILL BILCOCK: DANCING THE INVISIBLE (broadcast version)**

Post-Production Schedule, as at 15 December 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schedule/Production Details</th>
<th>Date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Start of Post Production</td>
<td>5 September 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rough Cut Viewing ABC+Investors</strong></td>
<td><strong>30 December 2016</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 wk comment Period</td>
<td>31 Dec 2016–6 Jan 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Jill Pickup Interview</td>
<td>16–20 Jan 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Cutting (2 weeks—Axel+Scott)</td>
<td>9–27 January 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fine Cut Viewing ABC+Investors</strong> (Vimeo link)</td>
<td><strong>27 January 2017</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offline: Final fixes + lock off</td>
<td>30 Jan–3 February 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handover to Soundfirm</td>
<td>6 February 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Online: Pic &amp; Sound Post (2 weeks)</strong></td>
<td><strong>6-17 February 2016</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion Date</td>
<td>21 February 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Delivery Date</strong></td>
<td><strong>28 February 2017</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 21. Post-schedule for Jill Bilcock: The Art of Film Editing, 15 December 2016

A Grigor

Jill Bilcock: Revealing the Invisible Artist – Exegesis, March 2022
Veteran Australian producer and editor Anthony Buckley has stated that “it’s not a good idea to have any preconceived ideas or opinion before commencing the edit” (Taylor 1970), preferring to let the film footage and the editorial process itself dictate the shaping of the film, rather than the script or the director’s convictions. This also proved to be the key for starting my new and unfamiliar relationship with Scott. Prior to the start of our offline editing period, Scott and I discussed which key biographical themes might inform the shaping of Jill’s story. We asked ourselves: could audio-visual evidence of her creative impulses in her editing work, her choice of films and collaborators, be tied to formative experience in her life? What role did her upbringing, early filmmaking experiences, her love of travel, and so on, play in the range of projects she had chosen to edit and her preference for working with new directors? While exploring ways to link her personal biography to her evolution as artist, I resisted the urge to present Scott with a grand plan for the film’s structure.

Author Michael Rabiger suggests that documentary directors can help editors “save time and energy for creative matters” (Rabiger 2015, 471) by having all interviews transcribed into text and then presenting an editing blueprint—known as a ‘paper edit’—based on these documents. Although we did commission written transcriptions of each interview, I never presented Scott with a paper edit. Time was a prohibitive factor, but the major reason for my restraint was the lingering uncertainties about which films and how much fiction film footage we would be able to feature in the documentary. Given that archive was essential to excite interest in both Jill as a person and her artistry, I did not want to point Scott too far in one direction lest the necessary archival clips would later reveal themselves to be impossible to license. We resolved that the best way for Scott to begin exploring the film’s structural possibilities was firstly to have him watch/re-watch Jill’s film catalogue—I provided him with a list of key titles and video files—and, secondly, to review and familiarise himself with all interviews we had conducted with Jill and her collaborators so far.

Pattern recognition has been identified as a one of the key skills of the documentary editor (Bricca 2018, 35). By carefully observing the raw footage and assessing what people do and say, the editor can identify potentially useful thematic links in a large material. Bricca writes that a useful strategy for recognising such patterns is through the creation of ‘select reel sequences’—timelines created in the non-linear editing software that contain, or points out, what the editor considers the ‘best’ material in each interview or shoot. Since time was
critical—Scott was only available between September 2016 until mid-November 2016 and my ability to be present in his editing room was limited due to ongoing production—we decided quite early on that our process would benefit from me providing him with ‘selects’ of interviews that had already been shot as well as those that Faramarz and I were about to record in New York and Los Angeles. In a very direct sense, our initial way of collaborating afforded me a familiar and proactive way to ‘direct the edit’, while avoiding becoming a director telling Scott how to do his job. By pointing him towards material that I wanted him to explore carefully or to steer away from passages that bore little or no interest for the project’s larger biographical aim, I hoped to improve his ability to find patterns he might find useful.

After returning to Brisbane, I installed myself at Scott’s studio for the remainder of the period that he was available to the project. To avoid hovering over Scott’s shoulders—a directorial habit I have always loathed as a film editor—we decided to split the mammoth editing task between us. Working within earshot of each other, we maintained a running discussion about what interview sections, archival discoveries and observational moments excited us and would allow audiences to better understand Jill’s craft and modus operandi. While Scott continued to build a loose assembly based on the interviews—seeking to connect subject-related information across the many interviews—I turned my full attention to securing, reviewing, and suggesting editorial use of archival footage. For the sake of us reaching a first ‘baggy’ cut, we soon decided that charting a chronological path through Jill’s life made the most sense.

Michael Rabiger points to the benefits of being “cautious and conservative with your first structure” (Rabiger 2015, 475). By focusing on letting the documentary structure follow Jill’s artistic development and career, rather than spending time on constructing clever segues...
between themes, a workable path to first assembly presented itself. As a general rule, we resolved that transitions between the documentary’s explorations of Jill’s contributions to her various film project should primarily be triggered by Jill’s and her collaborators’ words. Their train of thought should propel the audience onward. Documentary editor Kate Amend has stated that “as long as you set up a particular convention for the film, and the audience feels you are guiding them through the story with a clear vision and goal, it can work” (Amend in Oldham 2012, 203). By settling on the explicit idea to let voices and faces guide the audience from one narrative moment to the next, Scott and I were better able to determine how to link the film’s biographical themes.

Finding ways to illustrate the various ‘editing lessons’ espoused by Jill in her interviews was another key editorial strategy; it was one that ran parallel to the more straight-forward chronological writing of her biography as film editor. For example, during my third in-depth interview with Jill, I had asked her to define her approach to editing the openings of films:

I throw a lot of stuff out—expositional stuff—because you do not seem to need it. You have got to actually look at it and go: what will interest people here? It is that thing of putting your foot on the accelerator. You have to be interesting. I find [with] beginnings and ends of movies, and about twenty minutes in, I got to be way above sensational, if possible. (Bilcock in Grigor 2016d)

Studying this interview during editing inspired the idea of starting the documentary with Jill expressing her views on what makes for an arresting opening to a film. Soon realising that it would require much experimentation and many iterative attempts to create an effective visual analogy that lived up to Jill’s high standards, Scott and I decided that the editing of sequences that were not integral to the more pressing chore of arriving at a first chronological pass of her biography (such as the opening sequence) should be tackled by me. Discussions regarding the crafting of these special projects, which I often deemed quite risky due their dependence on imagery from a wide range of yet-to-be-cleared archive, would often lead to us identifying other ‘editing-illustrative’ opportunities in the main body of the film. The choice of ending the documentary with a collage of final shots from several of Jill’s films set to the words of Jill describing how she prefers to end a film—a line we recorded during a last-minute pickup
interview with Jill late in the post-production period—was another discovery that our parallel editing approach made possible.

Scott would also frequently hand me the task of doing first assembly passes of certain sections—which, on a more resource-rich production, would have been delegated to an editing assistant—allowing him to focus on narratively complex or structurally pressing areas of the documentary. Through this dynamic, non-competitive collaboration, which encompassed not only our new director–editor relationship but also the familiar editor–editor partnership, we forged on through the assembly stage towards our first rough cut.

Half-way through my editing period with Scott—a time when much new and essential archive material was finally becoming available to use in the edit—our strategy pivoted. We were finding it really difficult to do justice to Jill’s vast experience and her compelling thoughts on editing craft within the constraints of the half-hour format requested by the ABC. So rather than present them with an advanced rough cut for a half-hour programme, Faramarz, Sue and I decided to show them an hour-long rough cut. With all the richness of unseen and previously inaccessible footage now at our disposal, we hoped to convince ABC that Jill’s story deserved to be upgraded to the one-hour format for broadcast audiences. A few days before Faramarz, Sue and myself flew down to Sydney to present this cut at ABC, Sue got her first peek at this cut.

I always knew that this documentary was going to be good given your approach, dedication and talent...but this film is going to be outstanding if the rough cut is any guide! Congratulations!!
(Email from Sue Maslin to the author, 20 November 2016)

With Sue convinced that we should do everything possible to get the ABC to accept delivery of a longer version, Scott and I readied an updated cut. This was then screened for Mandy Chang at ABC on Tuesday 22 November, followed by an inquisitive and constructive feedback session. Six days later Mandy emailed Sue her view.
I have spoken to the head of programming and I’m afraid we are going to have to stick to the half-hour that’s been commissioned. Although we are sympathetic to the wealth of material, to Jill’s story and to her importance in the cinema landscape, I’m afraid this still needs to be delivered as a half-hour.

(Email from Mandy Chang to Sue Maslin, 28 November 2016)

In her email, Mandy also expressed surprise at having been shown a one-hour film with little advance warning and outlined several reasons for her decision, chief among them being that “Losing this from our half-hour Creatives strand will make for an insubstantial series” and that the ABC did not have funds allocated to support the “huge amount of work, skill and editing time (and our time) to make it work” as a one-hour film (Chang to Maslin 2016). With the decision made and Scott’s editing focus now directed elsewhere, I began to sketch out a plan for what should be trimmed from the hour-long rough cut and what should be set aside for a more deserving treatment in a theatrical version, and also what interview pickups were needed to patch any remaining gaps.

My main strategy in choosing what needed to stay and what could be put aside centred on locating sequences and moments that gave the audience a deeper understanding of how Jill’s biography and development as an artist intersects with her choice of films and collaborators. Such passages were safeguarded for use in the theatrical version. This explains why important films such as Head On (Kokkinos 1998), Japanese Story (Brooks 2003), Catch A Fire (Noyce 2006) and her collaboration with young Afghan-Australian filmmaker Arwin Arwin do not appear in the broadcast version. These films required another pacing to appreciate what made Jill’s creative investment in them so special. Many entertaining flourishes, such as archive footage of Jill’s Bollywood acting and the delightful story of Shekhar Kapur wooing her as the editor of Elizabeth (Kapur 1998), were also withheld from the broadcast version to add a sense of exclusivity and freshness to a longer version. And the films that were chosen to feature in the ABC version did not receive much in the way of immersive treatment. With this as my guide, I set out to deliver a respectable half-hour rough cut to our broadcaster by mid-January 2017 and a final cut by early February 2017, which Chang warmly received:

Just had a look at this without writing notes and I think it’s come along very well. It’s so much better and clearer and Jill comes across with great strength, warmth and genius. I think you’ve done really well to cram so much in. I will send notes anon but
just wanted to let you know that I am really pleased and think you have climbed mountains since that first viewing.
(Email from Mandy Chang to the author, 18 January 2017)

In early February 2017, I provided the ABC with the locked cut, which was then swiftly sent across to Soundfirm for sound post, grading, picture online and final delivery.

Just watched it. You’ve done a brilliant job and I think it’s fabulous… We’re putting it out first on March 14th, which means it will get its own promo. Very happy—thanks very much to you and the team for all the hard work.
(Email from Mandy Chang to the author, 3 February 2017)

In his ‘Pick of the day’ television review of the documentary in The Australian newspaper, Justin Burke praised the film for introducing audiences to Jill Bilcock, “one of the fascinating behind-the-scenes characters in the Australian film industry” (Burke 2017) and found it most fitting that a film in which Jill explains how she uses editing to forge an emotional connection with audiences “executes those elements so well to tell her story”. Audience reactions on ABC Arts Facebook page were equally enthusiastic, with one viewer commenting “Terrific piece, left me wanting more” (ABC Arts 2017).

3.7 Editing the Theatrical Version

The difference between editing a film and assembling a jigsaw is that with a film nothing is completely predetermined.
(Crittenden 1981, 74)

Although Jill Bilcock: The Art of Film Editing generated strong reviews and positive audience reactions following its premiere on ABC on 14 March 2017, my long-held ambition to complete an extended festival version lingered. Editing of the broadcast version had demonstrated to us (the producers) that a more immersive exploration of Jill’s career and craft was not only possible but should remain a priority. By the end of March 2017, Sue Maslin’s quest for additional financing – essential in securing an additional editing and post-production period – was beginning to gain traction; in part due to competing interest from Melbourne and
Adelaide Film Festivals to host the theatrical version’s world premiere. Initially, we had hoped to bring film editor Scott Walton back for the feature-length version, but his 2017 schedule remained too busy to accommodate five consecutive weeks of editing. Although it went against my preference, stated earlier, of keeping directorial and editorial duties separate, I began considering the positive and negative aspects of being the theatrical version’s sole editor, a process not too dissimilar from the one detailed in Chapter 1 when describing my very first editing experience at film school.

Vinca Wiedemann (1998) points out that “editing usually works best if it is completely integrated with the other means of expression used in the given film”. During the completion of the broadcast version, I realised that because I was intimately familiar with Jill’s life, the cultural impact of her work, the documentary’s overarching aim (to reveal an editor and her artistic processes through long-form biographical documentary portraiture), the project’s expansive raw materials and the complex labyrinth of licenses governing the use of archival material (footage and music), I was a useful editing candidate for the extended version.

By June 2017, with financing firmly in place and having recently relocated to Sweden with my family, I began editing the feature-length version while remaining open to the possibility of Scott joining the effort remotely if an opportunity presented itself.

I am confident that I will have a good rough cut ready by July 4 that will clock in around 70–75 minutes. This will also give many existing scenes more time to breathe. Also can't wait to include more on Jill's independence growing up (incl. her brothers), wonderful insights from her assistants (Caitlin, Jane Moran), importance of family (gathering at home in Brunswick), Roger's stabilising influence in her life (nice observational material from India, at home in Brunswick etc).

(Email from the author to Sue Maslin and Faramarz K-Rahber, 23 June 2017)

The solid groundwork that Scott and I had done when crafting the rough cut for a proposed one-hour broadcast version enabled the feature editing process to get off to a swift start. Using the half-hour version as a jumping-off point, I quickly revived, re-introduced and reworked scenes and moments that we had sequestered when ABC rejected the idea of an hour-long
documentary. The final third of the film, however, resisted a fast push towards the rough cut checkpoint:

Rough cutting of last third of doco is slower and requiring much more intricate work than earlier sections, but finally sensing end of tunnel. For example, it's very satisfying to have constructed a more expansive look at Jill's tireless efforts to keep Baz sprawling vision on track during the making of Moulin Rouge.

(Email from the author to Sue Maslin, 24 July 2017)

A solution to the third act roadblocks appeared courtesy of Jill. As mentioned in the opening chapter, a wish from the earliest days of my doctorate had been to explore how an audio-visual biography of a leading film editor could be edited to mirror the storytelling practices and rhythmical qualities of the film editor being portrayed. During our third in-depth interview with her, Jill had told me:

Working out how to make something travel from A to B, that is the whole film. All films are really only one shot for me. … I want it to always move. I don’t want to stop on the end of scenes after a camera move and just sit there. (Bilcock in Grigor 2016d)

This notion of Jill’s—to strive to let ideas, emotions and movement connect and flow seamlessly from one scene to the next, intentionally blurring the borders between individual story beats and establishing a narrative flow that held from the film’s start to its conclusion—was one I adopted as a key strategy while editing the theatrical version of the documentary. By adhering to Jill’s ‘film as one shot’ editing tenet, I hoped to do something similar: mimic her creative process and editorial rhythms in the documentary. In this way, I was hoping to overcome the potentially repetitive and episodic nature inherent to chronological storytelling. For example, to effectively transition from an exploration of Jill’s contributions in one film to another, or to move between professional and personal aspects of her biography, I ensured that each section communicated a distinct idea about Jill’s artistry, while resolving that every unique piece of the biographical puzzle must also propel the documentary’s overall body forward. Thematic repetitions, unmotivated praise and over-labouring of points were not welcome.
In early August 2017, after a month of calibrating the entire structure, making changes that suited the biography’s expanded duration, we were informed that the film had been officially invited to screen at the Adelaide Film Festival in October. The prospect of fully completing the film in eight weeks and screening it to a cinema audience, including Jill—who was still holding out for a theatrical premiere before watching any version of the film—felt doable yet complex. I proposed, and we settled on, the following finishing schedule:

- **Rough cut complete:** 11 August 2017
- **Fine cutting (Sweden):** 21–31 August 2017
- **Lock off:** 6 September 2017
- **Conform (Brisbane):** 7–12 September 2017
- **Soundfirm (Melbourne):** 14–25 September 2017
- **Final mix & DCP output (Melbourne):** 28 September–3 October 2017
- **Premiere (Adelaide):** 5/6/7/8 October 2017

Figure 23. Finishing post-production schedule on *Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible*.

To succeed, much hinged on my first rough cut hitting most of the marks. Fortunately, it received a largely positive response from my fellow producers.

> Bravo!!! A terrific rough cut and I can see the shape of the film now and it is looking great. You have met the challenge of keeping Jill present as a person throughout and got over the feeling that it is one film story after another.
> (Email from Sue Maslin to author, 13 August 2017)

In the absence of any rough cut notes from a broadcaster or investor, we resolved to rely on a close-knit team of colleagues to challenge the emerging film’s final structure and measure its impact upon an audience. Being now based in Sweden afforded me the opportunity to arrange test screenings for cineaste audiences unfamiliar with Jill and much of Australian cinema history. Gauging where their interest piqued or waned gave clues as to how to sharpen several sections and ensure the film would connect with audiences outside of Australia. For example, the crucial decision to place the sequence about Jill’s contributions on *Head On* (Kokkinos 1998) immediately after the section about *Romeo + Juliet* (Luhrmann 1996) sprung from such discussions.
After intense final editing and post-production weeks in Falun (Sweden), in Brisbane—where Scott and I prepared the locked cut for technical handover to sound post and picture online—and finally at Soundfirm in Port Melbourne, the theatrical version was complete. Right up to the end, there were concerted efforts to secure rights to the extensive amount of fiction film footage and associated music that featured in the final version. The strategies involved in accessing and clearing this vital material are explored in the final chapter.
CHAPTER 4: ARCHIVAL PURSUITS

He’s been a real little ferret digging away down a hole there to find everything that he wanted. I’m very impressed by what he put together. (Bilcock in Gartner 2018, 1)

In this chapter, I describe the efforts undertaken to locate and secure access to a large body of audio-visual archive that could effectively illustrate Jill Bilcock’s professional biography. First, I explore the hunt to locate rarely or never-before-seen moving image archive of Jill before turning my attention to the strategies that allowed the documentary to include over forty minutes of footage and associated music from films she has edited.

4.1 Locating the Unseen Jill

Quite early on, Jill told me that she did not want to watch the documentary until it was finished. Her reasoning was that she did not want to hinder my creative process, preferring to experience the finished film with an audience, gauging their response. Although the editor in me was worried by the prospect of not screening at least a rough cut to her and getting valuable feedback while there was still time to make necessary adjustments—a respectful process that had always been integral to the final stage on all feature documentary projects I have cut—it motivated me to make the strongest possible visual argument for why an editor’s creative life should be told using moving images. And the prospect of surprising Jill with archive material she had not seen before ‘tickled me pink’. Highly desired was finding footage of Jill appearing in Bollywood films, locating material that showed her editing and being an active member in the filmmaking community in 1960s and 1970s’ Melbourne.

By searching in Swinburne Technical College and The Victorian College of Art’s archives, I located many delightful audio-visual artefacts from Jill’s film school days, such as the camp fake advertisement film *Chilli Pom Pom* (Cuffley and Adolphus 1967), which shows Jill grooving to a ragtime tune with college friends. On my request, the National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA) in Canberra did a fresh film scan of the original film, producing a digital copy of excellent quality. The 1972 Swinburne promotional film *The Right Door* (anon 1972), starring a young David Williamson as host, also helped open a window to the goings-on at
Australia’s first film school. Via ABC’s Archive, I sourced several early glimpses of Jill editing at Fred Schepisi’s The Film House and found valuable material that portrayed the perilous state of the Australian feature film scene in the late 1960s. In particular, the current affairs report *The Flickering Future* (ABC Four Corners 1968) yielded many images that helped accentuate Jill’s and her contemporaries’ accounts of the perilous state of the Australian film industry at the time.

But the biggest archival coup relating to Jill’s early film days came through a referral from veteran film editor Brian Kavanagh ASE, who had mentored Jill during her first years at The Film House. Brian connected me with fellow veteran Australian editor Ken Sallows ASE, whom he thought might be in possession of a few photos or even footage relating to Sallows’ time at Fred Schepisi’s production company. Ken was not, but he in turn suggested I seek out *Part One: 806* (Löfvén 1970), an experimental feature film by Melbourne filmmaker Chris Löfvén, that he remembered seeing when editing the drama series *Persons of Interest* (Keenan 2014). Sallows informed me that Löfvén had been affiliated with The Film House around the time when Schepisi invited Bilcock to join The Film House and that the film contained some glimpses from those days. After learning that Australia’s National Film and Sound Archive held a full-length 16 mm viewing copy of the film in their collection, I requested this be sent to Brisbane so I could view it on Queensland State Library’s Steenbeck flatbed viewing table. Incredibly, in Löfvén’s avant-garde depiction of his bohemian life in early 1970s’ Melbourne, I found that he had not only captured Jill, Fred and colleagues larking about at The Film House, but had also documented Jill’s airport farewell when she departed for India (dressed in a kangaroo fur coat!) in 1970. I promptly contacted Chris in Noosa, where he currently lives, and received his permission to ask the NFSA to digitally scan the entire film. The joy of reuniting Chris with a first-quality version of his landmark film, almost fifty years after it had first been shown, was equal to the delight of being able to include his fantastic Bolex images of Jill in the documentary.
Richard Lowenstein kindly provided material from his behind-the-scenes archive from the making of feature film *Dogs in Space* (Lowenstein 1986), which delivered several blissful minutes of 16 mm film showing Jill editing the film and being interviewed about her process. Close-up shots of her handling and splicing strips of film were crucial in showing her expert handling of the Steenbeck editing and how physical the act of film editing was before the process turned digital in the 1990s. The detail of this footage would later allow my co-editor Scott Walton to fashion a thrilling visualisation of Jill’s solution to a problem she encountered when editing the final dance sequence in *Strictly Ballroom* (Luhrmann 1992). By cleverly weaving archive shots of Jill working at the Steenbeck table with shots from *Strictly Ballroom*’s climactic dance finale, Scott managed to effectively convey how Jill overcame a lack of dance footage through painstaking reuse of sounds of people clapping.

From the outset, finding footage that showed Jill and Baz Luhrmann collaborating during the production of *Romeo + Juliet* (Luhrmann 1996) had been high on my list of research priorities. During her conversation with Roger Crittenden in Brisbane 2012, Jill had mentioned that editing this film at her home in Melbourne was one of the most enjoyable and creative experiences of her career. In my interviews with Jill’s *Romeo + Juliet* collaborators, such as Martin Brown (co-producer), Kym Barrett (costume designer) and Kate Williams (first assistant editor), they all recalled that this intense period at Jill’s home was marked by a fun-filled, college-like atmosphere. When interviewing music executive Anton Monsted, who
worked as Baz’s assistant at the time, he hinted that some of the hi-8 home video footage he shot for BazMark (Luhrmann and Catherine Martin’s production company) during production of *Romeo + Juliet* might have survived. Finally, after interviewing Baz Luhrmann in New York in September 2016, it was confirmed that this material indeed existed. A few weeks later I was able to travel to Iona—Luhrmann and Martin’s former home and workplace in Sydney—to collect 38 DigiBeta tapes containing previously unpublished footage that perfectly depicted what Jill and others had described. Thanks to Baz’s kind support of the documentary, access to this archive material was given free of charge. This act of generosity allowed us to craft a wonderful behind-the-scenes sequence, which in turn helped to address my research’s need to illustrate Jill Bilcock in the midst of creation.

BazMark’s archives also yielded the Bilcock-edited *Romeo + Juliet* pitch film (aka ‘Monday Online’), which was shot on video at various Sydney locations two years prior to the film’s principal photography in Mexico. This thrilling conceptual presentation of how Luhrmann intended to bring his version of Shakespeare’s tale to life had been crucial in convincing Twentieth Century Fox to bankroll *Romeo + Juliet*.

