

Reviews of the film Everynight Everynight

The SBS Movie Show:

David Stratton and Margaret Pomeranz looked at the film for the 11th episode of the 1995 series of the *SBS Movie Show*, first aired on 14th May 1995 and available [here](#) until the end of December 2030:

David Stratton: *“Now to austere black and white with the new Australian film Everynight...Everynight...”*

(Cue a clip which shows Dale - David Field - in his prison cell, as Berriman - Bill Hunter - opens the door. Dale shuffles forward and gives a feeble salute as Berriman tells him to get 'on the cross'. Dale's feet are positioned on a white cross marked on the cell floor. *“Look at this mess, my five-year-old son could do better,”* Berriman says as he examines the cell. Berriman shouts that Dale isn't at home now, next time he opens the cell door, he wants to see it perfect, he wants to see his reflection on the floor. Berriman tells Dale to step out and give his name to the officer. Dale steps out of the cell, saying *“Dale, sir”*, but as he takes a step, Berriman thumps him in the stomach, doubling him up: *“Who told you to move?”* Dale mumbles a reply. Berriman: *“You don't do anything unless you're told!!”*

Dale returns to attention in front of the officer as the clip ends).

Stratton: *“Everynight...Everynight is an exceptionally stark, but most impressive film, based on a stage play by a former convict, Ray Mooney, who collaborated with producer/director Alkinos Tsilimidos on the screenplay. Mooney spent time in the notorious H block, at Melbourne's Pentridge jail, and got to know Christopher Dale Flannery, who's usually described as a standover man. Flannery's been missing, believed murdered, for some time now, and Mooney has written eloquently about the way he stood up against the prison guards, and carved a shred of dignity for himself and other prisoners.”*

(Cue another clip with Dale in his cell calling out, *“Hey boys, you there boys, c'arn, let's hear it.”* An officer tells him to shut up, but another prisoner in his cell, Barrett - Jim Daly - shouts, *“Yeah mate!”* Dale: *“That you Tige?”* Barrett: *“Yeah mate?!”* Dale: *“Don't you let these dogs worry ya mate. You've only got to resign, they can't touch ya.”*

A prison guard shouts through the cell door that he's giving Dale a fair warning. Dale shouts back at the guard, saying be nice to the cocksucker and asking if he wants to give him a bucket of water too.

Barrett, in his cell: *“You could give him a bucket of water from me mate!”* Dale, forming a crucifix pose in the corner of his cell: *“Yeah, you could do whatever you want Kert (Robert Morgan). I've resigned! You can't touch me! You hear that boys? All you've got to do is resign, and they can't touch ya!”* Dale looms up into CU in the frame: *“Who's for resigning?!”* CU on Bryant - Phil Motherwell - in his cell listening. In the distance, we hear Barrett saying he'll resign. *“Good on ya Tige,”* Dale shouts back.)

Stratton: *“David Field gives a most intelligent performance in the leading role, and the always reliable Bill Hunter is a formidable heavy this time, as the most brutal of the prison guards. This is, as you see, a black and white picture which makes no concessions to its audience. Its words and images are unrelievedly violent, and it takes us into a world most of us would do anything to avoid. But there's a humanity and a strange kind of beauty to this story of the resilience of the human spirit, despite the most daunting circumstances ... do you agree, Margaret?”*

Margaret Pomeranz: *"Yes I do and I think what this film did was sort of say here, hey, here's a new Australian talent ... (Stratton: "Yes it is") ... you know because I mean it's so well-directed, I mean Dave Field is so strong in this film, I mean that's, it's the core of it ... (Stratton: "Mmm") ... er, I mean, it's not my sort of film, to tell you the truth, you know, I find it, you know, quite a heavy trip, and I ..."*

Stratton (interrupting): *"It's daunting, isn't it?"*

Pomeranz (frowning): *"... well, it's violent, in the worst sort of way that I can't stand, where people are sort of in prison, and being battered to death ... (Stratton: "mmm") ... um, but I think it shows so much talent on so many levels ... (Stratton: "yeah") ... I'm giving this three and a half out of five."*

Stratton: *"Well I agree with you absolutely, I'll give it three and a half too ..."*

(As the stars come up on screen, we see Dale peering through a slot in his prison door, saying *"We've got 12 on board guv'nor, I think we're in with a chance."* Governor (Jim Shaw): *"Oh you'll get your chance all right. (shouting to the cell generally). You'll all get plenty of opportunity for that."* Dale (defiant): *"I know we will, and when there's a Royal Commission, I'll be the first one in the box to give evidence."* Governor: *"Well that's a change, an informer wanting to be a grandstander."* Dale: *"He still doesn't get it ... we've resigned from your world. You're history mate! (more a whisper) ... History!"* A guard's hand slams the cell slot closed on Dale's face as the clip ends).

