

**SCREENED AUSTRALIANNES:**  
*Representations of Australian National  
Identity and National Character  
in Australian-made Cinema  
1945 into the 21st Century*

by

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**certificate**

I certify that this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not being submitted as part of candidature for any other degree.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me and that any help that I have received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.

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## abstract

In the Australian nation's experiences of modernity and late modernity, Australian made films have become a popular conduit for the promulgation of national narratives. Employing a cultural studies paradigm, this study identifies, maps and describes some instances of the Australian national identity and nation building project's attempts at meaning-making, through an identification of various discourses associated with the national identity and the national character, as they have been represented in Australian made films, throughout the second half of the twentieth century.

This study argues that the Australian national identity and national character is often defined, in Australian cultural, social and political life, by association with a set of discourses I label the representative regime, a discursive regime that uses as reference points notions associated with: Australian values (mateship, a fair go, egalitarianism), gender (with masculinity occupying most of this space), ethnicity (including notions of race, whiteness or indigeniety), the landscape (including the anxieties of belonging to this place) and class (including notions of 'the battler' and 'the Ocker'). The representative regime, while discernible in fields and spheres as diverse as political rhetoric, advertising and business practices are best described by reference to cultural products and practices. The instances of meaning-making that employ the referential regime remained constant over the period studied; however, the ways in which the reference points are employed change with the times.

This study examines some examples of the films produced between 1945 and 2007 in the context of the times in which they were produced and viewed and from within social/cultural and political/economic/industry contexts. The discussion uses some film examples, chosen from various periods, to illuminate, illustrate and explain ideas around my contention that the main area of national identity meaning-making in Australian made film is to be found in the changing relationships between the mainstream of Australian society and some discourses (what I call the referential regime), associated with constructing, defining and bounding the national identity and national character. These are often deployed in an Australian made film, in an attempt to provide a shock of recognition. The result of these attempts at meaning-making, in the chosen film examples, is discussed.



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