A different tactic was required to track down footage of Jill appearing in 1970s Bollywood films. On several occasions I asked Jill if she remembered a title, or the name of a movie star.
or director of one of the films she had performed in while visiting India during the early 1970s. She recalled studio sets, details about her clothing and broad dramatic scenarios—she was usually cast as a dangerous blonde girlfriend of one of the bad guys—but not much else. The prospect of tracking down DVDs of hundreds of Bollywood films—over 70 feature Bollywood films were produced in the year 1970 alone—and trawling through them all in hope of spotting a blonde Australian extra that might or might not be Jill Stevenson (her maiden name) was dispiriting. However, deep into the documentary’s post-production phase, I discovered that much classic Bollywood content had begun appearing on online video sharing platforms. Armed with a list of 253 Bollywood films produced between 1970 and 1972, sourced from Wikipedia, I methodically began searching for each title on YouTube. A day or two later I was in luck. After years of wondering if Jill had been letting a good story trump the truth, there she was: appearing as a shifty gambler’s girlfriend in the opening sequence of *Aan Milo Sajna* (Dutt 1970) and, most entertainingly, performing as bad guy Roopesh Kumar’s brief fling in a rather decadent musical scene in *Andaz* (Sippy 1971).

Due to this scene’s potential to anchor a longer look at Jill’s ‘hippie years’ and its sheer entertainment value, we (the producers) agreed to reserve this archival moment for the theatrical version of the documentary. The limited duration of the broadcast version and my insistence that examples of Bilcock’s work preserved the integrity of her editing, also resulted in much of the other licensed motion picture footage only appearing in the theatrical version.
4.2 A ‘Righteous’ Battle

Rights to mainstream movies, even when clips are to be used for criticism or quotation, are very difficult to clear. Documentary filmmakers often find themselves enormously frustrated when attempting to refer to popular films. (Aufderheide and Jaszi 2004, 14)

I now turn the discussion to the strategies that were used to attain a large amount of motion picture footage from the films Jill Bilcock has edited—a category of archive present on-screen for 48% of the feature-length documentary’s duration—and how this was achieved without breaking our production’s humble bank. As the clearance and licensing of this category of audio-visual material involved negotiations with not only movie studios and film producers but also with many actors and their representatives, music publishers and music owners—whose work was integral to Jill’s own artistic efforts in her editing room—the chapter concludes with an analysis of how such associated permissions were successfully gained.

As described in the opening chapter, establishing effective and subject-appropriate ways to illustrate the craft and contributions of a leading film editor lies at the very core of this practice-based research effort. Therefore, the success (or failure) of my aim to analyse the artistry and biography of Jill Bilcock through documentary filmmaking hinged on the ability to present audiences with clear and sustained evidence of her editing craft in mainstream films.

Constraining such illustrative ambitions was the low-budget status of our documentary project and a seeming disinterest from fiction film rightsholders, particularly those based in Hollywood, to yield from their normal licensing asking prices regardless of cause or pleas. A decade earlier, the makers of feature-length documentary Imaginary Witness: Hollywood and the Holocaust (Anker 2004)—a documentary about Hollywood’s portrayal of the Holocaust—had faced a similar conundrum. Director Danny Anker states that the costs to license the rights to include extensive amount of Hollywood fiction archive in the documentary tripled the costs of the entire production budget and that “licensing officials were unmoved by his argument that his film would bring attention to long-forgotten movies”
(Anker in Aufderheide and Jaszi 2004, 14). Apart from licensing, other potential encumbrances when seeking access to fiction film archive are the “rules and laws regarding likenesses of famous people, which get you into all kinds of financial trouble” (Curran Bernard and Rabin, 330). Actors and their watchful agents, actors’ guilds, and the estates of deceased actors also frequently demand to have a say, and receive a pay, before personal rights associated with performances can be cleared for re-use in a new context.

Despite the thorny, dollar-hungry and wide net of interests that surrounds fiction film archive, the sheer illustrative and descriptive power such scenes offer documentary makers determined to make visible (and make sense of) the artistry and career biographies’ of film artists remains a strong lure. By clearly showing the fruits of my documentary subject’s labours, I hoped a more convincing and satisfying argument regarding film editors’ contributions could be put in front of the audience.

In her book *The Archive Effect*, Jaimie Baron (2014, 7) states that archival material appropriated for use in new films “may be imbued by the viewer with various evidentiary values”. She refers to this reformulated experience of reception between viewer and archival material as creating an ‘archive effect’. Using archival material in a new context, she argues, has the power to “generate new and particular conceptions of the past and, ultimately, of history itself” (8). By seeking to have *Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible* include extensive visible evidence of Jill’s creativity, I wanted to create my own ‘archive effect’; one that I hoped would assist audiences in reformulating their perception of what film editors do. Only through a persistent and relevant audio-visual display of Jill’s creative decision-making—by way of combining lengthy clips from many of the celebrated feature films she had edited with reflections from Jill and others about her contributions—could I hope to illuminate the far-reaching storytelling and industrial impacts of her curious and restless creative nature. The challenge was getting rights-owners and their hard-nosed gatekeepers to see things my way.

The process of negotiating access to Hollywood clips is a frequent discussion point in the book *Archival Storytelling* (Curran Bernard and Rabin 2007). The authors stress that documentary filmmakers wanting to incorporate archival material in their work need to take an early, pro-active stance in investigating all licensing obstacles, while not censoring themselves “by presuming that you can't afford the materials you need” (Curran Bernard and
Rabin 2020, 11). These dual aims—avoiding being cavalier about complex archival licensing matters while at the same time not letting such realities dictate how I wanted to craft the biographical story before me—influenced the making of *Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible* from the very start.

In March 2014—on executive producer Sue Maslin’s recommendation and once Screen Australia had approved development funding of the project—we decided to employ Melbourne-based researcher Penelope Chai. Experienced at handling rights management of archival sources, Chai’s first task was to ascertain licensing fees for using material from the feature films Jill had edited. She found that the licensing rates—based on a required use in all media, worldwide, in perpetuity—varied greatly between the various rights-owners. Licensing costs ranged from potential promises of zero dollars from supportive Australian licensors to headache-inducing rates of up to US$12,000 per minute (or US$3,000 for 15 second increments) by licensing executives at major Hollywood studios. The following is an excerpt from Chai’s feature film archival research spreadsheet—a longer version is included in the Appendices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Film/Release Year/Licensor</th>
<th>Cost for full rights: all media, worldwide, in perpetuity</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moulin Rouge! (2000)</td>
<td>$12,000 per minute, or portion of a minute, per picture (with a maximum of five clips per minute). Fox does not pro-rate its license fee based upon the number of seconds licensed, so if using 15-30 seconds, we will still be charged for one minute. Fox also requires: [X] Please provide written consent from all stunt persons who appear in the footage. [X] Please provide SIGNED, written consent from Nicole Kidman and Ewan McGregor if they appear in material from &quot;MOULIN ROUGE.&quot; Perhaps we can get Baz to weigh in for us?</td>
<td>30/4 - got quote 25/4 - liaising with Fox 17/4 - referred me to Fox—seeing if she has a contact there 15/4 - emailed Natalie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road to Perdition (2002)</td>
<td><strong>Paramount: has domestic rights (US and Canada) to this title and non-theatrical rights worldwide.</strong> All media, domestic only in perpetuity will run from US$6,000-10,000/minute for licensing. <strong>Fox has</strong> limited rights: Theatrical Exhibition, Television Exhibition and Home Video Exhibition, <strong>worldwide excluding the &quot;Domestic Territory&quot;</strong>, in perpetuity. The license fee for these rights is $11,000.00 per minute, or portion of a minute, per picture. Fox does not have Non-Theatrical Exhibition rights. In addition, Fox will require: - Written consent from any stunt persons who appear in the footage - Signed, written consent from Tom Hanks, the Estate of Paul Newman, Jude Law, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Anthony LaPaglia and Stanley Tucci if they appear in the clips.</td>
<td>5/6 - quotes sorted 5/6 - checking with Larry if non-theatrical WW are included in original quote 2/6 - got quote from Fox, just checking with Paramount about Non-Theatrical Exhibition rights. 26/5 - reminder to Andy 13/5 - emailed Andy at Fox 13/5 - got quote from Paramount 12/5 - emailed Larry 6/5 - reminder to Brian 25/4 - emailed Brian at Paramount 15/4 - emailed Vinnie at Dreamworks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 28. Excerpt from researcher Penelope Chai's feature film archival research spreadsheet, dated 11 August 2014
Even when entertaining the most optimistic documentary budget scenario, such as the project managing to attract a (rarely granted) Australian broadcast pre-sale for a feature-length documentary, coupled with several lucrative co-production deals with international television stations, we struggled to see how these archival licensing rates would permit the production of a documentary featuring more than 20 minutes’ worth of Jill’s editing craft.

Not wanting to limit free expression and exploration at such an early juncture, a choice presented itself: Either we could mount a sustained campaign to convince staunchly protective licensors to lower their exorbitant rates, or we could pursue archival clearance by claiming fair use (or fair dealing as the legal exception is known in Australian copyright law). Faced by the grim licensing price tags shown above and having recently become intrigued by the clearance practices of Northern Irish writer and filmmaker Mark Cousins, who despite operating on a tight budget (O’Sullivan 2013, 238) still had managed to include hundreds of excerpts from popular films in his landmark documentary series *The Story of Film: An Odyssey* (Cousins 2011), we decided that the fair use/fair dealing alternative deserved a closer look.

### 4.3 Considering a Fair Use/Fair Dealing Approach

We had no rights issues because we determined from the start to use the Fair Use/Fair Dealing rules that permit a scholar to use a small extract of a film. (Cousins in Kramer 2012)

*Fair use* has been described as “a legal exception to United States copyright law” (Curran Bernard and Rabin 2020, 3) that “promotes freedom of expression by permitting the unlicensed use of copyright-protected works in certain circumstances” (US Copyright Office 2021). As fair use is considered an “affirmative defense that can be raised in response to claims by a copyright owner” (Copyright Alliance 2021), creators do not need to inform copyright owners of their intentions prior to material being published in new works.
Section 107 of the *United States Copyright Act 1976* specifies that four factors should be considered for such a use to be considered fair:

- the purpose and character of the use, including whether such use is of a commercial nature or is for non-profit educational purposes;
- the nature of the copyrighted work;
- the amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole; and
- the effect of the use upon the potential market for or value of the copyrighted work.

Legal doctrine regarding copyright in Commonwealth countries, such as Australia, refers to *fair dealing* rather than fair use. Australian fair dealing provisions generally take a more restrictive view than its US fair use counterpart, only allowing copyright material to be used in five ways: research or study, criticism or review, parody or satire, reporting news, judicial proceedings, or professional advice (*Commonwealth of Australia 1968, 57–60*). A sufficient acknowledgement of the work adapted also must be made.

Due to powerful rightsholders’ threat of punitive legal action to stop unauthorised use of their commercial property and the steep legal costs that filmmakers face when defending fair use practices in court, use of the doctrine within the American documentary filmmaking sector has historically been low (Curran Bernard and Rabin, 240). In Australia, the Federal Court’s 2001 judgment in a high-profile case involving rival television networks has led to fair dealing cases being considered “more uncertain than ever” (Handler and Rolph 2003, 420). However, since the publication of *Documentary Filmmakers’ Statement of Best Practices in Fair Use* (*Centre for Media & Social Impact 2005*), which seeks to clarify how the US *Copyright Act*’s ‘fair factors’ relates to the specifics of documentary filmmaking, there is a bit more optimism around its use.

Through its adoption in American legal and business practice, the statement now “makes it possible for film makers to dramatically lower clearance costs while also honouring copyright ownership” (Aufderheide 2007). By providing a framework of principles and limitations which documentary filmmakers (and their researchers, producers and industry partners) can employ when deliberating whether fair use might apply on a specific project, the document has also emboldened entertainment lawyers and insurance companies to support filmmakers.
who, like Cousins, view ‘audio-visual quotations’ as pivotal to their screen storytelling efforts.

However, since “copyright is a national issue” (Donaldson 2014, 510) and fair use/fair dealing exceptions are “not universally accepted and interpretations vary by jurisdiction” (O’Sullivan 2013, 239)—France, for example, has “a strong moral rights tradition” (Cabay and Lambrecht 2015, 16) that gives authors the right of retraction—relying heavily on the fair use/fair dealing exceptions seemed anything but a straightforward proposition for Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible. Although Australia and the US were arguably the key territories for the film’s future distribution, I wanted Jill’s professional biography to be accessible, appreciated and disseminated by audiences worldwide. Relying on promising developments and legal precedents regarding fair use/dealing practices in some territories, felt like an uncertain shield if facing a future defensive battle elsewhere.

Adding further uncertainty regarding the fair use/fair dealing clearance path was the fact that the Best Practices in Fair Use statement, mentioned above, stated that “documentarians typically quote only short and isolated portions of copyrighted works” (Centre for Media & Social Impact 2005, 2). Since an attempt to effectively illustrate various aspects of Jill’s editing craft relied on displaying up to four minutes of footage from individual films, this requirement indicated a potentially reduced ability to mount a successful defense of a fair use/fair dealing approach. Also advocating a risk-averse approach was our production lawyer, who informed me that “if a studio sues you for copyright infringement, it can be hugely expensive and time-consuming, even if you end up winning by arguing fair dealing/fair use.” (email from Caroline Verge to author, 9 March 2017). Given the project’s international ambitions and intended scope of feature film archive, we decided that further attempts to lower, or even waive, the licensing rates by engaging directly with top executives at Hollywood clip licensing departments should be prioritised.
4.4 Taking a ‘Most Favoured Nation’ Approach

We took a lot of executives to lunch.

(Alan Heim in Skweres 2005, accessed Dec 2021)

In the literature review in Chapter 1, I noted that a key inspiration for Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible was the 2004 feature documentary Cutting Edge: The Magic of Movie Editing (Apple 2004). In order “to illustrate the evolution of editing from the early days to the present” (Skweres 2005), this production had somehow secured free access to almost 300 clips, many of them from popular Hollywood films. In interviews from the film’s release period, Alan Heim—the film’s producer and the Academy Award–winning film editor of films such as Network (Lumet 1976), All That Jazz (Fosse 1979), and Hair (Forman 1979)—hinted that they had not gone down the fair use route. To find out more about their strategy, I resolved to contact Alan directly.

In 2016, as we prepared to travel to London to film Jill working on Will (Kapur et al. 2017), I learned that our London filming dates would coincide with the ACE’s annual Editfest London event. As Alan Heim was scheduled to speak at the conference, I arranged to interview him for my project. Early on in our conversation I asked how he and Wendy Apple had managed to secure access to all the fiction film footage in their landmark editing documentary.

Alan: Luckily, she came up with a way to get the clips for nothing.
Axel: Really?
Alan: Yeah. I don’t think it will ever happen again.
Axel: I’ll have to have a talk to her… I’m up against Fox Studios.
Alan: I don’t envy you … We heard that Warner Bros was going to be the toughest to get the good rates. So we went through all the other studios first. And we offered to take them to breakfast or lunch. Not a serious bribe, just “let’s have a talk”… And everybody said “We’ll match Warner Bros”. So we went and took the Warner Bros. person to lunch … She loved editors. Knew a few. And she said: “Oh you can have the clips for nothing.”

(Alan Heim in Grigor 2016a)
Key to Heim’s and Apple’s licensing effort was a legal mechanism called ‘Most Favoured Nation’ (MFN). It is a legal phrase borrowed from international treaties that describes “when one nation is willing to sign a deal with one or more nations but want to make sure they get a deal equal to the best deal offered to any one of the other nations” (Donaldson 2014, 338). Although the earliest origins of MFN can be traced back to trade policies of the twelfth century, the clause “spread with the growth of commerce in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries” (Weiler, Cho, Feichtner and Arato 2017, 3). Whereas MFN remains most common during negotiations regarding tariffs and trade, the term is frequently used in contractual dealings between licensors and licensees in the area of film and music production.

When applied to the field of film and entertainment law, MFN is frequently invoked by producers and their legal representatives during licensing negotiations with music owners and publishers. The licensing of synchronisation rights (sync rights for short)—i.e., “the right to reproduce the music on the soundtrack of the movie in synchronization with video or filmed images” (Litwak 2016, 249)—often requires clearance from both the owner/publisher of the musical composition (publishing rights) and also from the owner of the master recording that was used in the film’s soundtrack. Hence, sync licensing often becomes a negotiation between three parties. To help reach an outcome agreeable, MFN can sometimes be a useful tool to settle on a licensing fee structure. Before Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible, this licensing scenario was the only area in which I had previously encountered the term.

When it comes to licensing visual archive, MFN negotiations are often shunned in documentary filmmaking circles as they can introduce “more ambiguity and tension into the rights process” (Aufderheide and Jaszi 2004, 12), which “makes budgeting unreliable, forces filmmakers into harsh aesthetic choices, and sometimes threatens to derail a production” (13). Despite misgivings about MFN’s fragile, house-of-cards-like nature and the long list of rightsholders who would need to agree to play by similar rules, our limited archive budget meant we could not afford not to try. But it was also clear that we had to find a way to plead our case in person, as Apple and Heim had done.

Whereas Warner Bros had been the key piece in Heim’s and Apple’s licensing puzzle, Twentieth Century Fox was ours. Fox had ownership in three films without which a biography about Jill Bilcock would most definitely feel incomplete: Romeo + Juliet
(Luhrmann 1996), *Moulin Rouge!* (Luhrmann 2001) and *Road to Perdition* (Mendes 2002). With Baz Luhrmann’s name writ large on two of these three properties, he appeared to be an important key to convince Fox to unlock their vault.

Prior to mid-2016, our email communication with Fox’s clip licensing department had yielded no concessions to their original licensing rates in 2014. So when paying a visit to Fox Studios in Los Angeles in September 2016 to interview Fox post-production executive Fred Chandler and Fox music executive Anton Monsted about their collaborations with Jill, we also made sure to reach out directly to the clip licensing department. During a short in-person chat in the lobby of the Fox Plaza building, a helpful member of the clip licensing team indicated that presenting Fox with clear evidence of documentary support from film directors associated with the titles we were seeking to license *could* be a way to soften Fox standard licensing terms.

The following week, we put this suggestion into practice when we met up with director Baz Luhrmann in New York. After our interview with him, I explained that our documentary about Jill hinged on receiving archival concessions from Fox. I asked if he might put in a kind word for us. He said he would. Shortly thereafter I received the following email from Paul Watters, general manager of BazMark:

> Baz asked me to handle this, as Bazmark Gen Mgr I can certainly represent Bazmark’s position and speak directly with clips and licensing at Fox on a regular basis. There may be other parties connected to obtaining permissions e.g. the actors but I can certainly pass on his support and will copy you.

(Email from Paul Watters to author, 25 October 2016)

The same day, I received the following message—together with an amended licensing agreement—from Fox’s director of clip licensing:

> I’m re-sending this, but I’m removing any license fees. We will be able to do this request gratis, on a most favored nation basis.

(Email from Fox clip licensing director to author, 25 October 2016)
With Fox having agreed to our gratis, MFN terms, attention turned to securing similar licensing deals from the other fiction film rightsholders. Australian rightsholders were largely easy to convince, in large parts thanks to effective lobbying by our executive producer Sue Maslin and the high esteem in which the film industry holds Jill. But on the other side of the Pacific Ocean, Universal Studios—copyright owner of *Elizabeth* (Kapur 1998) and *Catch a Fire* (Noyce 2006)—remained a steadfast and expensive archival stumbling block. Try as I might to convince them to match Fox’s term, they would have none of it.

I’m sorry but based on these broad rights and this large amount of footage, we cannot do this. Also, take into account that you have to clear the Music and Talent separately. (Email from NBC Universal clip licensing director to author, 13 February 2017)

As I had met and interviewed Shekhar Kapur in London a few months earlier, I decided it was time to turn to him directly and ask for the same favour Baz Luhrmann had previously granted us. Shekhar swiftly emailed Universal:

I am getting in touch to urge you to let Axel Grigor, the director and producer of the documentary on Jill Bilcock, use clips of my film *Elizabeth*. Baz Luhrmann has spoken to Fox who have very kindly allowed Axel to use footage from both *Romeo & Juliet* and *Moulin Rouge*, for free. I am asking you to extend the same goodwill to him for *Elizabeth*, which plays a central role in the documentary.

Jill is not only an incredible editor, but one of my closest friends. She is a champion of female talent and power in this industry, and I would like to make sure that I do everything in my power to ensure that the documentary is able to capture that, especially if they need to feature Elizabeth footage to do so.

The current fees per minute are extraordinarily high. I wholeheartedly support the making of this documentary, and would be more than grateful if you, like Fox, would too. (Email from Shekhar Kapur to NBC Universal clip licensing director, copied to author, 13 February 2017)
The same day Shekhar sent his email, Maslin also reached out to a connection of hers at Focus Features (a production company that is part of Universal Pictures) to see if he might put in a good word about us to Universal’s clip licensing department. The following day, the head of Universal licensing got back to me.

I heard about other films being used in the film and we can proceed on a Most Favoured Nations basis with all other film studios contributing footage to the film. Hopefully, this is a better option for you.

(Email from NBC Universal clip licensing director to author, 14 February 2017)

Once Universal agreed to the MFN rules, their kind support of the project grew. Up to that point, I had only had access to standard-definition footage from *Catch a Fire* (Noyce 2006) through a purchase of a DVD. (All other fiction films I had managed to source on high-definition Blu-Ray or via file transfer from rightsholders.) Now, Universal was even offering to send me high-definition excerpts from their archive master for free. This generous act suddenly made it possible to expand the documentary’s audio-visual analysis of Bilcock’s craft and her collaboration with director Phillip Noyce on *Catch a Fire*. Universal also went further than Fox when it came to permitting use of their footage in promos and trailers for the film.

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Figure 29. Excerpt from media licensing usage agreement between Faraway Productions and NBC Universal.
During the remaining fiction film clip licensing process, Fox and Universal—the two studios whose expensive per-minute price tags had haunted our filmmaking process for so long—were great passive partners. By showing other rightsholders that these two major Hollywood studios were willing to license close to 18 minutes of their precious properties to us via a rare gratis+worldwide+in perpetuity+MFN deal, many remaining negotiations quickly took a positive turn. Rather than face a budgetary blowout in the visual archive category, we were now able to divert much-needed funds to other areas. Below is a breakdown of the film footage used from Jill’s films in our documentary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TITLE (director, year)</th>
<th>RIGHTSHOLDER</th>
<th>DURATION (mm:ss)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strikebound (Richard Lowenstein, 1984)</td>
<td>Ghost Pictures Pty Ltd</td>
<td>01:08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dogs In Space (Richard Lowenstein, 1986)</td>
<td>Ghost Pictures Pty Ltd</td>
<td>00:56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evil Angels (Fred Schepisi, 1988)</td>
<td>Warner Bros</td>
<td>00:41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strictly Ballroom (Baz Luhrmann, 1992)</td>
<td>M &amp; A Film Corporation Pty Ltd</td>
<td>04:05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muriel’s Wedding (P.J. Hogan, 1994)</td>
<td>House and Moorhouse Films Pty Ltd</td>
<td>02:11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romeo + Juliet (Baz Luhrmann, 1996)</td>
<td>Twentieth Century Fox</td>
<td>03:24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head On (Ana Kokkinos, 1998)</td>
<td>Head On Productions Pty Ltd</td>
<td>03:01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth (Shekhar Kapur, 1998)</td>
<td>Universal Studios LLC</td>
<td>03:22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Dish (Rob Sitch, 2000)</td>
<td>Working Dog Sales Pty Ltd</td>
<td>01:43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moulin Rouge! (Baz Luhrmann, 2001)</td>
<td>Twentieth Century Fox</td>
<td>04:41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road to Perdition (Sam Mendes, 2002)</td>
<td>Twentieth Century Fox</td>
<td>02:43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese Story (Sue Brooks, 2003)</td>
<td>Gecko Films Pty Ltd</td>
<td>03:13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catch a Fire (Phillip Noyce, 2006)</td>
<td>Universal Studios LLC</td>
<td>03:03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Dog (Kriv Stenders, 2011)</td>
<td>Good Dog Enterprises Pty Ltd</td>
<td>02:54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Dressmaker (Jocelyn Moorhouse, 2015)</td>
<td>Film Art Media Pty Ltd</td>
<td>01:18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental (P.J. Hogan, 2012)</td>
<td>Mental Holdings Pty Ltd</td>
<td>00:06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will (Shekhar Kapur, 2017)</td>
<td>TNT Originals, Inc.</td>
<td>00:09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL FICTION FILM ARCHIVE: 38:38

As our luck turned, attention was also given to shoring up affiliated talent clearances tied in with nominated clips. Fortuitously, the six actors (see list below) who needed to provide consent before fiction film rightsholders could release their footage to us, also did so gratis and in perpetuity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performer</th>
<th>Film Title</th>
<th>Method of approval</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Toni Collette</td>
<td>Muriel’s Wedding</td>
<td>Performance release form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel Griffiths</td>
<td>Muriel’s Wedding</td>
<td>Performance release form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ewan McGregor</td>
<td>Moulin Rouge!</td>
<td>Ok given via agent email (UTA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicole Kidman</td>
<td>Moulin Rouge!</td>
<td>Ok given via agent email (Shanahan)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 30. Breakdown of archive from fiction projects edited by Jill Bilcock used in Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible Artist
Newman’s Own Foundation, the company managing the estate of late actor Paul Newman, proved to be the only challenge. After some anxious back-and-forth emailing with the foundation’s lawyer in Connecticut, trying to convince them to let us use footage of the actor in the diegetically silent shootout scene in Road to Perdition (Mendes 2001), this agreement fell into place only days before the broadcast version of the documentary went to air on ABC TV on 14 March 2017.

