

With a little help from ... Gonad Man

by ROSE SUTHERLAND

THE LOVINGLY RESTORED BOWRAVILLE THEATRE HAS BEEN UP AND running with a complete volunteer staff since August 2003 and the reaction from the community has been overwhelmingly positive. The new cinema and performance space has brought a new lease of life to local entertainment possibilities and cultural development.

The Bowraville Theatre Players, formed as a sub-committee of the Bowraville Arts Council (which restored the theatre) has already staged a very successful season of plays in the Theatre. Local schools and businesses have hired it to present youth film nights, fundraisers and fashion parades as well as plays, and the Coffs Harbour TAFE hired it as a venue for its 16 week course on theatre design and production.

As a cinema, the response has been a little more uneven. With the cost of obtaining film prints sometimes exceeding box office takings, we have cut back our screenings from once a week to once a fortnight, and use DVD where possible. When *Tropfest 2004* drew a near full house in March, we realised the importance of providing films that locals would not usually see at a regional cinema and started screening a short film before every feature. Our strategy is to develop a niche local market and avoid competing with the mainstream cinema complexes so we have also started showcasing and encouraging local film production.

The first initiative under this strategy was the formation of **Verandah Post Films** (VPF) in October 2002 by a collection of people interested in making films in the local area – some experienced film and TV professionals, some novices, and some writers from (yet another BAC sub-committee) the Nambucca Valley Writers Group. So far, VPF has produced two award-winning short films. The first, Jacquelin Melilli's *Outside The Square* was voted most popular local film at the 2003 Cool Bananas Film Festival in Coffs Harbour and went on to tour Australia. The second, Rosie Sutherland's *Dear Old Dad* won Best First Film at North Coast Camera's 2004 Northern Women Film Festival in Lismore. VPF is currently in production of *Spotlight on Bowraville*, a light-hearted short travelogue on the area, produced and directed by Marg Chaffey.

The second initiative is the **Bowraville Surf Classic**, an annual showcase of surf films by north coast NSW filmmakers, first held

in April. Classic surf films were shown over two nights, including the 70's landmark *Morning Of The Earth* by Albert Falzon (Eungai Creek) and the 90's modern classic *Litmus* by The Val Dusty Experiment (creator Andrew Kidman of Uki). Both films have recently been released on DVD yet many locals are unaware that the filmmakers were in their midst. Until April this year, *Litmus* had never had a cinema release in Australia – despite a cult following around the world.

Others on the bill were Monty Webber's *Liquid Time*, described by internationally revered filmmaker, George Greenough (also living on the North Coast) as "groundbreaking" and Mark Sutherland's superb animations, *Dream* and *Gonad Man*. The Surf Classic also featured an exhibition of photos, paintings and music by the filmmakers in the Theatre foyer, giving a deeper look inside the world-class talents of our North Coast filmmakers.

With an abundance of both experienced and new filmmakers right here on the NSW north coast, the Bowraville Theatre will never be short of locally made films to include in its unique regional cinema program. ■



Bowraville Surf Classic*

CLASSIC SURF FILMS ON THE BIG SCREEN

2 BIG NIGHTS!

Saturday APRIL 24th
MORNING OF THE EARTH
 + Mark Sutherland's **DREAM** animation
 + **GONAD MAN** cartoon

Litmus
A SURFING ODYSSEY BY THE VAL DUSTY EXPERIMENT

+ Photos, paintings, prints & music from the filmmakers ...

Sunday APRIL 25th
LITMUS
 + **LIQUID TIME** by Monty & Greg Webber
 + **Gonad Man**

Bowraville Theatre, Saturday April 24th and Sunday 25th from 6:30pm
 info@gonadman.com www.gonadman.com/surfclassic ph 02 6564 7808
 Tickets \$12/\$10 Conc. No films over (MA) * a sub-committee of the Bowraville Arts Council

August

17 - 19 August

☞ *Second Childhood* Play that looks at the life of a group of 'nobodies' who come to realise that they are in fact 'somebodies'. Presented by HotHouse Theatre Company.
NEWCASTLE Civic Theatre.
 Tel 02 4929 1977

17 - 30 August

☞ Bev Barbour and Maureen Clunas Recent Works **GLOUCESTER** Gallery.
 Tel 02 6558 3157

20 - 22 August

☞ *Bellingen Jazz & Blues Festival* All forms of jazz and blues music set in club, pub, community hall and open air venues.
BELLINGEN Contact 02 6655 9345
 Website www.bellingenjazzfestival.com.au

21 August

☞ *Songs of Love & War* by Claudio Monteverdi. The most musically combative view on the most amorous of all battles - the battle of the sexes. Presented by The Song Company. St Stanislaus **BATHURST**.
 Tel 02 9351 7939