The Sydney Morning Herald, VHS release review:

Bernard Zeul gave the film ◀◀ 'Rewind' status, *"so good it's worth watching again"*, in his review of the Siren VHS release for the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 18th November 1996: *The welcome-to-H-Division beating that Dale (David Field) receives on his first day in the notorious punishment cells of Pentridge has a rhythm to it that suggests the perpetrators are familiar with and fond of the routine. These "perps" are the prison guards, led by Berriman (Bill Hunter, in cold and evil form), and the beating is brutal, humiliating and makes it clear that down here subjugation and discipline are the same thing. With cinematographer Toby Oliver framing every shot in a pall of tight black and white claustrophobia, there is no avenue for relief or escape for a viewer, and writer/director Alkinos Tsilimidos doesn't want you to look away.*

Like John Hillcoat's stunning prison drama, Ghosts Of The Civil Dead, this film makes do with little. And like Ghosts, it turns on some powerful performances. David Field is one of the most uncompromising of actors, prepared to take his body and the role just that little bit further. As Dale, who takes on the institutionalised violence by opting out - "I've resigned from your world" - he fills the screen with his pocket-sized frame and defiance. This is not an easy film, not one to solve any problems nor to give any answers. But it's a debut that has me eager to see what Tsilimidos does next.

Directory of World Cinema Vol 3 Australia and New Zealand, eds. Ben Goldsmith and Geoff Lealand, Intellect Books, 2010:

Ben Goldsmith took a look at a number of Australian prison films in this publication. Here are his thoughts on the film:

An opening title states that Everynight ... Everynight is a true story, but due to 'legal implications', the characters have been fictionalized. Another title dedicates the film to the memory of Christopher Dale Flannery, an infamous underworld figure known as Mr Rent-a-

Kill who spent time in H Division in the 1970s and 1980s. Originally from Melbourne, Flannery was a major figure in the Sydney gang wars of 1984–85, dramatized in the television series Underbelly: A Tale of Two Cities (2009). He disappeared in mid-1985; there are several conflicting stories about his fate. The character of Bryant appears to have been based on Stan Taylor, who had spent time in H Division with Flannery. Taylor was sentenced to life imprisonment without parole in 1988 for the 1986 bombing of police headquarters in Melbourne.

Like many other films in this genre, Everynight ... Everynight draws heavily on real-life experiences and events, and shares a common intention to raise public awareness of the brutal treatment of inmates in Australian prisons and, by implication, to condemn a system of institutionalized violence. Unlike some other prison films, Everynight ... Everynight makes no attempt to suggest that prison officers are also victims of the system. None of the authority figures in the film, with the exception perhaps of the prison doctor who features briefly in an early scene, question the treatment of the prisoners or the justice or morality of their own actions. They are mere ciphers, simple agents of the system, as inhuman as the sledgehammer that Dale uses to break rocks. The prisoners are gradually broken down and reduced to rubble by the endless, routine humiliations and constant, petty cruelties that they are forced to endure. The ludicrous charges and disproportionate punishments that the prisoners receive for breaching often arbitrary rules similarly wear down the viewer. And in the end we, too, are broken, exhausted, brutalized by what we have witnessed and, ultimately, left with no choice, no way to redeem the system other than to resign from it, and refuse to succumb to its violence or to participate in its power games.

Stylistically, Everynight ... Everynight is unlike any other prison film I have seen. A variety of artistic techniques are used to powerful effect, most notably the chiaroscuro cinematography. The blackness that literally and metaphorically inhabits the prison repeatedly spills out of the frame, obscuring the boundary that separates the film world from ours, and denying the comfort of objective, distanced viewing. It is fitting that the film is shot in black and white, as there is no room for equivocation or misdirected sympathies here. The prisoners, for all their sins, are undeserving of the violence they suffer, and the authorities are unremittingly evil.

The choice of black and white gives the film a timeless quality. The prisoners' uniforms, the cold, stone walls of the Victorian prison, the ancient punishment of rock breaking, the hierarchy of power and pattern of oppression and abuse, situate the action in an uncertain (or endless) historical moment; only small details – a rifle, a radio – suggest a specific timeframe. Religious symbols and indices abound: the tattoo of a crucifix that covers Dale's back, the repeated orders to prisoners to stand 'on the cross' in their cells, the priest begging forgiveness. This could be purgatory, not Pentridge.