4.5 Licensing Music: A Long and Winding Synch Road

Music often saves something for me… Blessed, the music.
(Bilcock in Grigor 2014)

As seen above, unless one is working on an extremely well-resourced production or has the courage, commitment and legal support to go down an exclusively fair use/dealing route, negotiating favourable terms with rightsholders of fiction films requires persistence, time and helping hands from lofty quarters. Yet, compared with music licensing, which is notorious for being “a particularly fraught acquisition area” (Aufderheide and Jaszi 2004, 15), haggling over the rights and price of visual archive usage can easily seem rather straightforward.

There are two key reasons for the added level of complexity in licensing music: rights are often layered and each deal has to be done on a case-by-case basis (Aufderheide and Jaszi 2004). Furthermore, getting the rights to use recorded music “is more complicated, and requires fees and clearances that involve any or all of the following: composer, artist(s), publishers, and the record company” (Rabiger 2015, 492). Considering then that the final music cue sheet (included in the appendix) we submitted to APRA/AMCOS when finishing Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible lists eighty-five separate compositions—a total of 53 minutes and 43 seconds of music—it is easy to see why music licensing remained a consistent topic of debate and a budgetary worry throughout production.
There was, however, no getting around that a clear and appropriate display of Jill’s art in the documentary meant it was unthinkable to exclude the very music she had decided should accompany her own edited images. As stated in my research aims, it was crucial that all audio-visual references to Bilcock’s creative expression as a film editor included in the documentary remained as intact as possible. While we, the producers of the documentary, did consider taking a fair use/dealing approach in regard to licensing the music, we eventually concluded that this would be unwise. Words of caution from our production lawyer Caroline Verge played a key role in this decision, pointing out that “music is a particularly litigious field and it may be harder to justify not clearing music in one territory when you have cleared it in others” (email from Verge to the author, 5 March 2019). Professional experience had also taught us that careless handling of music rights could quickly lead to issues with copyright management organisations, make jittery film festival directors suddenly cancel premieres, and broadcasters swiftly withdraw scheduled screenings. It felt important to be safe rather than sorry.

Realising the amount of research and complex negotiations that would be required to firstly track down the owners and then clear the many cues of music contained within the licensed film clips, I sought help from Melbourne-based researcher Penelope Chai and our Brisbane-based production manager Tara Wardrop. Together, we created and maintained a growing list of tracks, artists, composers and rightsholders related to film clips that figured in the documentary’s evolving picture edit.

While assembling this information and making contact with rightsholders, it soon became clear that many songwriters and artists were deeply grateful for the collaboration they had had with Jill on various films projects. Their affection for Jill helped us clear much Australian-made music for free. Acclaimed Australian composers David Hirschfelder and Cezary Skubiszewski—who were both interviewed and feature in the documentary—kindly allowed gratis use of all their respective music included in archive clips from Strictly Ballroom, Elizabeth, The Dressmaker and Red Dog. David kindly also allowed us to use his original music from The Dressmaker in other areas of the documentary.
The reception of our licensing requests amongst rightsholders based outside Australia’s borders were less amorous. Whereas Jill Bilcock’s name and the Australian films she was associated with often helped expedite the handling of domestic license requests, overseas record labels and artists treated us as simply another customer in the queue. In retrospect, I regret being the person in the negotiating driver’s seat when asking for rights to use 30 seconds of ABBA’s “Waterloo”, a track firmly associated with the film *Muriel’s Wedding* (Hogan 1994). Due to my relative inexperience in dealing with a large record label (Universal Music) and music publisher (Universal Publishing Group), I ended up agreeing to an MFN deal between both parties that cost our budget $4000—the single most expensive archive license for the project. From that point on, it became clear that an experienced music supervisor had to come onboard to help us clear the remaining international music licenses.

A music supervisor ensures that “all music within the film soundtrack is cleared and used in accordance within the legal rights of the licensor” (Lewandowski 2010, 865). Within the context of the Australian film industry, the music supervisor is often viewed as a key creative collaborator, sometimes deciding “which tracks are selected for the film and even suggesting certain pieces to the director” (865). On the recommendation of Sue Maslin, we contacted music supervisor Kate Dean, who had previously helped Maslin with music licensing on *The Dressmaker* (Moorhouse 2015).

![Figure 32. Excerpt from Music Clearances Spreadsheet, 19 September 2017](image-url)
In the months leading up to the documentary’s Australian theatrical release in July 2018, Kate’s expedient and expert guidance helped untangle the film’s most complex and multi-layered music cues. For the track *Pretty Piece of Flesh*, which features in the service station scene early in *Romeo + Juliet*, she had to negotiate with five separate parties to secure the publishing rights. To license seven seconds of this track for use in the documentary, it took weeks of persistent nudging on her behalf to flip this music title from red to green in the music clearance spreadsheet.

In the end, the impact of the larger-than-expected cost to license the 54 minutes of music heard in *Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible* was cushioned by savings made by taking a proactive MFN approach in regards to licensing fiction film archive. In deciding to directly engage with footage and music rightsholders, while simultaneously pursuing an active dialogue with many of the leading creatives involved in the making of the images and music we wished to use in our documentary, it is my sincere hope that our documentary effort has been granted a more visible future and that appreciation of Jill Bilcock’s significant contributions to editing and cinema will continue to grow in the long term.

Figure 33. Arriving at Adelaide Film Festival with screening copy of *Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible*, October 2017
CONCLUSION

A drama critic might well write the life of an actor, a musicologist of a composer. It would be hard, if not impossible, to write a life of a mountaineer or a gardener, a chemist or an architect, with no experience—or at least no understanding at all—of those professions.

(Lee 2009, 12)

This exegesis has investigated my documentary filmmaking practice in the two films produced as part of my practice-based research: Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible (Grigor 2017a) and Jill Bilcock: The Art of Film Editing (Grigor 2017b). Created in response to lingering misconceptions regarding film editors’ contributions to filmmaking and intended to address the lack of audio-visual studies of individual film editors’ lives and careers, my thesis films offer a highly visual introduction to the professional biography and craft of the renowned Australian film editor Jill Bilcock AC, ASE, ACE. Through the metonymy of one editor’s life, I assert that I have given audiences access to a more generally applicable view of how influential creative editors can be in the filmmaking process.

I have charted how my artistic research emerged from formative and professional experiences as a film editor, as well as from a concern that director-focused, auteur-driven accounts of filmmaking conceals discussion about the vital contribution of film editors. As a teacher of film editing, I have found that the lack of biographical documentaries about prominent film editors’ creative lives wraps an unhelpful cloak of invisibility around the profession and art of film editing. This has resulted in the teaching of film editing at film schools becoming an unnecessarily impersonal affair, with instructors left little choice but to focus on imparting technical and theoretical knowledge rather than engaging students in discussions and analyses of significant editors’ craft and contributions. When considering the bank of biographical resources readily available for teachers of cinematography or film direction with what is currently on offer for editing teachers, the contributions of the resources I have created to the field becomes apparent.

Despite film editing being recognised as the invention that helped transform the novelty of moving images into the art of cinema (Murch in Crittenden 2006, ix), scarce attention to
individual editors’ craft since the dawn of cinema has allowed opaque and impersonal descriptions of editing practitioners (e.g., invisible artists) and descriptions of their professional practice as a “hidden art” (Brownlow 1976) to proliferate throughout film history. The historical absence of public and scholarly interest in noteworthy film editors’ lives—artists whose talent and tenacity helped breathe life into the twentieth century’s “most influential media” (Thompson and Bordwell 1994, xxv)—has allowed basic misconceptions about editors’ work to take hold.

For contemporary proof of editors feeling “unheard, disrespected and abandoned” (Giardina 2022), one needs only to look at the outrage sparked by the decision made by the Academy of Motion Picture and Sciences to exclude the feature editing category from the live telecast of the 2022 Oscars ceremony (Kay 2022). In Europe, echoes of film editors’ struggle to be fairly acknowledged for their efforts and their displeasure of being treated as “second-class citizens in the artistic realm of moviemaking” (Tonguette 2022) can also be heard in the recent push by Swedish film editors to receive a share of royalties generated by projects they work on (Swedish Union for Performing Arts and Film 2018). The formation in 2019 of Tempo—an umbrella organisation facilitating dialogue and collaboration between the world’s film editing associations (Tempo 2019)—is another significant sign that editors are becoming more vocal in demanding their rightful place in the sun. However, to attain increased industrial and public recognition of film editors’ work and contributions, new levels of outspokenness, bravery and visibility on an individual level is also required.

After establishing the capacity for long-form biographical documentaries to inspire greater interest in film artists’ careers—evidenced by documentary films about prominent directors and cinematographers which I discuss in this exegesis—I make the case that Jill Bilcock’s charisma, pioneering excellence, high-profile collaborations, and highly regarded position within the Australian film industry makes her an ideal subject for similar treatment. In fashioning an exuberant screen portrayal of Bilcock’s life and craft, I argue that presenting her story may help spark a wider interest in how her life and creativity have helped shape not only the many beloved films she has edited but also Australia’s screen identity. For audiences unfamiliar with the creative process of film editing, the documentary’s intimate and highly visual exploration of a single film editor’s creative life helps turn a complex profession into something personal, emotional and more tangible.
The choice to focus my research efforts on directing and producing a documentary portrayal about a prestigious subject such as Jill Bilcock, whose body of work is widely known and appreciated, was also crucial when seeking the support of broadcasters and funding bodies. Despite initial doubts by the Australian national broadcaster whether an editor’s practice could be told visually, our production team touting Bilcock’s affiliation with many prominent film titles and some of the biggest names in Australian and world cinema helped the conversation get started. Enlisting the support of Sue Maslin (one of Australia’s top film producers and a long-time colleague of Jill’s) as the documentary’s executive producer afforded the project crucial legitimacy and access, significantly enhancing the film’s fundraising prospects. Another key approach in addressing sub-question four (*How can I gain access to production finance and build the industry support required to produce a long-form biographical documentary about Jill Bilcock intended for Australian and international distribution?*) as well as helping me successfully manage the demands of producing a long-form documentary, was to share producer responsibilities with my filmmaking partner Faramarz K-Rahber. Through a strategic choice of subject and the support of highly skilled collaborators, I gained the resources and confidence required to attempt an ambitious illustration of a relatively unknown life and an underappreciated profession.

Key to gaining Jill’s trust—in me, the documentary team and the biographical approach—was forging a biographer–subject relationship built on common ground. Although my own filmography is meagre in comparison to Jill’s, our many shared experiences from the ‘editing trenches’—along with a mutual dose of resentment that we editors do not receive enough kudos for our painstaking work—sparked and sustained the lengthy documentary effort. Despite the project ending up taking considerably longer to complete than envisaged at the outset, Bilcock’s confidence in my stated mission—that audiences would gain new and helpful perspectives on film editing through a film-based investigation of her life and career—provided my team and me with the conviction that pursuing a long-form telling of her life was both appropriate and achievable. This also meant I had continued access to her, which was crucial to answering sub-question two (*How can I gain and sustain Jill Bilcock’s trust in my ability to adequately portray her craft and career through documentary filmmaking?*) as well as the overriding research question.
An attempt to write a biography of a film editor’s life that relies on an exploration of craft rather than hagiography requires the author to commit to a deep investigation of the subject’s social world—past and present. By devoting considerable time and effort to contacting and interviewing thirty-one of Jill Bilcock’s closest collaborators and her two older brothers—a process helped enormously by being able to demonstrate Bilcock’s active support of the project—many new critical perspectives and insightful anecdotes regarding her past creative contributions were collected. By pitching my undertaking as a concerted and communal effort to herald Bilcock’s place in Australian cinema history, I was able to constructively answer the first sub-question (What kind of biographical methods and processes should I employ or avoid when writing an audio-visual biography of Jill Bilcock?) as well as the third sub-question (How can I secure the involvement of Jill Bilcock’s collaborators and family in a film-based exploration of her life and career?).

Capturing observational moments of Jill’s contemporary editing process proved complex due to Bilcock’s determination to safeguard the privacy of her creative partnership with director Jocelyn Moorhouse on the feature film The Dressmaker (Moorhouse 2015). However, as demonstrated by the making of the short film Hello (Arwin 2015), an effective way to address sub-question five (What is required to capture observational scenes of Jill Bilcock’s present-day working practices and collaborations?) was to instigate and produce a bespoke film project that appealed to her lifelong passion for nurturing exciting new filmmaking talent. My research also led to the discovery of rarely seen observational material of her working with director Baz Luhrmann at her home during editing of Romeo + Juliet (Luhrmann 1996). Accompanying Jill to overseas film festivals and documenting her participation in editing masterclasses and awards ceremonies provided further useful glimpses of her active participation in local and global filmmaking communities.

My effort to produce an effective documentary about Bilcock’s working biography has been closely tied to an ability to actively reflect on my first-hand experiences as an editor and line producer and how a transition to first-time director-producer impacts the documentary production process. This need to reflect on my past and present filmmaking experiences relates to research sub-question six (As an experienced film editor and line producer, what advantages and disadvantages do I have as a first-time director-producer of a biographical documentary about Jill Bilcock?). Throughout the four years it took to complete Jill Bilcock:
Dancing the Invisible, I maintained a research diary where I jotted down my thoughts about how to best illustrate the work of an editor. Many ruminations on the collaborative processes between editors and director were shared through informal conversations with Jill and the contact I had with her many collaborators. Having to divide my time between my artistic research, teaching editing, and cutting other feature-length documentaries also helped a reflective discourse thrive. Regular discussions with my filmmaking partner Faramarz K-Rahber provided further opportunities to reflect on how an editor’s craft compares with that of the director. By allowing my past and present professional experiences as a film editor to guide and inform the many unfamiliar actions required of me as the generator and gatherer of biographical material, a richer portrait—in sync with my own experiences and ‘home truths’ about editing—could emerge.

In making Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible, my overriding argument is that a writer of a film editor’s life benefits enormously from working with the very medium that the subject’s own life has been devoted to: film. Addressing sub-question seven (What production strategies are required to locate and gain access to rich and illustrative audio-visual evidence of Jill Bilcock’s past life?) required a persistent and methodical inquiry of personal archives (Jill’s, her family’s and her many collaborators) and institutional archives. These processes delivered much rare footage and photos of Jill Bilcock to the documentary edit suite, ensuring that the film could represent both the ‘historical Jill’ and the ‘present-day Jill’. By juxtaposing moving images from the films that Jill Bilcock has edited with audio-visual material that authentically illustrate and emphasise her deep involvement in filmmaking process, I demonstrate that Bilcock’s creative choices, craft skills, collaborative methods, personal temperament and storytelling inclinations to a large degree control what audiences get to experience on screen. In a sense, as Bilcock’s biographer, I offer viewers an opportunity to see, hear and feel how her unique outlook on life, personality and professional experience manifests itself in her art. Through spending adequate time with Jill, exploring her filmography and her collaborations, audiences come away with a realisation that professional editors are not only highly skilled technicians and creatives but, indeed, film authors.

Getting sufficient access to Bilcock’s ubiquitous art and addressing sub-question eight (Given the difficulty and cost involved in licensing fiction film footage, how can a low-budget, independently funded documentary film manage to secure rights to footage that will allow the
film to portray the craft of a renowned motion picture editor?) proved a challenging but ultimately fruitful experience. Faced with the harsh reality that displays of a prominent film editor’s work outside of its natural context carries a hefty licensing price tag, a documentary biographer operating on a limited budget faces two choices: either drastically modifying their ambitions or seeking novel solutions. Desperate to do justice to Jill’s achievements, I chose the latter. My decision to meet and interview as many of Jill’s key collaborators as possible would now prove crucial. By appealing directly to high-profile directors—most notably directors Baz Luhrmann and Shekhar Kapur—to act as my advocate and intermediary during negotiations with rightsholders, favourable licensing deals were struck. Relying on a legal mechanism known as ‘Most Favoured Nation’, close to forty minutes of fiction film footage was licensed gratis. In achieving this, a new archival route and new creative possibilities presents itself to future intrepid film biographers seeking to portray the life and craft of a film editor through the medium of film itself.

At the heart of this practice-based research project is a paradox: in seeking to demonstrate—through biographical documentary filmmaking—why editors and directors deserve to share the acclaim when a film does well, I had to become a director. By engaging in this role reversal, I have gained a new appreciation for the order and focus an experienced film editor can bring to a director’s vision. Through the skill, patience and imagination of film editor Scott Walton, the raw documentary material gathered by Faramarz K-Rahber and I was beautifully transformed into the broadcast version Jill Bilcock: The Art of Film Editing. In successfully managing to illustrate Jill Bilcock’s career in a short format, Scott effectively paved the way for me to build on his work through my editing of the feature-length version Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible.

As an editor seeking to tell another editor’s story, I have had the privilege to explore not just the inspirational journey and unparalleled craft of Jill Bilcock AC, ASE, ACE, but also to reflect on my own creative identity and practice. Having an intimate understanding and appreciation for the complex technical, collaborative and narrative challenges that each film presents to the editor has been an enormous asset during my investigation of Bilcock’s career. It is my sincere hope that my efforts open the door to not only further screen portraits of great editors and editing, but indeed to more films about crafts and craftspeople who have hitherto not had their stories told.
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Non-Thesis Films

In my exegesis I refer to one short film and four feature-length documentaries I edited prior to my doctoral research period. I also reference two feature-length documentaries which I edited parallel to the production of the thesis films. My contributions to these non-thesis films have been instrumental to my development as a film editor and are closely linked to my desire to elevate the understanding of film editors’ pivotal role in the filmmaking process. In this appendix, I offer brief information about each of these film titles.

McAllister Field

Short Drama
2000, Australia
7 mins

Key credits: Writer, Director, Producer, Editor
Producers: Axel Grigor, Sally Johnson
Production company: Peak Hour Productions
Financing: Student film at Queensland College of Art, Griffith University

Synopsis

When thick black smoke and strange objects rise out of farmer McAllister's field, suspicious neighbours fear the worst. Has the unpredictable old man set his field on fire, or is he up to something less harmful?
Fahimeh’s Story

Feature Documentary
2004, Australia
83 mins

Key credits: Film Editor, Line Producer

Director: Faramarz K-Rahber
Producer: Ian Lang
Production company: Faraway Productions
Financing: Australian Film Corporation. SBS, Pacific Film and Television Corporation, Pro-Cam Digipost

Synopsis

Fahimeh’s Story is an observational documentary about a vivacious 47-year-old Iranian woman who migrated with her children to Australia after fleeing an unhappy, arranged marriage to a husband who she could not divorce under Iranian law. Five years on she has fallen in love with and married John, a 77-year-old Australian ex-army officer and Returned Services League member. John is now converting to Islam in order to better relate to his young wife. Both John’s and Fahimeh’s children are unhappy about the marriage. A few months later, Hossain, the Iranian ex-husband, arrives in Australia looking forward to seeing his wife and family again. He does not know his wife has remarried....
**Donkey In Lahore**

Feature Documentary  
2007, Australia/Pakistan  
117 mins

Key credits: Film Editor, Line Producer

Director & Producer: Faramarz K-Rahber  
Executive Producer: Mark Chapman  
Production company: Faraway Productions  
Financing: Film Finance Corporation, SBS

Synopsis

Brian, an Australian Gothic and a puppeteer, falls in love with a young Muslim woman in Lahore, during a short visit to Pakistan in 2000. Upon his return to Australia, he decides to convert to Islam and return to Pakistan to seek her hand in marriage. Despite Amber’s wish to marry Brian, her family is unimpressed by the idea of her marrying an unknown foreigner. What unfolds is a long and difficult process that leads to frustration, disbelief, and despair. However, Brian's love and determination is remarkable, if not bordering on obsession. While he comes close, he does not give up on their love.
My America

Feature Documentary
2011, Australia/USA/Hungary/Kenya/Iran/China
87 mins

Key credit: Film Editor

Director: Peter Hegedus
Producer: Jane Jeffes
Executive Producer: Trish Lake
Production company: Soul Vision Films, Firefly Productions, Freshwater Pictures
Financing: Screen Australia, Screen Queensland, Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg, RTL Klub, Rialto

Synopsis
Australian filmmaker Peter Hegedus grew up in socialist Hungary and overdosed on American movies and the values he thought they promoted: truth, justice, and hope for a safer world. But twenty years later, he wonders whether the America of his dreams ever existed. From the streets of Tehran to Tiananmen Square and from the refugee camps of Africa to the White House, My America follows Peter on a six-year quest to find out what happened to the America of his childhood.
The Trouble with St Mary’s

Feature Documentary
2011, Australia
72 mins

Key credits: Film Editor, Narration Writer

Director & Producer: Peter Hegedus
Production company: Soul Vision Films, WildFury
Financing: ABC-TV, Screen Queensland, Screen Australia

Synopsis

In February 2009 the St Mary’s church in Brisbane is at the centre of one of the biggest rifts in the history of the Australian Catholic Church. 72-year-old, Parish Priest Father Peter Kennedy is sacked by the Catholic Church for unorthodox practices. The fight that ensues will result in the exodus of an entire Catholic community as they follow their priest into the unknown.
Frackman

Feature Documentary
2015, Australia/USA
95 mins

Key credit: Film Editor

Director: Richard Todd
Production company: Aquarius Productions, Freshwater Pictures, Smith&Nasht
Financing: Screen Australia, Screen Queensland, ScreenWest, Goodpitch
Australia

Synopsis

This is a film about ordinary people caught up in a modern-day multinational “gas rush” to secure and exploit coal seam gas. Accidental activist Dayne ‘The Frackman’ Pratzky was building a simple home on his property, until the gas company arrived, demanding to install wells. So began his transformation from knockabout pig-shooter to passionate activist, and a David and Goliath battle against a $70 billion industry. Along the way he finds love, tragedy and triumph - and a few laughs.
Ella

Feature Documentary
2016, Australia
86 mins

Key credits: Film Editor, Co-Writer

Director: Douglas Watkin
Producer: Veronica Fury
Production company: WildBear Entertainment
Financing: Ronin Films, Melbourne International Film Festival Premiere Fund, Screen Queensland, Screen Australia

Synopsis

In October 2012, Ella Havelka became the first Indigenous dancer to be invited into The Australian Ballet in its 50-year history. It was an announcement that made news headlines nationwide. A descendant of the Wiradjuri people, we follow Ella’s inspirational journey from the regional town of Dubbo and onto the world stage of The Australian Ballet. Featuring intimate interviews, dynamic dance sequences, and a stunning array of archival material, this moving documentary follows Ella as she explores her cultural identity and gives us a rare glimpse into life as an elite ballet dancer within the largest company in the southern hemisphere.
Jill Bilcock’s Filmography

The following is a list of feature films and drama series, produced between 1984 and 2020, where Jill Bilcock receives a film editing credit.


*Dogs In Space* (1986) dir. Richard Lowenstein


*Till There Was You* (1991) dir. John Seale

*Strictly Ballroom* (1992) dir. Baz Luhrmann


*Muriel’s Wedding* (1994) dir. P.J. Hogan

*I.Q.* (1994) dir. Fred Schepisi


*The Dish* (2000) dir. Rob Sitch


*Road to Perdition* (2002) dir. Sam Mendes


*Blessed* (2009) dir. Ana Kokkinos

*Don’t Be Afraid of the Dark* (2010) dir. Troy Nixey


*Mental* (2012) dir. P.J. Hogan


Ride Like a Girl (2019) dir. Rachel Griffiths
High Ground (2020) dir. Stephen Johnson
ABC Documentary Proposal (November 2013)

The following short proposal was written by the author and sent to ABC Arts commissioner Mandy Chang in November 2013. Contact details have been removed.

DANCING THE INVISIBLE is a vibrant and intimate documentary about one of Australia’s most distinctive and influential film artists – film editor Jill Bilcock.

In a colourful career that spans over 40 years, her body of work includes much-loved films such as *Strictly Ballroom*, *Romeo+Juliet*, *Moulin Rouge!, Muriel’s Wedding*, *Japanese Story*, *Catch A Fire*, *Red Dog*, *Head On*, *Dogs in Space*, *Elizabeth* and *Road to Perdition*.

Highly sought after by top film studios and leading international film directors, she remains a fierce supporter of new and independent voices, having helped launch and elevate the careers of filmmakers such as Baz Luhrmann, Jocelyn Moorhouse, P.J. Hogan, Sam Mendes, Shekhar Kapur and Ana Kokkino.

And yet, despite her indelible imprint on the Australian and international film landscape, she remains relatively unknown outside of film circles.

**About the Film**

Thanks to Jill’s generous support, DANCING THE INVISIBLE is imagined as a rich, largely observational, long-form documentary about a bold visual artist whose life and career is built on a love for leaps into the unknown.

In this film, viewers get the rare opportunity to see Jill in full flight, observing how her choreography of images, sound, motion and emotion results in a film ready to be enjoyed by audiences worldwide.

Away from the editing room, we also experience other sides of her active life – the painter, mentor, teacher, family person, human rights activist and avid traveller.

Weaved in with these observational moments are interviews with Jill, her close friends, family, collaborators (past and present), actors, editors and film critics.

Extracts from films she has cut, vividly highlight how her creative decisions have left a lasting impression, inspiring and affecting filmmakers and film lovers around the world.

Through these insights into her own story and those she has helped sculpt, viewers will come to know a remarkably creative woman whose life and craft defies categorisation.
About the Team

Axel Grigor and Faramarz K-Rahber have written, directed, produced and edited award-winning documentary films since 2001.

Their first feature documentary, *Fahimeh’s Story* (2004), was nominated for an AFI award for best direction. Their second feature film *Donkey In Lahore* (2007) had its world premiere at International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam and screened in competition at Tribeca Film Festival.

Their films frequently feature at international film festivals and have been sold to broadcast television stations globally.

Co-owners of Brisbane-based Faraway Productions Pty Ltd, they currently have several documentaries and documentary series in various stages of development and production.
DANCING THE INVISIBLE

Feature Documentary Treatment

by Axel Grigor

Date: 1 August 2015

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PRE-TITLE SCENE (1 min)

A blonde, 60-something Australian woman - all dressed in black, except for a red head scarf - walks energetically through a busy bazaar in Mumbai, India. In her hand is a black and white photograph. She flits from shop to shop, stopping briefly to display the image to sales staff. She asks if they know where the photo was taken. Her voice is clear and sharp, but also somewhat agitated. One by one, the vendors shake their heads, frown or simply smile.

She comes up to the camera and begins chastising the unseen filmmaker for “having dragged her down here”.

Off-screen, the filmmaker can be heard saying “It would be a great way to link the past with your present journey”. Her unimpressed face clearly disagrees. “We keep having this discussion. This should not be about me.”

She storms off. The camera follows.

FILM TITLE: DANCING THE INVISIBLE

OPENING MONTAGE (2 mins)

An exuberant, rapidly edited montage of vibrant moments from films edited by Australian film editor Jill Bilcock. This includes iconic clips from films such as Strictly Ballroom, Moulin Rouge!, Romeo + Juliet, Elizabeth, Red Dog, Japanese Story, Muriel’s Wedding, Road to Perdition, Dogs in Space and many more.

Archive clips are intercut with comments from notable directors and actors who have worked with her, including Cate Blanchett, Rachel Griffiths, Tom Hanks, Nicole Kidman, Leonardo DiCaprio, Geoffrey Rush, Toni Collette, Johnny Depp, Fred Schepisi, Baz Luhrmann, Jocelyn Moorhouse, Sam Mendes, Sue Brooks, Shekhar Kapur, Richard Lowenstein, Ana Kokkinos and Kriv Stenders.

Their comments drill home that Jill isn’t simply one of the best and most sought-after editors on the planet (“a total filmmaker”, “a rebel”, “masterful bullshit detector”), but that she defies the traditional image of what a film editor is like.

Baz Luhrmann remarks that “Jill’s a majestic person. No matter how difficult the day is, she’s makes it majestic. And she’s very funny”.

The montage concludes with Kym Barrett (costume designer and one of Jill’s closest friends) adding enigmatically “But whatever you do, don’t cross her.”

MOUNT ROTHWELL, VICTORIA (1 min)

The sun rises over Mount Rothwell, a vast grassland area east of Melbourne, Victoria. The open, wild landscape is interrupted by a curious cluster of old buildings nestled next to a small hill. A lone, shabby-looking farm house sits atop the hill.
Suddenly, a camera assistant steps in front of the camera, blocking the view with a clapperboard. It reads: “THE DRESSMAKER. Director: Jocelyn Moorhouse. DOP: Don McAlpine”. This is a movie set.

As director and DOP discuss camera placement for an upcoming scene, Jocelyn Moorhouse describes how Jill, despite not being physically present at the shoot, is the film’s central person, and the one everyone is trying to please. “Everyone’s working their asses off to try to give the best images, sounds and performances to Jill so that she can craft an incredible movie in the edit”.

Jocelyn comments that Jill is a more than an incredible collaborator and film artist. “She cares deeply for the vision of the directors she works with. But most of all she’s a great friend”. She laughs and adds “What I love about Jill is that she always tells it as it is. She’s like a mother who never minces her words.”

SOUNDFIRM, PORT MELBOURNE (1 min)

On a large preview monitor, we see a dimly lit interior of a rural homestead. “Action!” Into the light steps a gorgeous-looking Kate Winslet, wearing a Parisian haute couture dress and a wide-brimmed hat. Off-screen, an excited voice shouts “Oh, she’s fabulous!”

We’re in a bright editing room, observing as Jill Bilcock and her assistant Caitlin review the first batch of rushes to arrive from the The Dressmaker set.

VO: I couldn’t believe my luck. It was day one of the editing of The Dressmaker, one of the most anticipated Australian feature films of recent times, and here I was, observing as one of the best film editors in the world embarked on her latest creative journey.

Jill laughs loudly, turns to camera and says, “You’ve got to look at this.” A hilarious exchange between Kate Winslet and Judy Davis plays out on the large preview monitor.

VO: Never before had Jill allowed a camera inside her editing room to document her entire process. But after a year of gaining her trust and negotiating access, I finally got the green light. For me, it was an opportunity of a lifetime.

Jill’s tone abruptly changes. She points at the kitchen scenery on screen and says “That’s not good. I’ll have to call them about that”. She’s concerned that the art direction looks too deliberate.

DOCUMENTARY’S ORIGINS (2 mins)

VIDEO AND PHOTOS OF JILL BILCOCK AND AXEL GRIGOR AT 2012 BRISBANE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

VO: I first met Jill in 2012. I had arranged for her to talk about her career at the Brisbane International film festival. I was nervous as hell. She’d been a filmmaking hero of mine for a long time, and one of the reasons I came to Australia in the first place.

VISION OF JILL AT: OSCARS, BAFTAS, RECEIVING AWARDS, APPEARING AT VARIOUS INDUSTRY EVENTS.
To me she was a rockstar, but to everyone outside the film industry bubble, she was a complete unknown. The films she has cut, however, are anything but.

CLIPS FROM FILMS JILL HAS EDITED. WE SEE HER NAME IN SEVERAL FEATURE FILM OPENING TITLE SEQUENCES.

VO: As a young film student, I was fascinated by the energy, elegance and inventiveness that fuelled the films that carried her name in the credits. For the first time, I began wondering what film editors actually do and how they shape what we see, hear and feel in the cinema.

CLIPS FROM FARAWAY PRODUCTIONS’ DOCUMENTARIES AND BEHIND-THE-SCENES-FOOTAGE OF EDITING PROCESS

VO: After film school, I started a production company with a friend. Together we began making documentaries. I soon realised that it’s in the editing room where the magic happens. And the more films I cut, the more I felt that film editing was misunderstood. It was so much more, and so much harder, than simply cutting out the bad bits and assembling the good parts. To be a great film editor, you not only had to be a skilled technician, but a highly creative and collaborative artist, able to bring the director’s vision into sharp focus. To get more people to pay attention to “the invisible art” I got involved with the ASE, the Australian Screen Editors guild. This is what brought me into contact with Jill.

FOOTAGE FROM EARLY VISITS TO SEE JILL IN MELBOURNE, EMAIL EXCHANGES BETWEEN JILL & DOCUMENTARY DIRECTOR, ARCHIVE PHOTOS OF JILL.

VO: The more I found out about her life, the more I felt her story deserved to be told. I finally gathered up my courage and asked if we could do a documentary about her.

CLOSE-UP OF EMAIL FROM JILL: “If anyone should make a documentary about me, it’s you guys.”

HORSHAM (3 mins)

Jill strolls along George Street in Horsham, a rural town in Victoria’s Wimmera region. She stops at the gates of an old house. Her first home, where she lived until she turned six. She begins describing a colourful, turbulent childhood.

As pictures of Jill and her family during the 1950s and 1960s play on the screen, she recalls how her father Jack would leap onto the kitchen table to recite Shakespeare and how her mother Betty would lead demonstrations for women’s rights. Often, visiting artists and poets would visit. Arthur and Yvonne Boyd (famous Australian artists) were close friends.

In a separate interview, Jill discloses that it was a volatile home. Jill and her two brothers witnessed many heated arguments between their parents. Once, their father threatened to shoot Betty with a shotgun in front of the children. On another occasion he tried to hang himself from a tree in the family backyard. Their parents separated when she was six.

In an interview, Jill’s brother Anthony hints that Jill’s talent for the dramatic and her restless pursuit of new creative challenges stems from their turbulent beginnings.
Back in Horsham, the documentary director asks Jill how she thinks her early years influenced her own artistic journey. Jill hesitates for a second before saying that her mother’s choice to independently raise three children while forging a career in education probably had a lot to do with it.

NOT A TRIBUTE (2 min)

As a fresh batch of archival photos begins playing on screen, Jill suddenly says she’s unsure about where the documentary is heading.

Cut to Jill sitting in a stark, white studio environment.

Off-camera, the documentary director argues that her early life, her time at film school and formative film experiences are key to understanding why she’s such a good storyteller and where her creative drive and rebellious nature come from.

Jill will have none of it. “Tributes are for dead people” she states coldly. “Besides, I don’t find my life terribly fascinating. Filmmaking was just an accident.”

She contends that if it hadn’t been for Human Rights, her experimental 1968 exam film from Swinburne Technical College, she never would have ended up in the film industry. This fast-paced, human rights-themed film caught the eye of leading Australian director Fred Schepisi who promptly offered her a job at his production company.

After a moment’s silence, Jill continues, “As a small child I always thought I’d end up in a third world country, doing something worthwhile”. After four decades in the film industry, she is hungry to “go full circle” and would like to use her skills to help tell worthwhile stories. “Perhaps, this is what the documentary should do?”

ARRIVING IN KABUL (1 min)

Far below, a stunning mountainous landscape drifts by. Jill and the documentary crew are in an airplane that’s descending into Kabul, Afghanistan. Jill photographs the dramatic scenery outside her window.

At the airport she is greeted by Najib Sharifi, the founder and CEO of Afghan Voices, a local filmmaking collective. Jill points to the documentary camera, frowns and says wryly to him: “You better get used to this”.

As Najib drives Jill through Kabul’s chaotic traffic, stopping several times at security checkpoints, Jill comments that the city has changed a lot since she last visited in the early 1970s. Najib asks her what brought her to Afghanistan back then. Jill reveals that she was travelling from India to Europe in a Combivan, together with her German husband Reiner and their adopted dog Oomphf. “Back then I was known as Mrs Grimm.” Najib smiles and remarks “Grimm, as in The Brothers Grimm?”. “That’s right. I’m their forgotten sister” she says. They laugh.
They pull up at Afghan Voices’ makeshift headquarters at the outskirts of the city. Inside, she is greeted by an excited group of young women and men. Many profess their fondness for film’s Jill has edited, such as *Muriel’s Wedding*, *Moulin Rouge!* and *Strictly Ballroom*. Jill tells the small crowd that despite her short stay, she hopes they can impart as much as possible about Afghanistan’s storytelling traditions.

**THE CHALLENGE** (2 mins)

Najib and a few of his students take Jill and the documentary director on a tour around Afghan Voices’ rudimentary production spaces and editing facilities.

**VO:** When Jill bluntly told me that she didn’t want the documentary to focus on her, I thought my dream project was dead, destined for the cutting room floor.

**VISION OF EDITING MONITOR FEATURING SEQUENCE OF WHITE STUDIO INTERVIEW WITH JILL.**

**VO:** But as I reviewed my interview with her (WE HEAR HER SAY “let’s go full circle”), an even better idea emerged. Instead of making a film ABOUT her that relied on observing her process on a big-budget film, why not try to make a film WITH her. Or as it turned out: three films.

**VISION OF DIRECTOR AND JILL AT HER MELBOURNE HOME, DISCUSSING THIS NEW APPROACH. THERE’S ALSO A SHORT ANIMATION THAT VISUALISES THE PROPOSED CHALLENGE.**

**VO:** A few weeks earlier, I had presented her with an ambitious filmmaking challenge: travel with me and a small documentary team to three countries. In each country, we would collaborate with an emerging filmmaker on a human rights-themed short film. She would be the films’ editor and would also act as a mentor to the director. She wouldn’t know anything about the people or the task ahead until she set foot in each country. And the clock was ticking. In three months’ time, the three short films would premiere in Jill’s hometown, at the prestigious Melbourne International Film Festival.

**VISUALS OF DIRECTOR AND JILL AT HER HOME.**

**VO:** To my amazement, she agreed. But there was something I didn’t tell her: I hadn’t given up on my wish to shine a light on her own story. Apart from documenting her unique collaborations, I was also going to try uncover what had turned her into such a great editor and storyteller.

**VISUALS RETURN TO JILL’S TOUR OF AFGHAN VOICES’ FACILITIES**

**VO:** In each country, our efforts would be supported by a prominent ‘helper’. Here, in Afghanistan, Najib was our man.

Najib tells Jill that due to security fears Afghan Voices recently had to relocate. But what they lack in resources they try to make up for with raw enthusiasm and artistic experimentation. It strikes Jill that their approach isn’t too dissimilar to what she experienced in the late 1960s at Swinburne Tech, Australia’s first film school. Except, of course, for the bomb threats.
AFGHAN CINEMA (2 mins)

To illustrate the dire straits of Afghanistan’s cinema scene, Najib takes Jill to Cinema Pamir, one of the busiest movie houses in downtown Kabul. It’s a large, rundown, dilapidated place.

In the foyer, they meet Siddiq Barmak, one of Afghanistan’s leading filmmakers. His film *Osama* won a Golden Globe in 2004. Inside the movie theatre, a scratchy Pashto language film is entertaining a crowd of unemployed men in dirty clothing.

As hashish smoke wafts through the flickering projector light, Siddiq tells Jill that Afghanistan filmmaking community is struggling to recover from decades of neglect. Forty years ago, cinemagoers would have been required to dress in suits or evening wear to be admitted into this cinema. And they would have been predominantly watching locally made films. It depresses Jill that such a proud, generous people don’t have the means of projecting their rich cultural heritage and homegrown stories back onto itself. She takes a few photos inside the movie theatre.

MEETING SULEIMAN (3 mins)

During dinner in Najib’s apartment, Jill gets to know some of the young Afghan Voices’ filmmakers better. Listening to them, she’s impressed by the students’ passion for telling visual, risky stories about their country. She appears slightly uncomfortable by the documentary camera’s attempt to capture her every interaction.

To help Jill decide which filmmaker and project deserves her full attention during her two-week visit to Afghanistan, Najib screens works-in-progress films on a bare wall. Although technically shaky, one of the stories manages to affect Jill deeply.

It’s a poetic story about a family that hides in a mountain cave to escape the murderous Taliban, told from the perspective of a young boy. It’s made by 25 year-old Suleiman Amanzad.

After the film finishes, Suleiman tells Jill that he’s from the persecuted Hazara community. He lived through the events depicted in the film. He goes on to reveal that after they emerged from the cave after three months, they found that many of their relatives and friends had been killed or forcibly relocated. Deeply moved by what she’s just heard and seen, Jill goes up to hug him.

BAMIYAN, HAZARAJAT (2 mins)

An Apache/Cobra helicopter streaks across the Afghan skies. It carries Jill, Suleiman, Najib and the doco crew. Mohammad, an aspiring Afghanistan cinematographer, rounds out the team.

They helicopter descends into the Bamiyan Valley in central Afghanistan, former home to the “Buddhas of Bamiyan”, the world heritage-listed rock statues that were obliterated by the Taliban in 2001.

The town of Bamiyan is alive with the annual Silk Road Festival, a celebration of the town’s rich past as a key stop on the ancient silk road. Suleiman proudly tells Jill that for centuries, Bamiyan has been a place where East meets West. It is the home, and a sacred place, for all Hazara people.
“For a long time, I believed that magic carpets were real” Jill tells Suleiman as he guides her around a large market area. Suleiman remarks that magic carpets have a lot in common with filmmaking: “Both sweep you away to a magical place full of adventures and new challenges”. Suleiman helps her haggle and she purchases a hand-spun wool carpet from a local merchant.

UNCLE’S HOUSE (3 mins)

As the sun sets over the valley, Jill enters a simple house on the outskirts of the city. A noisy diesel generator struggles to provide enough electricity to the household. Inside, a veritable feast has been prepared in honour of the special guests. Suleiman’s uncle insists that Jill and the doco crew to join him and his family on the floor carpets.

During the meal, Suleiman tells of the ongoing discrimination faced by the Hazara people in Afghanistan. They fear the Taliban will return to their valley when foreign troops have left Afghanistan. Over the years, many of his friends and family members have fled the country. Some of his friends paid Indonesian people smugglers and embarked on a refugee boat headed for Australia. Tragically they drowned in the Indian Ocean trying to reach Christmas Island.

The uncle expresses his pride in Suleiman, who was given an international scholarship and now studies political science in Kabul. To the Hazaras in Bamiyan, Suleiman’s journey since the 1999 genocide is a source of great pride, inspiration and hope.

After dinner, Suleiman’s uncle tells a Hazara folklore tale. It’s story about a Bamiyan goat that uses its cunning to protect its three kids from a wolf. A few kids peer in through the window. Jill waves to them to join them. They sit down next to her watch the animated performance with wide eyes. Loud cheers erupt in the room as he finishes his tale.

THE CAVE (3 mins)

A 4WD Toyota drives towards the large cliffs at the edge of Bamiyan city. It stops at a massive, gaping hole in the cliffs. Jill and Suleiman step out of the vehicle. Taking it all in, Jill reflects that although the giant Buddhas no longer watch over the valley, she can still feel the powerful presence. “They are still here”, she says to Suleiman, “just like the Hazaras.” Suleiman nods.

After driving a bit further into the mountains, everyone leaves the Toyota behind and continue on foot. After a short walk, they finally reach an inconspicuous opening in the rock wall. Suleiman’s older cousin and a local Hazara family greet them at the site.

Inside, Suleiman points out where they slept, cooked, sang, studied and where they sat as they listened for suspicious noises outside. A single shard of light shines through a crack in the cave roof, dust dancing through it. Suleiman says it was this light, a single ray of hope in the surrounding darkness, that inspired him to become a filmmaker.
FILMING AT THE CAVE (4 mins)

As Mohammad, Najib and the Suleiman’s cousin readies camera and light equipment, Jill helps Suleiman rehearse a scene with the Hazara family who will play lead roles.

A sequence depicts the intense 3-day collaboration at the cave. Jill divides her time between the cave and the Toyota, where she assembles the incoming material on her laptop. Her proximity to the unfolding action allows her to immediately inform Suleiman of problems in his story and camera coverage.

As more and more locals show up, the filmmaking process turns into a community event. Crowd (and goat) control sometimes proves difficult for Najib. Watching the recreation of the harrowing events of 1999 is emotional for many.

Translating instructions to film’s non-English speaking first-time actors proves time-consuming for Jill, Suleiman and Najib. Having a documentary camera follow her every move also frays Jill’s nerves. But in the end, Suleiman is happy to exclaim, “That’s a wrap”. To celebrate Suleiman efforts, a local farmer decides to sacrifices a goat. “Quite some wrap party”, Jill states wryly.

EDITING IN KABUL (3 mins)

Back at Afghan Voices in Kabul, Jill and Suleiman throw themselves into their intense post-production collaboration. Seated in front of her portable Lightworks editing system in the main classroom, they comb through the material and discuss editing choices.

VO: The pressure was on. Jill had insisted on screening a first version of the film to Siddiq, Najib and his students before we departing. They only had two days to get his story into decent shape.

We see the documentary filmmaker sitting in an adjoining room, editing on his own laptop. Shots from Suleiman’s film zip past on his screen.

VO: To give Jill and Suleiman a sporting chance, I decided to pitch in as well.

A montage of Jill and Suleiman’s day-and-night collaboration plays. Other students take an active interest in their process and sit down to watch them work. Jill seems to thrive on this and frequently asks them for advice on scenes. Her editing becomes a live masterclass.

PREVIEW AT CINEMA PAMIR (2 mins)

Jill’s final day in Kabul dawns. Jill and Suleiman sit in the backseat of a 4WD that’s slowly making its way through downtown traffic. They both look exhausted, but happy. She is clutching her laptop, which contains the cut of the film.

At Cinema Pamir, Najib gets up on the cinema stage and announces that there will be a special presentation before normal programming resumes. Gathered in front of him is an audience made up of mainly of students, their relatives and friends. Scattered around the cinema is also a number of slightly confused-looking cinemagoers. Jill and Siddiq stand at the back.
As the film plays, we only see the faces of the audience and Jill. The reactions are very raw and emotional. One of the unsuspecting cinema patrons sheds a tear. At the conclusion of the film, Suleiman hugs Jill. Siddiq shakes both of their hands and says that the film deserves to be seen everywhere. One by one, audience members come up to congratulate Suleiman. Jill tries to temper everyone’s enthusiasm by insisting that the film still needs a lot of work before it’s finished.