It's better in the dark blog review:

The film was reviewed by Anthony Morris, re-published 2nd December 1994, and available in blog form [here](#):

If the near-constant parade of light-hearted and quirky movies coming out of the local film industry have convinced you that that's all Australian film-makers are good for, then the release of Everynight... Everynight is going to come as a bigger shock than taking a bath with your toaster. This extremely bleak and downbeat look at what prison - in this case Pentridge Prison's notorious H Division - does to both the prisoners and their guards is based on the

stage play by Ray Mooney (who's interviewed elsewhere in *Limelight*), and tells the story of Dale (David Field), a troublemaker held on remand at Pentridge in the early seventies. Despite not actually having been convicted of anything, his lack of respect for the system gets him shipped off to H Division, where in a very long and extremely brutal beating the guards explain to him exactly how things operate down there. What follows is a soul-crushing series of petty brutalities, beating, mindless work of the rock breaking kind, and mental torture designed to break his spirit. But instead of giving in, he gives up - he 'resigns' from humanity and encourages the others to do the same and break the prison code of 'never dob' on the brutal warders.

First time director Alkinos Tsilimidis pulls no punches here, with the black and white cinematography adding greatly to the already chilling atmosphere of the prison (it was filmed inside Geelong Goal). The acting is spot-on, with Field the clear stand-out in a very powerful role (and he's not afraid to be unsympathetic, knowing that our concern shouldn't be focused on the man - who, after all, is supposed to be Christopher Dale Flannery, Victoria's most notorious hitman - but the situations that he's in), but the rest of the cast, including Bill Hunter, are equally up to their gruelling tasks. The only real problem this has is that it's almost too gruelling - it begins on such an extreme of brutality that there's nowhere left for it to go, leaving the ending as a bit of an anticlimax. This is still worth catching though - it's hard to see anyone actually enjoying this, but as a powerful look at the brutality of the prison system it's hard to beat. Anthony Morris
(this review appeared in *Forte*#128)

Retrospective reviews:

Tim Groves took a retrospective look at the film for *Senses of Cinema* in September 2012. It is available in full [here](#), saved to WM [here](#). As this is an active Australian site, and still available, here's the first half of the review as a teaser - follow the links for the full review:

*When thinking about the history of Australian cinema, many people might associate 1994 with only *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (Stephan Elliott) or *Muriel's Wedding* (P. J. Hogan). However, it is Alkinos Tsilimidis' *Everynight... Everynight* that has lingered in my memory. The film is a rugged, low budget adaptation of Ray Mooney's play about Melbourne's Pentridge Prison in the early 1970s. It follows Dale (David Field), a young man awaiting trial, who is sent to the gaol's infamous H Division for disciplinary reasons. Like other prisoners, he breaks rocks with a sledgehammer and is subject to vicious, arbitrary beatings by the guards (including being raped with a truncheon upon arrival). After being charged with a minor infraction, he removes his clothes and declares that he has "resigned" from the system that has incarcerated him. Eventually he convinces the other prisoners that this form of intellectual disobedience will enable them to successfully resist the regime that dominates their every movement.*

*One of the compelling elements of *Everynight... Everynight* is its factual basis. Dale is based on Mooney's friend, Christopher Dale Flannery, who later became better known as a contract killer ("Mr Rent-a-Kill"). His initiation into H Division in the film draws from a real-life ordeal that reputedly lasted seven hours. This systemic brutality was known colloquially as "The Bash"; it became the focus of a 1973 judicial inquiry. While the film is very much an actors' piece in keeping with its theatrical origins, its stark visual style complements the grim narrative through black-and-white cinematography, static camerawork and extensive use of*

shadows. Tsimilidos creates a bleak look that is as unrelenting and oppressive as the prison routine it represents.

The most important moment for me in the film comes after Dale's decision to ignore his surroundings, but before the prisoners' defiant taunting of the most sadistic guard, Berriman (Bill Hunter), during the final act. Dale is seen in his cell, imploring his fellow prisoners to also "resign", but also berating them for failing to do so. In the first shot he comically accuses them of giving him fleas (because they are "dogs", or informers). In the second shot, he outlines a scenario in which he will be murdered by the guards for his dissent, but it will be made to look like suicide. In the third shot, Dale lies on the floor, pleading under the cell door. His voice is barely a whisper: "Resign. Resign." Why does this moment resonate? Partly it is because this lonely, abject figure seems to have reached his nadir. Dale's previous attempts to physically resist and then comply with his tormentors have failed: the violence and injustice have continued. His latest tactic seems entirely futile, a feeble gesture that seems destined to end in his resignation, his acceptance of utter defeat...

Awards

1994 AFI Awards:

The film was nominated in two categories:

Nominated, Newvision Film Distributors Award for Best Achievement in Direction (Alkinos Tsilimidos) (Rolf de Heer won for *Bad Boy Bubby*).