Suleiman hugs Jill and thanks her for mentoring him over the past few weeks. Jill thanks him for allowing her to be a part of such an emotional experience. As the opening music of the scheduled Pashto feature film begins to play in the background, Jill exits the cinema.

MUMBAI, INDIA (2 mins)

A montage of aerial footage: mountain ranges, deserts, forests and cotton fields, slums and modern high-rises. Then street-level shots: British colonial monuments, Hindu temples, haute couture shops, beggars, food stalls, street kids. This is Mumbai—city of thousand contrasts, Bollywood’s cradle, a place teeming with colour and life.

VO: Jill was exhausted, but I could tell how proud she was of what had been achieved in Afghanistan. I decided this was a good time to look a little closer at how her past adventures had shaped her as an artist and a person.

As Jill glances at the chaotic traffic scene outside her taxi window, we hear her reading from a letter she wrote to her mother in 1970. In it, she vividly describes her unexpected turn as an extra in Bollywood films: “I don’t dance, I play the bad guy’s girlfriend, the Western slut”. As she laughs at her own writing, we cut to her sitting in a hotel room. Many handwritten pages are spread next to her on the sofa. Speaking to the camera she adds, “I only got the roles because I had long blonde hair. And I had good shoes”.

The doc filmmaker asks her what drew her to India. She replies that she was on her way to swinging London and only intended to stay for a few weeks. But she fell in love—with the country and with a German backpacker. We see images of Jill and Reiner in the 1970s. Jill jokingly refers to her first marriage as an acid trip that lasted 7 years. After spending time in a hippie commune in Goa they travelled throughout Asia, Europe and South America.

MEETING SHEKHAR (2 mins)

A collage of Bollywood imagery: movie posters, Bollywood films playing on large LCD-TV screens in department store windows, Bollywood action figurines in toy shops, giant outdoor advertisement featuring top movie stars, cinema patrons streaming into a cinema in downtown Mumbai etc.

Outside one of Mumbai’s old movie houses, Jill meets film director Shekhar Kapur (Bandit Queen, Elizabeth, Elizabeth: The Golden Age etc). His greeting makes it obvious that he adores Jill.

In a separate interview, Shekhar calls Jill his personal Tinker Bell, a fairy who uses editing to sprinkle movie magic over his directing efforts. He says, “With Jill by your side, you can feel like God’s gift to entertainment industry. Everything is possible. Everything is exciting.”
Shekhar and Jill attend a special screening of one of the films by legendary Indian filmmaker Satyajit Ray. Afterwards, a visibly moved Jill admits to Shekhar that it was Mr Ray’s *Apu trilogy* films that drew her India in the first place. They both lament the dearth of challenging, cinema in India today. But, with the right support and the right voices, Shekhar argues that India will once again become a prominent producer of powerful, humanistic filmmaking.

**MEETING HEERAZ (2 mins)**

At Shekhar’s apartment, Jill is introduced to Heeraz Marfatia; a young filmmaker with plans to make a short film with and about orphaned kids living on the streets of Mumbai. Shekhar feels this film is the perfect fit for Jill’s current mission.

*VO: Heeraz’s name had come up in the very first phone conversation I had with Shekhar. The more I learned about his idea, the more I felt it ticked all boxes. So we took a risk. We decided not go down the same route as in Afghanistan, where Jill got to be part of the decision process. I had no idea how this would go down...*

Over dinner, Heeraz tells Jill of his dream to use cinema to help make significant inroads in how Indians perceive and treat street kids. She’s impressed by his vision, but quizzes him on what he feels makes it a visual story, one that entertains. She argues that the only way to get a wide audience is to first give them what they want.

After dinner, Heeraz proceeds to show Jill his storyboards and script. Jill is somewhat surprised at how “locked in” his vision is. She tells him it’s films’ unexpected moments and little details that really make us identify with characters and care about the story. She’s seen too many big films fail because of rushed shooting schedule, narrow-minded directors and poor production design. Half-jokingly, Jill asks “And where’s your big Bollywood dance number?”

**JILL DOUBTS (1 min)**

The following morning. In her hotel room, Jill carries out some changes to Suleiman’s film. As she edits, she confesses to the documentary director that she is unsure about Heeraz. Compared to the filmmakers at Afghan Voices, he seems so established and confident in his abilities. Wasn’t the whole purpose of the journey to help under-supported and untested talent? The documentary director agrees, but argues that Heeraz’ creative goals resemble Suleiman’s: telling a highly visual, affecting story with and about a hidden minority in society. Jill says that throughout her career she’s always chosen her projects based on a gut feeling about the director. It worries her that Heeraz seems quite earnest and serious.

**CHASING JILL’S INDIAN PAST (1 min)**

Jill walks through a busy bazaar. In her hand is a photo of 22-year-old Jill sitting on a Mumbai park bench. She asks shopkeepers if they know where photo was taken. No one seems to know. In frustration, Jill comes up to camera to vent. “Why are we doing this?”
The documentary filmmaker replies that he feels it’s a wonderfully visual way to connect her past with the present. “This should not be about me!” she retorts before storming off.

STREET SCHOOL (3 mins)

Later that evening, Heeraz takes Jill for a walk downtown. She’s not wearing a radio mike and appears quite standoffish towards the documentary crew.

A group of children, some as young as four, sit on the pavement listening attentively to a young female teacher. They are in the midst of an English grammar lesson. Heeraz explains to Jill that this is a street school for underprivileged kids, a non-profit charity run by teachers and local housewives. Jill remarks how attentive and enthusiastic the group is. If it wasn’t for the setting and the students’ unkempt appearance, she says this could pass for any classroom in Mumbai.

During a break between classes, Heeraz introduces Jill to Dipesh and Deepa, two energetic and bright siblings who he’s chosen to star in his film. Jill asks them where they live. Deepa says they live with an uncle in Mumbai’s Dharavi slum. As the children are called back to class, Heeraz tells Jill that he passionately believes that if India wants to be a “golden bird”, a great nation, then the stories, lives and hopes of these kids need to be a part of India’s story.

ACCESS DENIED (2 mins)

Jill and Heeraz enter a busy restaurant. Once inside, she turns around and tells the documentary director that they need to leave them alone. The director is surprised and tells her this is a vital moment to capture for the documentary. She does not budge. “See you tomorrow” she says curtly, before proceeding to a table. From the street, we get glimpses of Jill and Heeraz as they talk inside. Soon, the restaurant owner emerges. “No filming, please”.

For a moment, the screen goes dark.

The documentary director knocks on a hotel room door. No response. He sends a text message and makes some phone calls. No luck. Next, he’s in the lobby asking the concierge if he has seen his friend leaving. The concierge writes something down on a paper. The documentary director waves down a cab.

RED SHIELD GUEST HOUSE (2 mins)

We’re outside a slightly run-down three-story building in Mumbai’s Fort District. A large Salvation Army sign hangs over the main entrance. Across the street is the opulent five-star Taj Mahal Palace Hotel.

After the director has a quick word with a uniformed man at the front desk, the camera proceeds upstairs. It finds Jill and Heeraz standing in a large dormitory room talking to another uniformed
man. While the director explains the crew’s presence to the man in uniform, Jill keeps on talking to Heeraz as if nothing’s happened.

We overhear her telling Heeraz that she remembers how young children used to suddenly appear in the window, hoisted up on sticks by beggars down on the street. She also points out a street corner where she used to wait to be picked when she performed in Bollywood films. These tales from Jill’s past fascinate Heeraz.

She asks the manager if it would be possible to rent a room with a window for a week. She explains that instead of being trapped in an insular five-star hotel tower, she’d much rather stay and work here, surrounded by the smells and sounds of Mumbai. After conferring with another uniformed man, the manager returns and says, “Done!”

**FILMING & EDITING “GOLDEN BIRD” (4 mins)**

Early morning. Jill is standing at her old “Bollywood pickup point” close to Red Shield house. The documentary director expresses his dismay about her cutting off all means of communicating with her. He says, “We can only do this if we’re a team”. Jill simply states that she needed to get to know Heeraz better. She feels she has done the documentary a favour as she came very close to catching a plane back to Melbourne that morning. Shekhar arrives in a taxi and invites her to climb in.

They drive to an inner-city construction site where Heeraz’ film crew is getting ready for the first day of action on his film *Golden Bird*. As Heeraz yells “action” the children begin running up to various workers (actors) asking if they have seen their “paapaa”. Jill and Shekhar follow the action from some distance. The children’s understated performance impresses them. In between camera setups, Deepa and Dipesh come up to Jill. The children beam as she gives them a good luck charm each. She tells them they are doing wonderfully and to always be themselves in front of the camera. Jill Heeraz quickly confers with Jill about his visual ideas for the next scene and then everyone quickly gets stuck into the next shot.

A music-led sequence begins, juxtaposing behind-the-scenes vision from the cross-city shoot of *Golden Bird* with vision of Jill working in her Salvation Army room. Close-up vision of her screens offers a window into her editing choices. Curious hostel guests appear in the doorway to glance at the strange lady and her screens. She invites some of them into her room so they can get a better look at what she’s doing and she can ask their opinion on a dramatic moment or a scene. Even in its rough form, the film about two children wandering Mumbai in search of their father appears to strike an emotional nerve with her hostel friends. Heeraz also stops by to get Jill’s feedback on what needs to be improved and to watch freshly edited scenes. He’s blown away by her speed and ability to prepare several versions of each scene.

Jill returns to the film shoot for film’s final scene. As Heeraz shouts, “That’s a wrap” the film’s two young stars rush up to Jill to give her a warm embrace. She asks Heeraz how to say a sentence in Hindi. Then she turns to Dipesh and Deepa she says “Aap bahut khaas” (“You are special”)
STREET SCREENING (2 mins)

For one night, the street school location is converted into a makeshift, outdoor mini-cinema. Shekhar reveals that he has called in some favours so that Jill and Heeraz can test screen their first rough cut of *Golden Bird*. Smiling, he adds enigmatically “A good cause, explained just the right way, helps bend even the strictest of rules”.

The short screening becomes a joyous public spectacle. The largely dialogue-free drama allows street children to easily follow the narrative. Judging by their animated reactions, they appear totally invested in the two main characters’ plight. Street vendors, passers-by and even some local policemen linger to sneak a peek at the screen. Traffic slows to a crawl as drivers try to see what’s going on. Jill soaks it all up. “I think I should do all my test screenings here,” she says with a smile.

When the story finishes, the large crowd erupts in rapturous applause. Deepa and Dipesh become instant mini-celebrities. Off to one side, Heeraz and Jill hug. Shekhar asks everyone if they want to see the film one more time. The children all shout at the top of their lungs.

PLANE TO AFRICA (1 min)

A plane lifts from the runway at Mumbai airport. On-board, the documentary director opens his laptop and places it in front of Jill.

*VO:* *I realised in Mumbai that Jill had been right. Chasing her past would never lead me to a simple explanation as to why she’s able to express her creativity the way she does.*

Jill hits play on the laptop. We catch glimpses of what appears to be a rather quirky and entertaining tale short film about a Nairobi taxi driver who dresses and dances like Michael Jackson. Jill thinks it’s fabulous.

*VO:* *What really mattered to her was having the freedom to chart her own course, to be free to decide what came next—in her life and in the editing room. It struck me that it was probably these qualities that were behind her decision to take a chance on our documentary and on me in the first place.*

ANIMATION OF AIRPLANE FLYING FROM MUMBAI TO NAIROBI, KENYA

*VO:* *As we arrived in Africa, I decided to treat Jill less as a subject and more as a colleague.*

MEETING JUDY (1 min)

At the airport, Jill and the doco team is warmly greeted by a group of people, led by a very enthusiastic woman. Jill is surprised to be received like a celebrity.

*VO:* *When I first reached out to her, Judy Kibinge jumped at the opportunity to help connect Jill with an emerging filmmaker in Kenya. She had told me that many filmmakers in East Africa adored Australian films and actors, but nothing had prepared us for this reception.*
Jill and Judy sit next to each other in a mini-van. Jill asks Judy what it is like to be a filmmaker in Kenya.

VO: A few years ago, Judy quit her job in advertising in the UK to return home to Nairobi direct films. Frustrated by the lack of support for homegrown filmmakers who wanted to tell Kenyan stories, she soon became a leading voice for efforts to revitalise and connect East Africa’s struggling film communities.

RIVERWOOD (1 min)

The van pulls up on River Road in downtown Nairobi. Judy exclaims “Welcome to Riverwood!”

Jill enters a small studio space and receives another enthusiastic greeting, this time from what appears to be twenty-odd crew and cast members working on a local film production. Jill is surrounded by fans of *Muriel’s Wedding*, *Moulin Rouge!* and *Strictly Ballroom*.

As the crew returns its focus to the studio shoot, Judy explains that this team is working on a local-language, straight-to-DVD movie. It won’t be competing at film festivals but will find a large and appreciative audience all over Kenya. “Riverwood films aren’t artistic, but they feel fresh and from the heart. Filmmakers market their films collectively and they all benefit from each other’s successes. They help each other out”. Jill loves what she hears. She tells Judy that when she started out in film in the 1970s, Australian filmmakers were much more open with each other about their stories and processes. “It’s become much more inward-obsessed and secretive. We should be less like Hollywood and more like Riverwood”.

MEETING BENJI (1 min)

Judy walks with Jill to another production company on River Road, where she’s introduced to Benji Mureithi, a young editor who’s in the final stages of editing a Kenyan low-budget action movie. He’s completely taken by surprise by their arrival. When he realises who Jill is he’s instantly awe-struck. “I’m your biggest fan in Africa! *Strictly Ballroom* is my favourite movie of all time.”

Judy explains that Benji isn’t just a well-regarded local editor; he’s also one of the more exciting and inventive new filmmakers to emerge in Kenya for some time. His most recent effort, the short film *Billy Jean*, has led many in the Nairobi film community dubbing him the ‘next big thing’. Jill gets very excited when she realises this was the same film she watched on the plane. She tells him she thought it was genius. Benji beams and says, “The next one is even better”. Egging him on, Jill says, “When do we start?” The three of them laugh.

As Jill watches parts of the movie Benji is editing, a voiceover is heard:

*Prior to our journey, Judy and I had zeroed in on three potential collaborators for Jill in Kenya. However, seeing her and Benji get on like a house on fire was all the selection process that was needed.*
KENYAN CINEMA (3 mins)

Evening. Jill arrives outside Nairobi Cinema where she is met by Judy, Benji and Kenyan film director David ‘Tosh’ Gitonga. They have arranged a special screening of Tosh’s Nairobi Half Life, a film that saw Nairobians rush to cinemas in 2012. It was Kenya’s first ever entry to the Academy Awards.

After the screening, the three of them gather at a nearby café—a favourite hangout for local artists and filmmakers.

Jill praises Tosh for opening a whole new window on urban life in Africa. Tosh says he’s proud that the film has helped pave the way for more authentic and accessible Kenyan stories. But while the film was an unusual homegrown success story, Judy adds that East African filmmakers have a long way to go before they reach the level of commercial and international success enjoyed by colleagues in Francophone West African countries.

Several young filmmakers pull up their chairs at the table to add their own accounts about how support for telling contemporary Kenyan stories is lacking. Jill hears that cinemas show little interest in screening local stories and the Kenyan Film Commission doesn’t do enough to encourage local or international investors to co-finance ambitious films.

Jill tries to inject some hope. She tells them that before the ‘Australian new wave’ of the 1970s ushered in a new interest in local stories, powerful cinema chains actively argued against having a local film industry and there was no Government support for Australian films. She spurs them on by concluding, “It only takes a few mad renegades to turn things around”.

KIBERA (4 mins)

Time lapse of a day in the life of Nairobi, intercut with vision of Jill in her hotel room, reading over the script for a new short film by Benji Mureithi. Close-up shots of text lines in the script are juxtaposed with time-lapse footage of street life in Nairobi.

A train rumbles past, revealing a sea of corrugated iron roofs and rusty shacks. A group of children plays next to the train track. This is Kibera, East Africa’s largest slum, home to an estimated one million people.

Benji and Jill walk down a windy, dusty path lined by mud shacks. We get a sense of a vibrant community, buzzing with economic activity. Curious kids and teenagers soon surround them, some who try to sell them souvenirs, toys and mobile phones.

They arrive at a busy community centre. In one corner, a dance teacher is helping a 12-year-old boy master a complex routine. The boy’s mother sits nearby. During a break, Benji introduces Jill to the boy. Ayo is the star of Benji’s new short film and is busy going through final rehearsals before filming starts in two days’ time. Jill asks the mother how come Ayo wants to be a dancer. She laughs and says he was born that way. “He hasn’t stand still since he was born!”

Ayo’s mother, Nurisha, invites Benji and Jill to their home: a small, rusty shack with no electricity, water or toilet. Jill asks how long they have lived here. Nurisha replies that she and her three children came to Nairobi only 5 months ago, after her husband was killed in Western Kenya.
Benji adds that Nurisha’s story is very common across Kibera. What’s unusual about them is that despite their poverty, she continues to support Ayo’s dream to become a dancer by paying for regular dance lessons. This is how Benji first met Ayo.

As they continue their walk through Kibera, Jill asks what made him choose the slum as a setting for his upcoming film. He divulges that his idea was inspired by a newspaper story about young slum kids who are obsessed by reality TV shows. In Benji’s film, Ayo’s character is so taken by the show So You Think You Can Dance, that he begins dancing on rooftops, fantasising of making it onto the show.

As Benji and Jill arrive at higher vantage point that overlooks Kibera, he says that he hopes the film is equal measures entertaining and thought-provoking so it stands better chance of connecting with audiences that usually ignore the lives of slum dwellers. “And”, he adds with a grin “I always wanted to make my own version of Strictly Ballroom”.

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**FILMING AND EDITING BENJI’S FILM (4 mins)**

A sequence starts that depicts preparations for Benji’s film. As Jill meets with Benji’s cinematographer and production designer, Judy and Benji inform Kibera residents of the impending film activity.

*VO: The premiere in Melbourne was now only three weeks away. Benji’s film was going to be a difficult final challenge for Jill. For many of his scenes, Benji planned to shoot with 3 cameras. This meant Jill would have to sift through more material. We were 5 days behind our schedule. We couldn’t afford anything going wrong.*

Cut to shots of heavy rainfall over Nairobi and Kibera.

Jill joins the entire team in the Kibera Community Centre. Looking tense, she talks to Judy and Benji about the need for everyone in crew and cast to stay safe. Ayo says he’s enjoyed having another two days to practice, but that he’s excited to finally get going.

*VO: After delaying the start of the filming for two days, a decision was made to convert several outdoor scenes into indoor scenes and begin filming. To make up some time, we’d also film for longer on each day. This added up to a heavier workload for Ayo, which made Jill really concerned.*

After completing indoor scenes at the Community Centre and in Ayo’s home, the rain relents, allowing the team to begin filming outside. Jill decides to pull the plug on editing at River Road and begins to assemble incoming footage as close to the action as possible. The Kibera Community Centre partitions off a corner where she can work—the same corner where she first saw Ayo practice his dancing. She confesses to camera that she has high hopes for this film and that she wants to ensure there’s no delay in Benji getting her suggestions.

A sequence juxtaposes the various on- and off-set activities of the 4-day shoot. As in Kabul, the documentary director helps Jill by tackling additional editing tasks. While they edit, community centre patrons, dance groups and curious visitors surround them.

Ayo gains many new fans as he busts his well-rehearsed moves at various Kibera locations. Benji and Judy express huge admiration for his commitment not only to film’s many dance portions, but the dramatic acting scenes too. His mother and younger siblings follow as much of the action as they can.
Each night, Benji quickly confers with Jill about the progress of the story and the quality of coverage. He admits to camera that both being editors their discussions about what’s working and what’s not can be very economical. He is astounded by the speed with which Jill reviews and then structures the material.

**FINAL WRAP (1 min)**

As the fourth filming day draws to a close on a high hill overlooking Kibera, Benji hoists Ayo up on his shoulders and allows the boy to shout out to the crew “That’s a wrap”. Jill is present for the special moment. She gives Ayo a miniature magic carpet she purchased in Mumbai.

Judy tells Jill that what they been able to achieve is remarkable. She hugs Jill and tells her that through her involvement, she’s inspired not just Benji but many other emerging filmmakers. She hopes more experienced film artists will follow her suit, so East African filmmakers come closer to achieving their dream: “to make films that entertain and helps Africans better understand who we are.”

**PREVIEW IN THE SKY (1 min)**

Jill and the documentary team is farewelled by Judy and Ayo at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport.

**VO:** Because of the delay in filming, and the need for Jill to rush home to Australia to finish the three films before the premiere, there was no time to preview Benji’s film in Nairobi.

Vision of Benji sitting next to Jill on the plane. As they take off, Jill flips open her laptop and loads up Benji’s film in the Lightworks editing program.

**VO:** Benji, along with the two other directors, had been invited by the Melbourne International Film Festival to present their finished films. I made sure Jill and Benji would be on the same flights to Australia, so they could make the most of their time together in the air.

Vision of Jill inviting nearby passengers and aircrew to have a look at the film. After the plane’s First Officer views it, he asks Jill and Benji if they can play the film on the in-flight system so everyone can enjoy it. Jill is thrilled by the idea and the documentary director begins exporting an appropriate video file. The First Officer announces the special film presentation over the speakers and soon, travellers of all ages and nationalities, turn their eyes towards their screens. The film is met by cheers. Several people come up to Benji and Jill to offer their congratulations.

**SOUNDFIRM (2 mins)**

Their plane touches down in Melbourne. Roger Savage (Jill’s partner and Soundfirm’s CEO) meets them at the airport.
VO: With only five days remaining until the premiere, we headed straight to Soundfirm, the post-production facility where she and the filmmakers would spend the next couple of days putting final touches on the three films.

At Soundfirm, they are met by Suleiman and Heeraz. After a quick round of hugs and introductions, they proceed into Soundfirm’s main screening room. It’s the first time the three directors get to see each others’ films. As the lights go back up, Jill and the directors launch into an enthusiastic discussion about how each film can be improved and how to best prioritise the coming days’ work.

Their final dash to the finish line is depicted in a hectic montage. Each director takes turns working with Jill. Caitlin, her assistant, operates a second edit suite. With no time to lose, Jill doesn’t hold back her views on what she thinks need to be done to each film. In interviews, the directors describe the intense process, the narrative and technical obstacles that remain and what they have learned from their collaboration with Jill. To gauge their progress, they screen the films in the screening room at the end of each day.

One by one, each film’s timeline is locked off and sent across to Roger Savage for final sound mixing. For a while it looks like Benji’s film won’t be finished in time. But, with only an hour to spare, his film is added to the delivery harddrive and rushed to the festival venue.

THE PREMIERE (2 mins)

The Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) in Melbourne’s Federation Square plays host to the festival premiere of the three short films. The main cinema is filling up with many notable Australian filmmakers, actors, members of Melbourne’s Hazara, Indian and East African communities as well as lots of Jill’s closest friends and relatives.

As they wait backstage, the three sleep-deprived filmmakers and their editor admit to being incredibly nervous. There’s been no time for a tech check. “It’s all up in the air, anything could happen,” Jill says.

Finally, Jill takes to the stage and is greeted by a huge round of applause. She extends a warm welcome to everyone, particularly to the wonderful people in Kabul, Mumbai and Nairobi who are tuning in via the internet. Live images from each city appear on the cinema screen. Najib, Shekhar and Judy can be seen fronting excited crowds at a location central to each of the three films.

She invites her three young collaborators up to the stage, declaring “Tonight belongs to these three brave filmmakers and their powerful stories.”

Suleiman, Heeraz and Benji become very emotional as they thank Jill for her patience, guidance and creativity. Benji adds that she has planted a powerful seed of creativity and self-belief in not just the three of them, but in all the people she came in contact with during her three month journey.

Jill confesses that, at first, she didn’t want to go on this journey. She doubted her ability to keep up with people so much younger than herself and she feared that no one would pay any attention to anything she had to say. “And I hated the idea of cameras filming the disaster unfold”. The crowd laughs. “But, it turned out to be one of the best experiences of my life.” Pointing to the young filmmakers next to her she adds “If I hadn’t said yes to this challenge, I would have never have met the three bravest and most passionate filmmakers I know.”
The lights dim. As the three stories play, we don’t see the films themselves. Instead, we focus on observing the faces and reactions in the four audiences. By intercutting between the diverse locations, there’s a powerful sense that everyone is part of a global cinema experience.

Once the third film has finished, the three filmmakers return to stage and receive a standing ovation.

**FULL CIRCLE** (2 min)

The documentary director steps up to the microphone and reveals that there’s one more film for them to watch - a film no one has seen for over 40 years, believed lost until just a few weeks ago: *Human Rights*, Jill’s 1968 exam film. He informs the audience that this was the first film she made and that she cut it on her kitchen table.

He invites Fred Schepisi to share the story of how he discovered Jill. Fred tells the audience that he offered her $30 dollars a week to do whatever she liked at his production company. Eventually she settled into editing. “And it’s a bloody good thing that she did, because had she wanted to direct I probably would have been out of a job.” He looks at Jill and says he hopes they will work together again one day. “I keep begging her to say yes to me but she’s always so busy.”

The scratchy 16 mm film begins playing and we hear the Franz Liszt melody which 18-year-old Jill chose to accompany her striking images.

“I just want to say thank you” Jill says. Cut to her sitting in a white studio environment. “Not for doing the documentary, but for nagging me to come with you on this journey. It was amazing”.

The documentary director asks what her biggest takeaway from the trip is. She pauses for a second to think. “To never stop taking risks. And to be more trusting.”

She goes on to say that she hopes the documentary will inspire more young filmmakers to make dangerous, uncompromising films. She thinks it’s the duty of experienced filmmakers to help the next generation of storytellers be as brave as they can.

She smiles and says, “Are we finally done now?”

**END CREDITS** (2 mins)

(Includes information on where the three short films and Jill’s 1967 film can be viewed.)

**TOTAL DURATION: 84 MINS**
Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible

27:30 mins Documentary
Editing is like a dance. Jill is the Rudolph Nureyev of editing.

Shekhar Kapur

You are only limited by your imagination.

Jill Bilcock

Jill defies the traditional image of what an editor is like”.

Cate Blanchett
TREATMENT - Half-hour documentary

11 May 2016

by Axel Grigor

Toronto Film Festival 2015. Kate Winslet is signing autographs on the red carpet. Cameras flash, people shout. Suddenly, she shrieks with delight. She has recognised someone off-screen. She dashes over to give Jill Bilcock, a long-time friend, an affectionate hug. Jill tells Kate that she’s just met a disabled girl who dearly wants to get her autograph. As they stride over to the girl, Kate tells the adoring crowd:
“It’s the editor. Jill.”

An exuberant, rapidly edited montage of vibrant moments from films edited by Australian film editor Jill Bilcock plays. Interspersed between clips from films such as The Dressmaker, Strictly Ballroom, Moulin Rouge!, Romeo + Juliet, Elizabeth, Red Dog, Japanese Story, Muriel’s Wedding and Road to Perdition are comments from notable directors and actors who have worked with Jill. Among them: Cate Blanchett, Rachel Griffiths, Toni Collette, Baz Luhrmann, Jocelyn Moorhouse, Sam Mendes, Sue Brooks, Shekhar Kapur, Richard Lowenstein and Kriv Stenders.

Their comments make it clear that they consider Jill to be one of the best, most daring and most sought-after film artists on the planet. Baz Luhrmann remarks that “Jill’s a majestic person. No matter how difficult the day is, she makes it majestic. And she’s very funny”. Cate Blanchett remarks that Jill “defies the traditional image of what an editor is like”.

The film’s title appears on screen.

A busy film set in Mount Rothwell, Victoria. While the camera crew is busily preparing for the next shot, Jocelyn Moorhouse, the film’s director, confers with cinematographer Don McAlpine. A clapperboard appears in front of the screen, announcing the title of the film: The Dressmaker.

The clapperboard snaps shut and drops out of shot, revealing a dimly lit interior of a rural homestead. Suddenly, we are watching the action on a large preview monitor in another location. Jocelyn shouts “Action!”. Into the light steps Kate Winslet, wearing a Parisian haute couture dress and a wide-brimmed hat. Off-screen, an excited voice shouts “Oh, she’s fabulous!”

We’re in a bright editing room in Melbourne, observing as Jill Bilcock reviews the first day of rushes on her latest project. Jill laughs loudly, turns to camera and says, “You’ve got to look at this.” A hilarious exchange between Kate Winslet and Judy Davis plays out on the screen.

In an interview, director Jocelyn Moorehouse remarks that that Jill is so much more than an incredible editor. “She cares deeply for the vision of the directors she works with. But most of all she’s a great friend, a mother figure.” She laughs and adds “What I love about Jill is that she’s never afraid to tell it as it is.”
Back in the editing room, Jill’s demeanour abruptly changes. She points at the scenery on-screen and says, “That’s not good. I’ll have to call them about that”. She’s concerned that the art direction looks too deliberate.

As we see Jill assemble a scene, Sue Maslin, producer of The Dressmaker, describes what a blessing it is for any film or filmmaker to have Jill say ‘yes’ to them. “She has an incredible range and has an uncanny knack for knowing what the audience wants from a story, regardless of genre.” Sue also mentions that it is no accident that Jill is the editor of five of the ten most successful Australia films of all time. “Her impact on Australian cinema is undeniable.”

A clip from Moulin Rouge! plays. Nicole Kidman and Ewan MacGregor are singing and dancing in the clouds. In an interview, Nicole Kidman underscores Jill’s pivotal role in reviving the global fortunes of Australian cinema. “Few filmmakers have done so much to help Australian stories, characters and actors get on a global stage as Jill has.”

We see photos and artefacts in Jill’s colourful East Brunswick home in Melbourne. In an interview, Jill says that she’s always had a strong visual sense. She mentions that she always liked to dance as a child. Never stood still. “I didn’t play an instrument, but the musical rhythm was always there.” From an early age, she also liked impressing an audience with a good story. With a mischievous smile she adds, “…often at the expense of the truth”.

As black and white photos from Jill’s photo collection play on screen, Jill tells of her early life. She was born in Horsham, rural Victoria. Her parents were English teachers. Many of their friends were poets and artists. Famous artists, such as Arthur and Yvonne Boyd, used to stay with them for long stretches. Jill recalls how her father Jack would leap onto the kitchen table to recite Shakespeare.

Her older brothers, Carl and Tony, describe their parents’ relationship as dangerous and their upbringing tumultuous. Tony hints that Jill’s talent for the dramatic and her restless pursuit of new creative challenges stems from their turbulent beginnings. Jill recalls hearing several loud fights and remembers her father once pointing a shotgun at her mother, Betty.

After their separation when Jill was six, Betty raised the three children by herself. She credits her mother, a prominent fighter for women’s rights and a leading figure in technical education in Victoria, with instilling in her a strong sense of independence, a passion for social activism and an adventurous spirit.

ABC-TV archive footage from 1968 shows students making films at Swinburne Tech, Australia’s first film school. Jill states that she was amongst the first intake of students. “In those days, there wasn’t really a film industry to speak of”, she says.

In a 1969 Four Corners report on the Australian film industry, the head of Hoyts bluntly questions the need for a local film industry altogether. In an interview, film director Fred Schepisi reflects on the dire state of Australian cinema at the time. “There were virtually no Australian stories showing in movie theatres. Hollywood dictated what we could see.”
Jill describes the graduation film she made at Swinburne Tech, an experimental short called *Equality of Man*. A lack of functioning editing equipment at school forced her cut it on her kitchen table. She had mistakenly filmed with the wrong camera speed, resulting in deliriously fast shots. Fred Schepisi recalls how he, along with Phillip Adams and designer Alex Stitt, was on the school’s final-year assessment panel that year. He found Jill’s film particularly visual and memorable.

As we see some of the images that still survive from her student film, Jill reveals that Fred promptly offered her $30 a week to do whatever she wanted at The Film House, his busy film commercial company based in an old red-brick church in Fitzroy. “If it hadn’t been for my incompetence with the school’s camera and Fred, I doubt I would have ended up in the film industry.”

One of The Film House’s early 1970s commercials play. “Editing was just an accident that I fell into”, Jill says in an interview. Jill tells how she tried various film positions at Fred’s company until she finally began working alongside Fred’s main film editor Brian Kavanagh. Brian mentions that Jill had a natural talent for capturing movement, life and drama in her editing. A clip from *The Naked Bunyip*, an Australian sex comedy from 1970, plays. Jill tells how she began contributing to some of the independent films that was being made in Melbourne at the time. She also edited music documentaries for popular bands such as Manfred Mann and Procol Harum and helped Brian Kavanagh cut Fred Schepisi’s seminal films *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* and *The Devil’s Playground*.

In an interview, she praises the close-knit and collaborative atmosphere of the small Australian filmmaking community at the time. “Everyone helped everyone.” She singles out Fred Schepisi as a major influence on how she developed her approach to filmmaking. “Fred was one of my biggest mentors. He was a great leader and taught me to care deeply about every project, regardless of where they would be seen.”

Archive footage of Bombay in 1970s. Jill says she decided to stop in India for two weeks on her way to chase film work in London. She was drawn to India by her love for the humanist films of great Indian director Satyajit Ray. Upon arriving in Bombay, she quickly fell in love with the colourful bustle of life that greeted her. To afford a longer stay, she took roles starring as “dangerous blondes” in a host of Bollywood movies.

As we see a short montage old Bollywood clips, as well as photos and letters related to Jill’s extensive travels in South-East Asia and South America during the 1970s, film director Shekhar Kapur describes Jill as a daring and free-spirited explorer: “Jill’s is incredibly open to the world and always hungry for new impressions. Always fearless.” Jill states that she would never have become a good editor if she hadn’t travelled a lot in her youth. “All the things that I saw and that I did, influence my ability to observe and tell story.”

A clip from *Dogs In Space*, featuring Michael Hutchence, plays. This is followed by behind-the-scenes archive footage from 1986 of Jill editing the film together with director Richard Lowenstein. As Jill is seen swiftly weaving a strip of film between the rollers on a flatbed editing machine, Richard says that he began his career as her assistant, helping her cut ads
and tourism campaigns. Watching Jill work, Richard learned the importance of every frame. “She showed me that cutting one frame too early or one frame too late is the difference between a perfect cut and something totally out of kilter. She’s ruthless. No detail is too small to obsess over. It’s all about the zing!” To that, Jill adds that every film has its own unique rhythm, intimately connected to the vision and sensibilities of the filmmaker making it. “I need to be able to communicate with the filmmaker, and they need a sense of humour and must display strong creative leadership. Earnestness zaps the life force out of you.”

The colourful opening of Strictly Ballroom plays. In an interview, Baz Luhrmann recalls the first time he met Jill in Sydney. He had never made a film before and was looking for an editor who could also act as a filmmaking mentor. In an interview he says, “The editor has to be a great match, and a great creative partner and just great to be with”. Jill describes their first meeting as being offered to join the circus. “Who hasn’t dreamt of running away from home and joining the circus?”

As we see behind the scenes footage from the filming of Strictly Ballroom, Baz states that “It’s the quality that she brings to the editorial room that lets ideas flourish, fun to flourish. She’s very funny!” The film’s writer, Craig Pearce, says that “Jill is the best friend a writer could have.” He laughs, then says, “She loved the script, but would rarely look at it in the editing. She is able to find an even better story in the rushes and the performances.”

As a clip from the film’s final dance scene plays, Jill mentions that she didn’t just cut it. She actually helped film it. “The schedule was so tight. I grabbed a camera to make sure we had enough cutaways to make it all work.” The applause heard in the film’s final ‘Paso Doble’ scene transition seamlessly to the sustained applause that greeted the filmmakers when Strictly Ballroom received its world premiere at the 1992 Cannes Film Festival. “It was simply incredible”, Jill says. “It opened up a fabulous world of possibilities for Baz and so many in the team.”

The opening ‘bridal bouquet’ scene from Muriel’s Wedding plays. Jill says that she’s always loved working with first-time filmmakers. “You get this incredible enthusiasm. You just know they are going to fight to get this made. And you might be able to make it even better than they thought. And that’s exciting!”. In an interview, the film’s director, J. Hogan, describes Jill’s contribution as absolutely vital to the film’s success, adding “She leaves no take unturned in editing. So many times I was convinced a scene I’d shot the would never work. But she would always find a way.”

The ‘ABBA Waterloo’ dance scene from Muriel’s Wedding plays. Rachel Griffiths states that “Jill is pure genius. To this day, I’m blown away how she and P.J. could turn a film that is so resoundingly Australian, featuring so many unsympathetic characters, into an international smash hit.” Toni Collette adds, “Dark comedies are the hardest kinds of film to edit, with constant changes in emotion and rhythm. So many of us were learning on the job, but she made us look like pros.”

The fast-paced opening service station scene from Romeo + Juliet plays. Jill says that “In Hollywood, some people criticised the fast editing and the sped-up shots. It’s not done to be flashy; it’s done to keep the natural rhythm of Shakespeare’s dialogue. Style without
emotional substance is rubbish.” As we see behind-the-scenes footage of Jill and crew working on location in Mexico, Baz Luhrmann adds, “Jill cares about every aspect of the filmmaking craft. The camerawork, the design, the locations, the story. But most of all she cares deeply for the people she works with.” As we see photos of Jill and Baz editing the film in Jill’s Melbourne garage, Leonardo DiCaprio recalls the first time he saw the finished picture. “Her impact on the film was profound. I had never seen editing like it before. The exuberance and the energy she infused into the editing truly elevated Baz’s vision and made Shakespeare accessible to a whole new generation.”

A clip from Elizabeth plays, in which the young queen, portrayed by an equally young Cate Blanchett, nervously rehearses a speech in front of a large mirror. Jill’s jump-cuts during her monologue accentuates her character’s internal state of mind. In an interview, Cate Blanchett reveals that, “Editors guide where the audience should look and how they should feel in any given moment. And Jill is the master of that. She understands the plight of the character to an almost absurd degree.” Jill continues, “Cate was brilliant. This extraordinary young actress was totally believable. The strength of her made my work all about camouflaging all the other things that weren’t working.” In an interview, Shekhar Kapur reveals that he pursued Jill relentlessly to edit Elizabeth. “No one knows better on how to turn the chaos of life into a series of recognizable patterns and finally into the harmony of a complete story.”

The insanely fast ‘Can Can’ scene from Moulin Rouge! plays. Jill reveals that the film was the most complex challenge of her career, owing to the sheer amount of footage that was filmed during a very long shoot. In an interview, Nicole Kidman marvels at Jill’s ability to capture the essence of Baz’s wild vision through her editorial choices, whilst also adding a very unique flavour of her own.

The “El Tango De Roxanne” scene from Moulin Rouge! plays. Baz remarks that this scene is an example of Jill at her absolute finest. “Her ability and persistence to bring together music and dance in the service of drama in this scene is astounding.”

We see Jill amongst the nominees at the 2002 Academy and BAFTA Awards ceremonies. “It was wonderful to be nominated in America and in England for my work on the film, but what I really loved was getting awarded by my peers. We see a clip of Jill winning the American Cinema Editors’ “Eddie Award” in 2002.

A change of pace as we see a clip from the American prohibition-era gangster film Road to Perdition, featuring Tom Hanks and Paul Newman. In an interview, Jill shares that some have expressed surprise when realising that the editor who cut Moulin Rouge! also edited Road to Perdition. Sam Mendes says, "A great editor can cut anything. As a director you want to team up with someone you can spend many weeks in a room with and share the journey of putting the movie together." Another clip from Road to Perdition plays. He continues by remarking that Jill has an incredible ability to control sound. Jill says that simplifying the soundscape in a scene can have just as powerful an effect on the audience as a rich sound edit. “Used right, silences and visual pauses make dramatic moments speak even louder.”
A clip from *Japanese Story* plays. Director Sue Brooks: “What marks Jills work is that it never looks like a struggle. She can do that work in a way that a lot of editors can’t. Therefore, it leaves her a lot of space to engage with the material on a whole other, human level”. As a second clip from *Japanese Story* plays, she adds that “There’s a sense that she doesn’t let the rubbish go through. On Japanese Story she worked closely with the composer to ensure the music does exactly what she needs it to.”

The moon landing scene from *The Dish*, featuring Sam Neill, plays. Director Rob Sitch states, “Jill is somehow able to remain vulnerable to the material and the story, regardless of how many times she has to look at the same footage. She’s a joy to be with and has an ability to excite everyone around her. If she senses there’s a better for a scene to excite the audience, she is unafraid to go there.” As the ‘Cricket match in the dish’ scene plays, Jill comments, “Rob and the whole team at Working Dog team are fabulous Australian storytellers. They know that the best comedy is very human and springs from a believable sense of place. And Sam Neill’s comedic timing was incredible.”

A clip from *Red Dog* plays. The voice of director Kriv Stenders exclaims, “That dog didn’t do anything! Jill’s juxtapositions is what made the dog and the film truly come alive. Quite astounding!” He describes Jill as a total filmmaker. “I love how she protects me from myself in the most incredible ways.” As a section of the ‘Red Dog travel montage scene’ plays, Jill says that she prefers to stay away from film sets. “I prefer not knowing how difficult it was to film one particular shot, or how expensive it was to use a certain location. If something’s not working, I want the freedom to cut it out, or present a scene in a better way.”

Jill is speaking at a packed new filmmakers’ event at ACMI in Melbourne, taking questions from an audience of young and emerging filmmakers. In an interview she says. “We need extraordinary people of high intelligence and imagination to enthuse people to get off their asses and fight the system! It doesn’t have to be political. It has to be about caring.

In an observational scene, we see Jill collaborate with a young Queensland filmmaker in Brisbane. Arwin, who recently came from Afghanistan as a refugee, shares in an interview that “Jill read one of my poems and offered to help me turn it into a short film.” As we see Jill mentor Arwin’s during his film shoot in a Brisbane studio and on the beach at Surfers Paradise, she states: “There aren’t enough strong leaders of a creative nature. Those of us that are in good positions, we need to do more I think.”

We see vision of Jill attending the world premiere of Arwin’s short film at the Melbourne International Film Festival. Kriv Stenders: “Jill is still so youthful, so alive and fresh. I really hope I get to work with her again someday.” Producer Sue Maslin concludes the film by remarking: “Although her contributions on a film are often invisible, known only to those lucky enough to collaborate with her, her impact on Australian cinema is anything but. She’s paved the path for so many, helped new voices emerge. Jill is one of the greatest storytellers this country has ever produced.”

Axel Grigor
11 May 2016
# Finance Plan (July 2017)

**Project Title:** JILL BILCOCK: DANCING THE INVISIBLE

**Date:** 4-03-2017

**Total Budget:** $293,060

**Total duration:** 60 mins

**Screen Australia production investment sought:** $40,000

**Screen Australia contributions here**

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**Difference to Budget**

|                | $0                          |

**Comments**

- Pro Rata does not meet the eligibility thresholds for the Producer Offset.
- Project meets the eligibility threshold for Producer Equity.

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**A Grigor**

**Jill Bilcock: Revealing the Invisible Artist – Exegesis, March 2022**
### Final Production Budget (July 2017)

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#### ABOVE THE LINE COSTS

**A.1 STORY & SCRIPT**
- Story Rights (Inc Options) Australia: 0/0
- Story Rights (Inc Options) Overseas: 0/0
- Writers Fees Australia: 0/0
- Writers Fees Overseas: 0/0
- Researcher(s) Australia: 0
- Researcher(s) Overseas: 0
- Fringe - Total for Story & Script: 0/0

**Sub-total**: 0/0

**A.2 DEVELOPMENT**
- Development Funds
  - Source 1 (Screen Australia): 10,000/10,000
  - Interest/Premium Source 1: 0
  - Source 2 (Film Victoria): 0
  - Interest/Premium Source 2: 0
  - Source (Screen Queensland): 7,500/7,500
  - Interest/Premium Source 3: 750/750
  - Consultancy Fees/Expenses, Australia: 0
  - Consultancy Fees/Expenses, Overseas: 0
  - Budgets and Schedules: 0
  - Film Rent/Equipment: 0
  - Film/Video Equipment: 0
  - Research Expenses, Australia: 0
  - Research Expenses, Overseas: 0
  - Secretarial & Office Expenses: 0
  - Location Research, Australia: 0
  - Location Research, Overseas: 0
  - Travel & Transport, Australia: 0
  - Travel & Transport, Overseas: 0
  - Accommodation & Living Expenses, Australia: 0
  - Accommodation & Living Expenses, Overseas: 0
  - Legal Expenses: 0
  - Overheads: 0

**Sub-total**: 0/0

**B.1 PRODUCERS**
- Fees: 0/0
  - Executive Producer(s), Australia - Sam Melion: 2,000/2,000
  - Executive Producer(s), Foreign National: 0
  - Producer(s) - Axel: 3,000/3,000
  - Producer(s), Foreign: 4,000/4,000
  - Associate Producer: 0
  - Line Producer: 0
  - Fringe - Total for Producers: 0

**Sub-total**: 6,000/11,000

**B.2 DIRECTORS**
- Fees: 0/0
  - Director: 4,000/4,000
  - Production Accommodation: 2,000/2,000

**Sub-total**: 3,000/4,000

**C.1 PRINCIPAL CAST**
- Fees: 0/0
- Agent: 0/0
- Fringe - Total for Principal Cast: 0/0

**Sub-total**: 0/0

**TOTAL ABOVE THE LINE COSTS**: 59,150

### BELOW THE LINE COSTS

#### PRODUCTION COSTS:

**C. PRODUCTION UNIT FEES & SALARIES.**

**C.1 PRODUCTION MANAGEMENT**
- Production Manager: 1,900/0
  - Production Co-ordinator: 0/0
  - Production Secretary: 0/0
  - Production Assistants: 0/0

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ProdBudget_JillBilcock_170710 ($253,060).xlsx
### Preliminary Estimates for Fringe Calculations above the line:

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### Preliminary Estimates for Fringe Calculations below the line:

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<td>Tented Individuals Salaries &amp; Allowers</td>
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###FRINGE & WORKERS COMPENSATION

[Australian State/Territory QLD]

#### Holiday Pay

- **Pre-Prodin**
  - 6.25%
  - Hours: [Details]
  - Amount: 185
  - Total: 185

#### Payroll Tax

- **Pre-Prodin**
  - 10%
  - Hours: [Details]
  - Amount: 0
  - Total: 0

#### Workers Compensation

- **Pre-Prodin**
  - 2.9%
  - Hours: [Details]
  - Amount: 1,737
  - Total: 1,737

#### Superannuation

- **Pre-Prodin**
  - 9.5%
  - Hours: [Details]
  - Amount: 0
  - Total: 0

### CAST & CASTING (please state what agreements you are using)

#### Australia

- **Cost Casting**
  - Casting Fees
    - Casting Costs: [Details]
    - Casting: [Details]
    - Casting Costs: [Details]
    - Casting: [Details]
    - Sub-total: [Details]

### COSTUMES (DRAMA)

- **Costumes - Hire**
  - Hire Cost: [Details]
  - Hire: [Details]
  - Sub-total: [Details]

### MAKE UP & HAIRDRESSING (DRAMA)

- **Make-up & Hair Supplies**
  - Supplies: [Details]
  - Supplies: [Details]
  - Sub-total: [Details]

### LOCATIONS

- **Permits, Rent/Lease, **
  - Permits: [Details]
  - Sub-total: [Details]
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G.2 STUDIO/STAGE RENTALS
- Studio Rental: 2 days
- Studio Rental: 1 day
- Studio Equipment: 1 day
- (Electricity, phone, cleaning, security)

Sub-total: 0

H. SETS & PROPERTIES
H.1 CONSTRUCTION (DRAMA)
- Set Construction: 0
- Set Rental: 0

Sub-total: 0

H.2 PROPS & SET DRESSING (DRAMA)
- Props & Set Design: 0
- Standby Props & Equipment: 0

Sub-total: 0

H.3 ACTION PROPS & VEHICLES
- Action Vehicles: 0
- Action Boots, safety boots etc: 0
- Towing, Freight & Transport: 0

Sub-total: 0

H.4 LIVESTOCK
- Animal Hire: 0
- Suturing, Carriages etc: 0
- Stabling, Feeding, Transport: 0

Sub-total: 0

H.5 SPECIAL EFFECTS & ARMOURY
- SFX Equipment: 0
- Props Hire: 0
- Weapons Expenditure: 0

Sub-total: 0

H.6 VISUAL EFFECTS, Shot Only
- Detailed Quote Required, Please Attach: 0

Sub-total: 0

H.7 ANIMATION & PUPPETRY, Shot Only
- Detailed Quote Required, Please Attach: 0

Sub-total: 0

SET S & PROPS, SUB-TOTAL: 0

I. STOCK, PROCESSING AND TRANSFERS
- Use Section Ia for film stock & processing
- Use Section Ib for tape/HD stock & processing

Ia STOCK, PROCESSING AND TRANSFERS - FILM & LAB - Shooting
- Main Shooting Hours: [Programe Length] / [Ratio] [1:5]

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A Grigor

Jill Bilcock: Revealing the Invisible Artist – Exegesis, March 2022

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### A. Grigor

**Jill Bilcock: Revealing the Invisible Artist** – Exegesis, March 2022

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#### a. STOCK, PROCESSING AND TRANSFERS. TAPE & HD

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#### J. INSERTS, STILLS AND ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE

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#### K. EQUIPMENT & STORES

##### K.1 CAMERA EQUIPMENT & STORES

- Canon 5D & Accessory Kit Canon 13D 3,800 1,200 5,000 5,000
- Canon 5D & Accessory Kit Canon 2nd Camera 900 0 900 900
- **Software:**
  - Additional Camera Hires 350 2 1,300 1,300
  - Additional Lens Hires 650 3 1,950 1,950
- **Accessories:**
  - Additional Access. Hires 0
  - Unforeseen Rental/Spec Camera(s) 0
- **Sound:**
  - Streetscan 0
- **Expendables:**
  - 300 0 0 0
- **Sub-total**
  - 0 7,900 1,700 9,650 9,650

##### K.2 SOUND EQUIPMENT & STORES

- Sound Equipment 300 0 3 1,500 1,500
- Sound Equipment – Additional 0 0 0 0
- Sound Expendables 0 0 0 0
- **Sub-total**
  - 0 1,500 0 1,500 1,500

##### K.3 LIGHTING EQUIPMENT & STORES

- Light Equipment 300 0 3 900 900
- **Other Equipment:**
  - Truck & Equipment 0 0 0 0
  - Equipment: additional 0 0 0 0
  - Generator 0 0 0 0
  - Truck timelapse replacement 0 0 0 0
  - Expendables 0 0 0 0
- **Sub-total**
  - 0 0 0 0

---

**ProofBudget_JillBilcock_170710 ($2,93,060).xlsx**

Page 6/12

A. Grigor

Jill Bilcock: Revealing the Invisible Artist – Exegesis, March 2022

163
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**Notes:**

- **Pre-Prod** refers to pre-production costs.
- **Shoot** refers to production costs during shooting.
- **Post-Prod** refers to post-production costs.
- **Sub-total** is the sum of all costs for each category.