Nominated, Orlando Trilogy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay (Ray Mooney, Alkinos Tsilimidos) (David Stevens won for *The Sum of Us*)

Festivals:

The film's main award claim to fame came at the 1994 Montréal Film Festival:

Winner, Prix de Montréal, Best First Film, Montréal World Film Festival.

The film also attracted attention for being a 1994 Venice Film Festival official selection, though it's not listed in this category in the festival's wiki.

The film was also an official entry in the 1994 Stockholm Film Festival, making it a nominee for the Bronze Horse award, but that year Quentin Tarantino won with *Pulp Fiction*.

The Screen Australia database [here](#), as well as the above, also lists:

1994 Oslo International Film Festival

In the usual way, Screen Australia doesn't list Australian festivals, but the film was also selected for hometown Melbourne Film Festival.

Availability

The film's domestic DVD release reflected the 16mm low budget nature of the original shoot. While the image is claimed to have been framed in 1.85:1 (it looks more 1.78), all this does is reveal the grain in the black and white image, the lack of contrast, and the softness. It's likely a high definition version would do the same, unless a fully restored image was taken from the original 16mm. material. For once, a 4:3 version might have been a better option.

At least the domestic DVD release had a few useful extras:

- Audio commentary with director Alkinos Tsilimidos, author Ray Mooney and actor David Field;
- Photo gallery - just a few publicity style photos.

Director Tsilimidos dates the commentary track to 2006, by recalling it's being done some 13 years after the film was finished in 1993.

The commentary is informative and useful, especially for anyone interested in the stories and the ideas behind the film. Towards the end Ray Mooney goes on an extended rant about Australian's criminal and penal history, noting that most people and most films shy away from looking at this aspect of Australia's past, and claiming seminal importance for *Everynight...Everynight* for paying attention, but up to that point, much of the discussion has been focussed on the film itself. Actor Field notes that the imprisonment rate during John Howard's time saw a 42% rise, while also noting the United States' sterling contribution to penology (though China might also have been mentioned).

Tsilimidos sees some hope in a system that allows inquiries and Royal Commissions, but also despairs at privatised systems, and their ability to conceal what happens inside prisons.

Mooney contrasts the behaviour of priests, teachers and medical officers in relation to the inquiry in H-Division, none of whom testified, to the behaviour of medical officers in the 1976-78 Nagle Royal Commission ([here](#), [WM here](#)) where - after prison officers got up and claimed it was all in the prisoners' imaginations - medical officers testified they had treated prisoners for incredible injuries.

For more that's discussed in the commentary track, see this site's 'about the film' section.

As for the film itself, it won't be to everyone's taste, especially those who prefer films without a theatrical edge. The film never strays far from its theatrical origins, a function both of budget and inclination, with the emphasis on performances, as was the case in director Tsilimidos's follow-up low budget film, *Silent Partner*, which also featured actor David Field.

The key performances are all solid, with David Field and Bill Hunter giving it their all, albeit with aforementioned enhanced naturalistic theatrical air, and with the mood throughout relentlessly bleak.

There's no doubt the film performs a useful service in reminding viewers of the brutality of Australian prisons back in the day, including soul-destroying violence and pointless activities, such as breaking rocks with a sledgehammer as a form of discipline.

Other Australian prison films, such as *Stir*, and *Ghosts ... of the Civil Dead*, could afford to open up the action a little, and for all the endless bashings, there's nothing in *Everynight ...Evernight* to compare to the visceral experience of the prison violence that can be seen in *Chopper*.

In later times, Pentridge became a real estate development, with H Division and its main areas of torture preserved as heritage items, in much the same way that Australians have treasured other aspects of the gulag mentality arising from the country's foundation as a prison colony.

That said, the thesis that Mooney advances, that what happened to Christopher "Mr Rent-a-kill" Dale Flannery in Pentridge turned him into a hit man tends to fail, in that it doesn't explain why Mooney himself, after experiencing H-Division, turned to writing as his form of revenge.

What Mooney endured helps explain the film's desire to bludgeon screws, the prison system, and the inquiry that whitewashed what happened in Pentridge, but at the same

time, some viewers will also feel like they've been bludgeoned by the relentless, enclosed, claustrophobic, and despairing nature of the material they've endured.

The one ameliorating note in the bleakness is the music by Paul Kelly and Shane O'Mara.

For those wanting to try before they buy, the ASO has three clips from the film [here](#), with curator notes by Paul Byrnes, getting excited at the guerilla way the production was put together in defiance of Equity. As usual for this education-orientated site, the clips chosen have an M-rating, and therefore don't quite convey the MA 15+ nature of some of the film.