---

**ProdBudget_JillBilcock_170710 ($2,933,060).xlsx**

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**A Grigor**

**Jill Bilcock: Revealing the Invisible Artist – Exegesis, March 2022**
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G OFFSHORE SHOOT

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**TOTAL PRODUCTION COSTS:**

102,502

H POST-PRODUCTION CREW

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**Overheads & Fringe:**

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I POST-PRODUCTION RENTALS & OFFICE EXPENSES

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J POST-PRODUCTION TRAVEL & ACCOMMODATION

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<tr>
<td>- Per Diem</td>
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TOTAL: 102,502

A Grigor
Jill Bilcock: Revealing the Invisible Artist – Exegesis, March 2022

Page 166
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U.1 PICTURE POST PRODUCTION (FINISHING ON TAPE)

| Miscellaneous Video Tapes                       | 560      | 350    |           |           |                               |
| Miscellaneous Video Stock                       | 250      | 350    |           |           |                               |

U.2 TITLES AND GRAPHICS:

| Titles                                           | 2,000    | 2,300  |           |           |                               |
| Graphics                                         | 200      | 350    |           |           |                               |
| Subtitles                                       | 100      | 400    |           |           |                               |

U.3 SCANNING/REPRODUCTION AND MANIPULATION

| Scanning/reprographic services & set up            | 1,000    | 2,300  |           |           |                               |

U.4 BROADCAST MASTER

| Broadcast offline edit | 1,000    | 3,000  |           |           |                               |
| Stills - sound effects, composer                  | 1,000    | 3,000  |           |           |                               |
| Tape Stock for sound effects                      | 1,000    | 3,000  |           |           |                               |
| Credits                                          | 1,000    | 3,000  |           |           |                               |
| Digital effects                                  | 1,000    | 3,000  |           |           |                               |
| Titles, themes and design                        | 1,000    | 3,000  |           |           |                               |
| Motion Graphics                                  | 1,000    | 3,000  |           |           |                               |
| DCP                                              | 1,000    | 3,000  |           |           |                               |
| Audio re-build                                   | 1,000    | 3,000  |           |           |                               |
| Title/Check/Quality Assurance                     | 1,000    | 3,000  |           |           |                               |
| Final Duplication                                | 1,000    | 3,000  |           |           |                               |
| Sound                                             | 1,000    | 3,000  |           |           |                               |

U.4.1 OTHER COSTS

| Other costs                                      | 1,000    | 3,000  |           |           |                               |

V.1 SOUNDBOARD - POST PRODUCTION

| Soundboard Master                                | 1,000    | 3,000  |           |           |                               |
| Total package (if negotiated as such)            | 1,000    | 3,000  |           |           |                               |
| Sound Stock                                      | 1,000    | 3,000  |           |           |                               |
| Tracks                                           | 1,000    | 3,000  |           |           |                               |
| Narration Recording                              | 1,000    | 3,000  |           |           |                               |
| Mix                                              | 1,000    | 3,000  |           |           |                               |
| Mix/CD                                          | 1,000    | 3,000  |           |           |                               |
| Rebuild                                          | 1,000    | 3,000  |           |           |                               |
| Audio derivatives (or see Worksheet 2)           | 1,000    | 3,000  |           |           |                               |

V.2 REVERSING COSTS

| Reversing Costs                                  | 1,000    | 3,000  |           |           |                               |

V.3 MUSIC

| Commission Music                                 | 1,000    | 3,000  |           |           |                               |
| Fees - Composer/Conductor                        | 1,000    | 3,000  |           |           |                               |
| Music Research                                   | 1,000    | 3,000  |           |           |                               |

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167
### Pre-Production
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#### X.1 Purity & Still - Production & Post-Production
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**TOTAL POST-PRODUCTION COSTS**

**TOTAL `BELOW THE LINE` COSTS**

**INDIRECT COSTS**

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<td>Shoot</td>
<td>Post-Prod</td>
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<td>- Overseas</td>
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<td>RGC Production Levy</td>
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<td>TOTAL BUDGET</td>
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Feature Film Archival Research Spreadsheet (September 2014)

The following spreadsheet details licensing costs, rightsholder information and early negotiations in relation to feature film titles deemed to be of special interest during development of *Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible*. This document was compiled and maintained by researcher Penelope Chai. Contact details have been removed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Film</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>License</th>
<th>Cost for full rights: all media, worldwide, in perpetuity</th>
<th>Progress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Naked Bunyip</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>John Murray</td>
<td>All Media Worldwide is given as $90 per second plus 25% for in perpetuity making a total cost of $100 per second with a minimum of 30 secs. In your case we could make the minimum 15 secs. I would draw up an agreement to suit which limits usage to your program and its promotion alone - meaning that one cannot on sell or distribute The Naked Bunyip footage except as an integral part of your program or the promotion thereof. AB from John: I have also asked Brian Kavaiah to steer you when the time comes from some footage that is of poor quality. Its a long story about inky laboratory processing in 1969, and it would be nice to ensure a section that would support Jill and yourselves adequately.</td>
<td>12/6 - got quote from John 23/6 - DVD returned to Brian; in quote discussions with John 5/6 - NSFA tell me the copyright holder is John Murray – have emailed him 5/6 - Brian has posted DVD to Alex 5/6 - heard back from Brian – no Film House days memorabilia but happy to be in touch later in year. Will ask him if he has copy of The NB. 5/6 - emailed Veronica for Mark’s contact details 5/6 - heard back from both Umbrella and Gristle – DVD is out of print. Checking with Umbrella who now owns the rights for clips licensing. 2/6 - messaged Brian through website 2/6 - emailed Umbrella and US distributor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strikebound</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Ghost Pictures</td>
<td>$90 per second - but flexible. Normally with a 30 sec min.</td>
<td>16/4 - got quote 15/4 - emailed Maya 15/4 - emailed Richard Lowenstein</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The More Things Change...</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>NOT PURSING</td>
<td>$90 per second - but flexible. Normally with a 30 sec min.</td>
<td>15/4 - emailed general email</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dogs in Space</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Ghost Pictures</td>
<td>Warner Bros: Territories that MGM excludes (US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand), all media. In perpetuity. WB license fee is $10,000 for each clip up to 1 minute in length. MGM: MGM’s customary license fee for all Worldwide (excluding the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand), perpetuity is US$6,000.00 per Thirty Second (.30) Film Clip per Title. (MGM will allow an aggregate of 3 Clips per .30 per Title.)</td>
<td>25/4 – liaising with Tristram 17/4 – referred me to MBA Films – seeing if she has a contact there 15/4 – emailed Natalie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Cry in the Dark</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Warner Bros (US) MGM (Worldwide)</td>
<td>NOT PURSING</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Till There Was You</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>NOT PURSING</td>
<td>Favoured nations deal - i.e. MBA expects the same as the top rate the film is paying the others.</td>
<td>25/4 – liaising with Tristram 17/4 – referred me to MBA Films – seeing if she has a contact there 15/4 – emailed Natalie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strictly Ballroom</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>MBA Films</td>
<td>NOT PURSING</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Say a Little Prayer</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Ghost Pictures</td>
<td>NOT PURSING</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temptation of a Monk</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>NOT PURSING</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urothale</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>NOT PURSING</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muriel’s Wedding</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Visual Icon</td>
<td>Between US$4000 per title and US$8000 per title (per 30 secs).</td>
<td>17/4 – got quote 16/4 – emailed reply to Spencer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.Q.</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>NOT PURSING</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How To Make An American Quiet</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Universal Pictures</td>
<td>US$3000 for 15 sec increments (Does not include Music Clearances or Performers Rights)</td>
<td>17/4 – got quote 16/4 – emailed Roni 15/4 – emailed Peer at Universal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romeo + Juliet</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Twentieth Century Fox</td>
<td>$12,000 per minute, or portion of a minute, per picture (with a maximum of five clips per minute). Fox does not pro-rate its license fee based upon the number of seconds licensed, so if using 15-30 seconds, we will still be charged for one minute. Fox also requires: [X] Please provide written consent from all stunt persons who appear in the footage. And see ‘no go’ notes saved to folder (certain locations etc) Perhaps we can get Baz to weigh in for us?</td>
<td>25/4 – liaising with Fox 17/4 – referred me to Fox – seeing if she has a contact there 15/4 – emailed Natalie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Licensor</td>
<td>Cost for full rights: all media, worldwide, in perpetuity</td>
<td>Progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head On</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Jane Scott / Head On Productions</td>
<td>Commercial use world rights = $80 per sec with 30 sec min (but the min sounds neg). Non-commercial use (educational/cultural - Umbrella needs to approve) = $35 per sec</td>
<td>29/4 - got quote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Universal Pictures</td>
<td>US$3,000 for .15 sec increments (Does not include Music Clearances or Performers Rights)</td>
<td>17/4 - got quote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Dish</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Working Dog</td>
<td>CANNOT DO IN PERP – ONLY 30 YR PERIOD. $10 per second with a minimum of 30 secs. FYI - &quot;There will be extra charges if we need to cut any clips... hopefully you'll be able to use footage from the DVD and not incur any extra costs.&quot;</td>
<td>32/4 - got quote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moulin Rouge!</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Twentieth Century Fox</td>
<td>$12,000 per minute, or portion of a minute, per picture (with a maximum of five clips per minute), Fox does not pro-rate its license fee based upon the number of seconds licensed, so if using 15-30 seconds, we will still be charged for one minute. Fox also requires: [X] Please provide written consent from all stunt persons who appear in the footage. [X] Please provide SIGNED, written consent from Nicole Kidman and Ewan McGregor if they appear in material from ‘MOULIN ROUGE.’ Perhaps we can get Baz to weigh in for us?</td>
<td>39/4 - got quote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road to Perdition</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Paramount (North America)</td>
<td>Paramount has domestic rights (US &amp; Canada) to this title and non-theatrical rights worldwide. All media, domestic only in perpetuity will run from US$5,000-10,000/minute for licensing. Fox has limited rights: Theatrical Exhibition, Television Exhibition and Home Video Exhibition, worldwide excluding the &quot;Domestic Territory&quot;, in perpetuity. The license fee for these rights is $11,000.00 per minute, or portion of a minute, per picture. Fox does not have Non-Theatrical Exhibition rights. In addition, Fox will require: - Written consent from any stunt persons who appear in the footage - SIGNED, written consent from Tom Hank’s, the estate of Paul Newman, Jude Law, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Anthony LaPaglia and Stanley Tucci if they appear in the clip’s.</td>
<td>5/6 - quotes sorted</td>
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<tr>
<td>Japanese Story</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Gecko Films</td>
<td>Sue M will contact Sue B and Alison to see if they will agree to zero licensing fee.</td>
<td>24/7 - Sue M said she still hasn’t heard from Sue B and Alison but she’s happy to take that as evidence that they’re fine with her licensing it at no cost</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Libertine</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td></td>
<td>NOT PURSUING</td>
<td>16/4 - got quote</td>
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<tr>
<td>Catch a Fire</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Universal Pictures</td>
<td>US$300 for .15 sec increments (Does not include Music Clearances or Performers Rights)</td>
<td>17/4 - got quote</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elizabeth: The Golden Age</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Universal Pictures</td>
<td>US$3,000 for .15 sec increments (Does not include Music Clearances or Performers Rights)</td>
<td>17/4 - got quote</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Young Victoria</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Visual Icon</td>
<td>Between $4k per title to $8k per title (per 30 secs).</td>
<td>17/4 - got quote</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blessed</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td></td>
<td>NOT PURSUING</td>
<td>16/4 - emailed reply to Spencer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Film</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Licensor</td>
<td>Cost for full rights: all media, worldwide, in perpetuity</td>
<td>Progress</td>
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<tr>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Be Afraid of the Dark</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Miramax / Visual Icon</td>
<td>$8,000 for 30 seconds</td>
<td>17/9 - got quote</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13/8 - emailed Spencer</td>
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</table>
| Red Dog                      | 2011 | Woss Group              | Ballpark e.g.: $250 flat fee (donation - see below) for a 2 second clip in a promotional reel. Nelson is happy for us to use Red Dog material in development materials as long as not for commercial gain. Later on, when know clips and durations, get in touch. Payment will be to make a donation to this charity, and Woss Group will match it. Example rate/donation is above: http://www.doghome.org.au/ Nelson also said he and Kriv would be more than happy to be tix for the film as they adore Jill and wouldn’t have gotten Red Dog made without her. | 28/4 - got quote
|                              |      |                         |                                                          | 28/4 - spoke to Nelson Woss                                               |
|                              |      |                         |                                                          | 28/4 - spoke to and emailed Annabelle – she will chase up                |
|                              |      |                         |                                                          | 25/4 - emailed reminder                                                  |
|                              |      |                         |                                                          | 15/4 - emailed                                                           |
| Mental                       | 2012 | Universal Pictures      | Universal: Has **limited territories** but all Media rights, which would be the **UK and Australia**. All media in perpetuity for the cost of $1,800 for each 15 seconds based on the territories we do have. | 6/8 - Mark Lazarus from SciGz forwarded email to Todd Fellman, Mental producer
<p>|                              |      |                         |                                                          | 30/6 - tried Ingrid at Arclight                                          |
|                              |      |                         |                                                          | 23/6 - back to Clay at Arclight                                          |
|                              |      |                         |                                                          | 23/6 - spoke to Roni and Universal have limited rights. She doesn’t know who has the rest of the rights. |
|                              |      |                         |                                                          | 9/6 - emailed Roni again to double check                               |
|                              |      |                         |                                                          | 9/6 - Clay passed me on to Universal, they passed me round a bit, then referred me back to Roni (via website) |
|                              |      |                         |                                                          | 26/5 - reminder to Clay                                                  |
|                              |      |                         |                                                          | 15/5 - made contact with Arclight LA and they are getting quote for me    |
|                              |      |                         |                                                          | 13/5 - left msg for Arclight Sydney                                     |
|                              |      |                         |                                                          | 12/5 - Axel said rights are with Universal so tried Roni                 |
|                              |      |                         |                                                          | 6/5 - email reminder to Athena                                           |
|                              |      |                         |                                                          | 25/4 - emailed Athena                                                    |
|                              |      |                         |                                                          | 15/4 - emailed                                                           |
| Arrows of the Thunder Dragon | 2012 | NOT PURSUING            |                                                          |                                                                         |
| My Mistletoe (pre-production) | 2014 | NOT PURSUING            |                                                          |                                                                         |
| The Dressmaker               | 2015 | Film Art Media          |                                                          | Sue Meslin will manage these negotiations                              |</p>
<table>
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<th>Music Cue Sheet (For Registration with AFPA/AMCOS Only)</th>
<th>Version 3.3</th>
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<td><strong>Series Name</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Episode Number</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Duration of Production</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Country of Origin</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Genre of Programme</strong></td>
<td>Comedy / Crime</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>First Transmission / Release Date</strong></td>
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### Work Details

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<th>Performer(s)</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Catalogue Disc No.</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Work Type</th>
<th>Usage Type</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You Know Exactly What</td>
<td>Hirschfelder, David</td>
<td>David Hirschfelder</td>
<td>Deepfield</td>
<td>Film Art Media</td>
<td>21 mins</td>
<td>Commercial Recording</td>
<td>Featured</td>
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<td>Symphony No 4 in G Minor</td>
<td>Mozart, Ar. Gallia, Tobias, David</td>
<td>Hirschfelder, David</td>
<td>Deepfield</td>
<td>Audio Network</td>
<td>32 mins</td>
<td>Production Music (Library Background)</td>
<td>Featured</td>
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<tr>
<td>Need A Lift</td>
<td>Cooper, Julie</td>
<td>Cooper, Julie</td>
<td>Audio Network</td>
<td>Audio Network</td>
<td>42 mins</td>
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<td>Light Sky</td>
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<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>35 mins</td>
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<td>Unknown</td>
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<td>29 mins</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chilly Pink Porn</td>
<td>Caffrey, Peter</td>
<td>Caffrey, Peter</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>21 mins</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>Featured</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hoys Nation</td>
<td>Bradley, Bob. Grounds, Lincoln, Dymond, Steve</td>
<td>Bradley, Lincoln</td>
<td>Grounds, Dymond</td>
<td>Audio Network</td>
<td>43 mins</td>
<td>Production Music (Library Background)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hilton The Great Leap Advertisement Music</td>
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<td>Top of the Morning Raps for Sales and Speeches</td>
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<td>16 mins</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>E.S &amp; A Advertisement Music</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>11 mins</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>Featured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whiskey Train</td>
<td>Tosser, Robin, Neville, Keith</td>
<td>Tosser, Robin</td>
<td>Precious Harum</td>
<td>Origin Music Publishing</td>
<td>15 mins</td>
<td>Commercial Recording</td>
<td>Featured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C carnival</td>
<td>Tosser, Robin, Neville, Keith</td>
<td>Tosser, Robin</td>
<td>Precious Harum</td>
<td>Buckle Music Group Ltd</td>
<td>27 mins</td>
<td>Commercial Recording</td>
<td>Featured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arden Opening Theme</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>11 mins</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>Featured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mulga Pure Sea Pigs Lag Koi</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
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A: Jill Bilcock: Revealing the Invisible Artist – Exegesis March 2022
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Reviews and Press

Bilcock’s Edit Makes the Cut

Film review by David Stratton
Published in The Weekend Australian, 14 July 2018

Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible
Four (out of five) stars.

”Never be dull.” The advice comes from the great film director Frank Capra, quoted in an excellent feature documentary about Australia’s ace film editor, Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible.

Bilcock, who has edited some of this country’s most important and admired films in recent years, is one of those behind-the-scenes heroes of the industry whose achievements and creative input are probably not very obvious to the average filmgoer, but whose talent and dedication are admired by just about everyone in the business.

One of the most telling comments made about her in Axel Grigor’s intimate documentary is: “She’s not going to allow you to be self-indulgent.” In the world of cinema, that’s a pretty important attribute.

The Film Encyclopedia by Ephraim Katz describes the role of an editor as follows: “[T]he success or failure of a production may hinge on the quality of his [sic] work. Sharp film editing can make a mediocre production look good and a good production look even better.”

A rollcall of talent in front of the camera and behind it testifies to Bilcock’s contributions as a film editor, among them directors Phillip Noyce, Fred Schepisi (her early mentor), Jocelyn Moorhouse, Baz Luhrmann, Richard Lowenstein, Ana Kokkinos, Sue Brooks, Kriv Stenders, Rob Sitch and Shekhar Kapur; actors Cate Blanchett, Rachel Griffiths and Paul Mercurio; composers David Hirschfelder and Cezary Skubiszewski; and cinematographer Don McAlpine.

At the age of 15, the then Jill Stevenson enrolled at Swinburne College in Melbourne, where she says “there was not much study but I had a really good time”.

After Swinburne, she found work at Film House, the Melbourne-based producer of TV advertisements at a time when, though there was virtually no Australian feature film industry, the government of the day mandated that all TV commercials must be locally produced. Schepisi and his colleagues cut their cinematic teeth on these commercials before launching into features with The Devil’s Playground in 1976, and Bilcock learned her editing skills in this “co-operative hothouse-environment”.

She also travelled in India, where she gravitated to the local film industry and found herself cast as an actress in a handful of films, some of them usefully excerpted here. She played the “bad girl” — the blonde who seduced the hero away from the Indian heroine.
Back in Australia she began cutting feature films: Lowenstein’s *Strikebound* and *Dogs in Space*, Schepisi’s intricately structured *Evil Angels*, Sitch’s *The Dish*, Kokkinos’s provocatively dazzling *Head On*, Stenders’s heartwarming *Red Dog* (we learn it was Bilcock who edited the endearing close-ups of the film’s canine star to maximum effect), Moorhouse’s *The Dressmaker* and the Luhrmann films *Strictly Ballroom*, *Romeo + Juliet* and *Moulin Rouge*.

One of the most fascinating revelations in the documentary is the fact that a pilot for *Romeo + Juliet* was shot in Sydney on video, with leading actor Leonardo di Caprio, and edited by Bilcock so skilfully that the studio suits at 20th Century Fox were confident this modern take on Shakespeare would make a viable movie. Bilcock’s cutting of the dance sequences in *Strictly Ballroom* and *Moulin Rouge* was essential to the success of those two classic movies. Overseas she edited the Sam Mendes-directed drama *Road to Perdition* and Kapur’s *Elizabeth*.

“The most important thing,” she says, “is to establish the style of the film”, and this she has always achieved to perfection. “You’ve got to cut the bogus and deliver an emotional outcome,” she adds, all of which may seem obvious but it takes a craftsman of Bilcock’s talent to achieve it.

This informative and extremely entertaining tribute to a consummate perfectionist makes rewarding viewing for anyone interested in the art of the cinema.
David Stratton Recommends *Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible*

Film review by Australian film critic David Stratton, originally published on Cinema Nova’s YouTube page on 4 July 2018.

https://vimeo.com/690028184/cf727dd59b

Review of *Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible* on The Mix, ABC News

Jason Di Rosso, Katie Jinx and Alexei Toliopoulos reviews Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible on ABC News “The Mix – Episode 25”, 21 July 2018

https://vimeo.com/692150947/7de4d04e4b
**JILL BILCOCK : DANCING THE INVISIBLE**

Film Review by Judith Greenaway


Retrieved 2 Aug 2021

*Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible*, is such a wonderful reminder of the complexity of cinema. Jill Bilcock, is an Australian film editor and this feature documentary profiles this ‘cutting legend’ and an art which, as Cate Blanchett points out, is sometimes overt, yet often invisible. With superb access to stars and directors and footage from famous films, the documentary reframes our cinematic appreciation of loved scenes and leaves one with new perspectives about the power of a shadow on a screen.

This film treats its subject matter in a traditional and accessible way but is conceptualised with care—from the white space around a woman and a pair of monitors which begins the film, to the beautifully cut sequence of endings which concludes the watch. It is written and directed by Axel Grigor to enhance a viewer’s appreciation of the techniques and passions around Bilcock’s body of work and of film editing in general.

‘The beginnings of movies have to be way above sensational’ Bilcock says, and it is the same with docs. In *Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible*, it couldn’t be more exciting with grabs from so many recognizable films with her name as editor on the credit roll. However, the film does then take a chronological approach to its subject and how formative influences shaped her editing style. There’s considerable insight from the artist herself as she explains early on a ‘cut the bogus’ philosophy and a bedrock of cutting for emotion, structure and, most importantly, rhythm.

For a film lover there is some delicious use of footage from famous films such as *Elizabeth* and *Road to Perdition* where the editing can be better appreciated after the interviews around it. This is especially true of sections such as the Tango sequence from *Moulin Rouge!* And this film allows the viewer the time to appreciate the works rather than present them as entertainment. To understand why the heart rate rises, the documentary pulls us toward the screen as we immerse more deeply in our new appreciation of the familiar.

The filmmaker’s instinct that Bilcock is good talent proven over and over as the viewer gets her thoughts on the creation of the edit. Bilcock in interview is cheeky and driven as we follow her from very early days as a student to now as a revered veteran and mentor of filmmakers such as Grigor. His reverence captured here through both the spirit of fun and the unrelenting professionalism. There’s also a sense of restlessness which can be felt as the film follows her working life through India and South Africa with so much to learnt from her interview comments. I was especially taken by the idea that an editor can’t be emotionally attached to the big budget items, like chopper shots and footage that involves huge amounts of extras. And also, Bilcock’s comments about the psychological strength needed to withstand the ‘torture’ of repetition in the editing room.

There are constant surprises also. For *Strictly Ballroom* she utilised the B-camera footage for cut-in shots and we are treated to an insight into the skill and instinct involved in the audio track edit of that film’s final sequence. One especially fascinating section about *Romeo + Juliet* involves a pre-greenlight, proof of concept, shoot, under the half-finished Anzac
Bridge. With Leonardo DiCaprio just as exciting as in the final film. Baz Luhrmann is a contributor to the film as are Fred Schepisi and Phillip Noyce among other directors and actors with whom Bilcock has worked over such a long career.

At its heart, *Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible* is a remarkable capture of one artist and of the choreography of images and sound which makes cinema-going such a universal emotional and intellectual entertainment. Thoroughly fascinating and illuminating!
I have to admit, I was embarrassed that I had never heard of Jill, especially as each successive achievement unfolded in the documentary, including Australian classics such as *Muriel’s Wedding*, *Head On*, *The Dish* and all three of Baz Luhrmann’s first films, to international films such as *Elizabeth* and *Road to Perdition*, to recent hits like *The Dressmaker*. The cumulative effect of spending time on each of these projects (and many more) is to highlight both her versatility and her enormous contribution to the voice of each film. Grigor’s decision to highlight each film by focusing on a notable moment is a wise one, preventing it from feeling like a "top hits" compilation like many documentaries on filmmakers, and instead being an examination of what makes Jill’s craft so singular.

It’s also thrilling to watch how she constructs narrative, emotion and tone through the rhythm of images and sound. I had goosebumps seeing how the final dance number in *Strictly Ballroom* or the Roxanne sequence in *Moulin Rouge!* were pieced together and hearing Jill’s intention behind them, but equally amazed at the uncompromising and exacting craft in constructing harrowing moments of intensity in *Head On* and *Japanese Story*. I found myself falling in love with these films all over again, marvelling at their artistry, and ashamed at not having seen the woman there in plain sight that was so responsible for their success.

Even at just over 70 minutes, the film covers an enormous amount of ground, giving you a sense of Jill as both an artist and as a person, and how vital the intersection of those two worlds are in making her the extraordinary artist she is.

Another careful element of the success of *Dancing the Invisible* is how it maps Jill’s personal story, offering a window into her life and her family without even relinquishing her privacy. There’s a wonderful candidness to both Jill and the film, especially around her singular position as a woman rising through the ranks in the predominantly male Australian film industry in the 70s, and how her personal perspectives, both as someone fascinated by culture and as a woman, have informed her work. The interviews from her collaborators, from directors like Luhrmann, Fred Schepisi and Jocelyn Moorehouse, further highlight the personal investment Jill imbues in her work and working relationships, and how the trust they have in her is well-earned. One of the highlights of the film is in how Jill sees her responsibility as a mentor to help usher in a new generation in Australian cinema, and her willingness to work with new artists and new voices.

*Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible* has one intention: to uncover a relatively unknown Australian legend, and that singularity of intention results in a clear, crisp film full of generosity and surprises. Axel Grigor circumnavigates many of the pitfalls that often encumber documentaries about filmmaking in the simple but effective narrative construction.
of the film, and by letting both Jill and her work speak for her. You’ll walk away with her name safely etched in stone in your memory, and with an insatiable desire to go back and watch all her great work again, if only to marvel, with all your new knowledge of her craft and philosophy, at how she conjures such magic out of the marriage of images.

**Review of Jill Bilcock: The Art of Film Editing in The Australian, 14 March 2017**

**Creatives: Spotlight on a behind the scenes star**

Justin Burke

Pick of the day: Creatives, ABC, 10pm.

This superlative documentary will be for many their first encounter with Jill Bilcock, an Academy Award nominated film editor and one of the most fascinating behind-the-scenes characters in the Australian film industry.

Film editing is not something to which audiences give much, if any, thought. Bilcock said as much in 1999, telling this newspaper, “You can tell that by what taxi drivers ask you: they just think I cut the rude bits out.”

But here it is clear — from interviews with luminaries such as Cate Blanchett, Baz Luhrmann, Rachel Griffiths, Richard Lowenstein, Rob Sitch and Fred Schepisi — that no one is more important than the person who crafts a film from footage.

Bilcock is known for her work on Muriel’s Wedding, The Dish, Elizabeth and Moulin Rouge! and more recent films such as The Dressmaker.

The singular aesthetic she achieved on Romeo + Juliet prompted one Hollywood wag to say it looked as if it were edited by a “Russian serial killer on crack” — no doubt a compliment.

The scenes here showing how she created the famous clap crescendo finale of Strictly Ballroom out of virtually nothing are amazing.

Bilcock’s skills have been honed across an entire career stretching back to Swinburne Technical College’s first film course. (There is ABC archival footage of her from that era, cutting and splicing film.)

Bilcock explains her methods: she is concerned with establishing tone, style, rhythm, and forging an emotional connection with audiences.

Nothing can be more fitting than a documentary that executes those elements so well to tell her story.
MARCH 12 2017

Critic's choice TV viewing picks

Bridget McManus & Melinda Houston

CREATIVES
Series premiere ★★★★★
Tuesday 10pm, ABC

This five-part series brings into the limelight the important, largely unknown work of Australian artists who are pioneers in their fields. First up is the woman who has tied together almost every hit Australian film since Dogs in Space. Jill Bilcock shares tales from her childhood, her formative years in India, and from the cutting rooms of hit movies including Strictly Ballroom, The Dish, Muriel's Wedding and The Dressmaker. The filmmakers and actors who have worked with her are rightly gushing.

Review page for **Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible** on Rotten Tomatoes website

https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/jill_bilcock_dancing_the_invisible

The following screengrab was captured 20 March 2022.

#### CRITIC REVIEWS FOR **JILL BILCOCK: DANCING THE INVISIBLE**

All Critics (7) | Top Critics (3) | Fresh (7)

- **Alexandra Heller-Nichols**
  The Blue Lenses
  ★ TOP CRITIC

  While perhaps typical of the ... praise that ... marks these kinds of documentaries, it is such an eloquent and sincere celebration Bilcock’s work and she is so immensely personable that it is hard for that joy not to be contagious.

  August 25, 2018 | Full Review...

- **Sarah Ward**
  Flicks.com.au

  It’s Bilcock herself and her glorious work that shines brightest.

  July 31, 2018 | Full Review...

- **David Stratton**
  The Australian
  ★ TOP CRITIC

  This informative and extremely entertaining tribute to a consummate perfectionist makes rewarding viewing for anyone interested in the art of the cinema.

  July 13, 2018 | Rating: 4/5 | Full Review...

- **David ‘Mad Dog’ Bradley**
  Adelarde Review

  ...as enlightening a depiction of the classic editing process as you’ll see in any doco.

  July 15, 2018 | Full Review...

- **Leigh Paatsch**
  Herald Sun (Australia)

  A wonderful, illuminating documentary, Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible is an open celebration of one of the hidden living treasures of Australian cinema.

  July 5, 2018 | Rating: 3.5/5 | Full Review...

- **Craig Mathieson**
  Sydney Morning Herald
  ★ TOP CRITIC

  The praise is uniform but matched with insight, while the editing, by Grigor and Scott Walton, is cleanly capable with the odd inside joke.

  July 31, 2018 | Rating: 3.5/5 | Full Review...

- **Alex Lines**
  Film Inquiry

  Hopefully the film becomes a go-to tool for beginners to understand the art of film editing.

  July 6, 2018 | Full Review...
Premieres, Festival Participation and Recognition

**Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible**

World Premiere: 8 October 2017 (Adelaide Film Festival, Australia)
Australian cinema release: 19 July 2018
European Premiere: 13 October 2018 (France: Saint-Tropez Antipodes Film Festival)
Nordic Premiere: 26 January 2019 (Sweden: Gothenburg Film Festival)
22 October 2019 (Los Angeles: ASE & Ausfilm Screening)

Notable Screenings:

Asia-Pacific Screen Awards, Brisbane, Australia 15 November 2017
Griffith Film School, Brisbane, Australia, 20 November 2017
Gold Coast Film Festival, Gold Coast, Australia, 2 May 2018
‘All About Jill’ season at Sun Theatre, Yarraville, Australia, 2 November 2018
DocUtah, 4 September 2019
Miskolc International Film Festival, Miskolc, Hungary, 13 September 2019
Pixar Animation Studios, Emeryville, United States, 21 October 2019
Visible Evidence XXVI, USC School of Cinematic Arts, United States, 26 July 2019
ACMI Cinema 3 (online screening and Q&A), 12 January 2021

Recognition:

Winner 2017 Audience Award, Adelaide Film Festival
Winner 2019 Australia Prize for Distinctive Work, Council for the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (CHASS) Awards
Winner 2019 Raven Award (Digital Film Award), Docutah Southern Utah International Documentary Film Festival
Nominated 2017 Best Feature Documentary, Film Critics Circle Australia (FCCA) Awards
Nominated 2018 Best Feature Documentary, Australian Academy of Cinema and Television Arts (AACTA) Awards
Nominated 2018 Best Feature Documentary, Sydney International Film Festival
Nominated 2019 Best Editing in Documentary, Swedish Film Editors’ (SFK) Awards

**Jill Bilcock: The Art of Film Editing**

Broadcast Premiere: 14 March 2017 (ABC)

Recognition:

Winner 2017 Best Documentary Biography, Australian Teachers of Media (ATOM) Awards
End Credits – Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible

Written & Directed by
AXEL GRIGOR

Produced by
AXEL GRIGOR and FARAMARZ K-RAHBER

Executive Produced by
SUE MASLIN

Edited by
AXEL GRIGOR and SCOTT WALTON

Cinematography by
FARAMARZ K-RAHBER

JILL BILCOCK—DANCING THE INVISIBLE

INTERVIEWEES

Arwin Arwin Paul Mercurio
Bruce Beresford Anton Monsted
Jill Bilcock ASE, ACE Jocelyn Moorhouse
Cate Blanchett Jane Moran
Sue Brooks Phillip Noyce
Martin Brown Glenys Rowe
Fred Chandler Roger Savage
Rachel Griffiths Fred Schepisi
David Hirschfelder Rob Sitch
Shekhar Kapur Cezary Skubiszewski
Brian Kavanagh ASE Caitlin Spiller
Ana Kokkinos Kriv Stenders
Richard Lowenstein Anthony Stevenson
Baz Luhrmann Carl Stevenson
Sue Maslin Kate Williams
Don McAlpine ACS, ASC

FEATURED FILMS

Strikebound (1984) dir Richard Lowenstein
Dogs In Space (1986) dir Richard Lowenstein
Evil Angels (1988) dir Fred Schepisi
Strictly Ballroom (1992) dir Baz Luhrmann
Muriel’s Wedding (1994) dir P.J. Hogan
Romeo + Juliet (1996) dir Baz Luhrmann
Head On (1998) dir Ana Kokkinos
Elizabeth (1998) dir Shekhar Kapur
The Dish (2000) dir Rob Sitch
Moulin Rouge! (2001) dir Baz Luhrmann
Road to Perdition (2002) dir Sam Mendes
Japanese Story (2003) dir Sue Brooks
Catch a Fire (2006) dir Phillip Noyce
Red Dog (2011) dir Kriv Stenders
The Dressmaker (2015) dir Jocelyn Moorhouse
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
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<tr>
<td>Production Manager</td>
<td>TARA WARDROP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>FARAMARZ K-RAHBER</td>
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<tr>
<td>Additional Camera</td>
<td>PETER BAKER</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DAVI SOESILO</td>
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<td>CAMERON MARCH</td>
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<td>DARCY YUILLE</td>
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<td>PHILIP CHARLES</td>
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<td>AXEL GRIGOR</td>
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<tr>
<td>Script Editor</td>
<td>DARYL DELLORA</td>
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<td>PENEOPE CHAI</td>
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<td>KATE DEAN—SYNCHouse</td>
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<td>JOSEF SWITAK</td>
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<td>LUCY CLAIRE EAST</td>
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<td>JOEL THOMAS</td>
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<td>ROBERT RILEY</td>
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<td>DIANA MANDIC</td>
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<td>ALEXANDER RATCLIFFE</td>
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<td>JESSICA SMITH</td>
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<td>TRANG PAYNE</td>
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<td>JONATHAN BURTON</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online &amp; VFX Editor</td>
<td>JOHN KERRON</td>
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<td>CHRIS GOODES</td>
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<tr>
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<td>DIEGO RUIZ</td>
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<td>MICHAEL GRISOLD</td>
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<td>Mix Assistant</td>
<td>DION TSALOS</td>
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A Grigor  Jill Bilcock: Revealing the Invisible Artist – Exegesis, March 2022  188
Legals
CAROLINE VERGE - VERGE WHITFORD & CO

Production Accountant
DANIEL SCHULTZ

Post Production Script
REEZY MILLER

Poster Artwork
LINDA BERGHOV

Marketing—Film Art Media
KYLIE PASCOE

Transcribers
SABRINA SIDHARTA
TIFFANY EDWARDS
BENJAMIN GILCHRIST
HA ANH PHI
SARAH PETRASIJUNAS
TRANG PAYNE
DIANA MANDIC

WITH THANKS TO

Jill Bilcock ASE, ACE

Erika Addis
John Adolphus
Arwin Arwin
Genevieve Bailey
Renee Bailey
Mithun Bangera
Kym Barrett
Ian Bates
Jessica Brewster
Sue Brooks
Martin Brown
Linda Brusasco
Ben Buckingham
Nigel Buesst
Peter Cuffley
Fred Chandler
Mandy Chang
Sally Cheshier
Jo Chichester
Cieron Cody
Dany Cooper ASE
Rob Copping
Kim Cunio
Siobhan Dee
Daryl Dellora
Franco Di Chiera
Leonardo DiCaprio
Jo Dillon
Zoe Evans
Todd Fellman
Helen Field
Trish FitzSimons
Michelle Frampton
Nicolette Freeman
Helen Gaynor
Andrew Gerhold
Gullan & Willi Grigor
Kersti Grunditz Brennan
Maya Gnyp
Ravi Gupta
Karín & Anders Gustavsson
Rosalie Ham
Donna Hamilton
Tom Hanks
Peter Hegedus
Alan Heim ACE
Donna Hensler
James Hewison
Pauline Hirsh
P. J. Hogan
Jillian Holt
Lynda House
Peter Hoyland
Sylvia Ingemarsdotter
Kate Jarvis
Nigel Jollands
Shekhar Kapur
Michelle Kaszai
Brian Kavanagh ASE
Ana Kokkinos
Pat Laughter
Richard Lowenstein
Baz Luhrmann
Chris Löfvén
Veronica Lysaht
Parivesh Malviya
Felicity Marshall
Don McAlpine
Jenni McCormick
Paul Mercuro
Tristram Miall
Meenakshi Shedde
Fiarrah Poole
Nyssa Parkes
Viv Parkes
Craig Pearce
Karen Pearlman
Julia Qvärnström
Mike Reed ASE
Cathy Rodda
Jordan Roe
Glens Rowe
Hayedeh Safiyari
Tyler Sajko
Ken Sallows ASE
Roger Savage
Jane Scott
Fred Schepisi
Akshat Ajay Sharma
Rupinder Singh
Shehzad Sippy
Cezary Skubiszewski
Margaret Slarke
Robyn Slovo
Caitlin Spiller
Kriv Stenders
Anthony Stevenson
Carl Stevenson
Fiona Strain ASE
Bob Talbot
Alison Tilson
Jenni Tosi
Barbara Truelove
Herman Van Eyken
Upasna Ved
Shanu Verma
Tracey Vieira
Janet Goodchild-Cuffley, Mark Gould, Jo-anne McGowan, Sam Griffin, Cheron, Isaac & Lucas Grigor, David Hirschfelder, Jaykowa Hockings, Anton Monsted, Jocelyn Moorhouse, Jane Moran, Bill Mousoulis, Phillip Noyce, John “Cha Cha” O’Connell, Paul Watters, Kate Williams, David Williamson, Kate Winslet, Nelson Woss, Rob Yamamoto, Tony Zna

Soundfirm, Swinburne University, Encore Post SoHo, London, Newman’s Own Foundation, Indian Film Festival Melbourne, State Library Queensland, American Cinema Editors, RGM, Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS)

PHOTO & VIDEO ARCHIVE COURTESY OF

Jill Bilcock, Bazmark Inq, Working Dog, Carl Stevenson, Swinburne University, Ghost Pictures Pty Ltd, Umbrella Entertainment, Toronto International Film Festival

Victorian College of Art, University of Melbourne, Natalie Miller Foundation, Mumbai International Film Festival, Mountain View Restaurant, Greenwich, Australian Screen Editors, Pro-Cam, Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI), National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA)

FEATURE FILM ARCHIVE COURTESY OF


‘PART ONE: 806’ Courtesy Chris Löfvén

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‘ANDAZ’ Courtesy Sippy Films

‘STRIKEBOUND’ & ‘DOGS IN SPACE’ Courtesy Ghost Pictures Pty Ltd


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‘HEAD ON’ Courtesy Head On Productions Pty Ltd

‘ELIZABETH’, ‘CATCH A FIRE’ Courtesy of Universal Studios Licensing LLC
“Waterloo”  
Written by: Anderson/Ulvaeus/Andersson  
Universal/Union Songs Musikförlag AB  
Administered by: Universal Music Publishing Pty Ltd  
Performed by: ABBA  
Under license from Polar Music International AB  
Licensed courtesy of Universal Music Australia Pty Ltd

“Mariel’s Wedding Opening Theme”  
Composed by Peter Best (Copyright Control)  
Licensed courtesy of House & Moorhouse Films

“Muriel’s Wedding Opening Theme”  
Composed by Peter Best (Copyright Control)  
Licensed courtesy of House & Moorhouse Films

“Waterloo”  
Written by: Anderson/Ulvaeus/Andersson  
Universal/Union Songs Musikförlag AB  
Administered by: Universal Music Publishing Pty Ltd  
Performed by: ABBA  
Under license from Polar Music International AB  
Licensed courtesy of Universal Music Australia Pty Ltd

“Win/Lose”  
from the film “Dogs In Space”  
Written by: Ollie Olsen (Copyright Control)  
Performed by: Whutlywords  
Licensed courtesy of Ghost Pictures

“No More Map”, “Very Old Rock”  
and “At the Waterhole”  
musical compositions from the film “Japanese Story”  
Written by: Elizabeth Drake  
Published by: Elizabeth Drake  
Licensed courtesy of Gecko Films

“Mi Mou Thimonis Muta Mou”  
Written by: Stavros Koupoumatizis  
Published by: Seed Point Music Publishing  
Performed by: George Dalaras  
Under exclusive license to Minos EMI  
Licensed courtesy of Universal Music Australia Pty Ltd

“Montague Boys (a.k.a Montague Rap)”  
from the film “Romeo + Juliet”  
Written by: Nellee Hooper/ Marius De Vries/ Justin Warfield  
Published by: T C F Music Publishing, Inc. and Fox Film  
Music Corporation/ ID Soup Music. Licensed by Sony ATV  
Music Publishing Ltd/Amegan Ent. Ltd.  
Administered by: Universal Music Publishing Pty Ltd/ WB Music Corp.  
By kind permission of Warner/Chappell Music Australia Pty Ltd  
Licensed courtesy of Universal Music Australia Pty Ltd

“Miracle”  
Composed by: Peter Best  
Licensed courtesy of House & Moorhouse Films

“Muriel’s Wedding Opening Theme”  
Composed by Peter Best (Copyright Control)  
Licensed courtesy of House & Moorhouse Films

“Muriel’s Wedding Opening Theme”  
Composed by Peter Best (Copyright Control)  
Licensed courtesy of House & Moorhouse Films

“Head On” and “Head On (Theme)”  
musical compositions from the film “Head On”  
Written and performed by: Ollie Olsen (Copyright Control)  
Licensed courtesy of Ollie Olsen

“Tiny Little Engines”  
from the film “Head On”  
Written by: Ollie Olsen/ Andrea Tall/ Geoffrey Hales (Copyright Control)  
Performed by: The Visitors  
Licensed courtesy of Py-Harmonics

“Bouzouki Solo”  
Written and Performed by: Irene Vela (Copyright Control)  
Licensed courtesy of Irene Vela

“Need A Lift”, “You Know Exactly What”, “The Dressmaker Closing”, “All Settled Then”  
musical compositions from the film “The Dressmaker”  
Written by: David Hirschfelder  
Published by: Deerfield Productions  
Performed by: David Hirschfelder  
Licensed courtesy of Film Art Media

“Drive To Chicago” and “Rooney Shoot-Up”  
musical compositions from the film “Road To Perdition”  
Composed by: Thomas Newman  
Published by: Fox Film Music Corporation  
Licensed courtesy of Ollie Olsen  
Production music courtesy of Audio Network and APRA AMCOS

“Montague Boys (a.k.a Montague Rap)”  
from the film “Romeo + Juliet”  
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Theatrical Poster Art

Theatrical poster design by Linda Berghov, Blikka Designeri, Sweden. Archival photo courtesy of Jill Bilcock.