

# CAFE REPORTER

ISSUE 1 DECEMBER 2015

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Phil Avalon



Food Gallery



Richard Brancatisano



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# INTERVIEW



## Phil Avalon

By Howard Rich

*"I had to hustle friends and family to help raise the finance to produce the film, which starred two young actors in their first year of drama school – Mel Gibson and John Jarrett."*

**The successful 40-year career of writer, actor, director and producer Phil Avalon is classed as a leading light in the domestic and international film community. His book, *From Steel City to Hollywood (New Holland)*, is a lively portrayal of his life in movies, his love of surfing and his time as a male model. "I wanted to show how I lived the dream, had fun along the way and made a career against the odds," Phil explains.**

In the late 1970s, combining his passion for film and his hobby of surfing (which was to eventually result in a World Masters Surfing Championship win), Phil wrote, produced and starred in arguably Australia's most successful independent film *Summer City* – set in the 1960s and around the theme of surf culture. "I was used to hanging around the beach, riding the waves and chasing the girls. It was a pretty idyllic life. At drama school, I discovered there weren't any dramatic films about surf culture, so I decided to write a script. I had to hustle friends and

family to help raise the finance to produce the film, which starred two young actors in their first year of drama school – Mel Gibson and John Jarrett. The movie ended up being a hit in Australia. Then, when Mel Gibson starred in *Mad Max*, some key people from overseas started looking at his earlier movies like *Summer City* and *Tim*."

"There were not a lot of home grown movies being made then. Most of us had second jobs just to pay the rent. I was doing some male modelling work, including being the centrefold for *Cleo* magazine, and the exposure – no pun intended – actually assisted in getting me a part in the movie *Inn of the Damned*, and helped pay for the cost of making *Summer City*," Phil recalls. "Modelling taught me a lot about working in front of the camera, as I was doing two-to-three commercials a week. Hollywood, however, was tough because I still had to audition and screen test for various movies."

"I was fortunate to have a great agent and I got to meet a lot of movers and shakers. Eventually I

began asking actors such as Elliott Gould, Linda Blair and Christopher Atkins to come and play roles on some of my films."

"I was also lucky enough to also meet the likes of Jack Lemmon, whom I often lunched with, Gregory Peck, who invited me to his Christmas party – what a gentleman – and Jane Fonda, an amazing woman."

These days, Phil is working on two films, *The Killer's List* and *Hot Rain*. Both are in the latter stages of development and will be shot in Queensland. Phil also maintains his love of surfing, and happily resides on the Gold Coast.

And what advice would Phil give to potential actors, writers, directors and producers in today's competitive world? "Believe in yourself. Do the courses, learn the skills, meet and mix with others who are doing something similar to you. Maybe you can all put a film together, even a short film – don't give up!

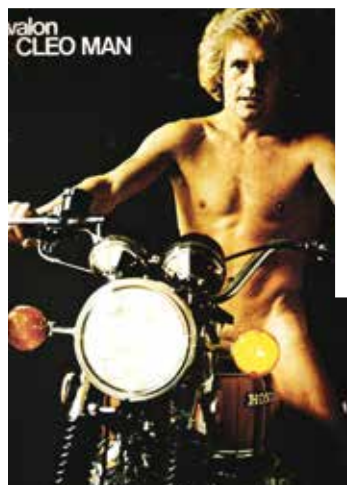
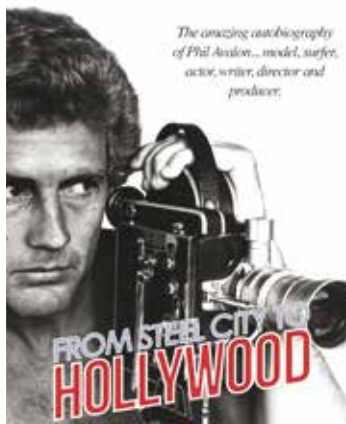
*Images: New Holland.*



AVALON FILMS PRESENTS

# Summer City

PHIL AVALON



STARRING  
**JOHN JARRAT PHIL AVALON**  
 STEVE BISLEY MEL GIBSON JAMES ELLIOT DEBBIE FORMAN  
 GUEST STARS ABIGAIL AND WARD AUSTIN

Directed by Christopher Fraser Produced & Screenplay by Phil Avalon Music by Phil Butkis

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# CAFE REPORTER

## Food Gallery

**Some of our favourite bites  
this past two months.**

**Top row (l-r):**

Art of Fine Food, Earlwood  
Bread & Brew, Surry Hills  
Public Espresso Cafe & Wine Bar,  
Bondi Junction  
Macchina Liverpool

**Second row (l-r):**

Vaucluse Ocean Foods, Vaucluse  
Blackgold Espresso, Rosebery  
Bondi Road Fruitologist, Bondi  
Milkbar & Grille, Newtown  
Bar Latte, Edgecliffe

**Third row (l-r):**

Soul Food Depot, Kingsgrove  
Dear Delicious, Dulwich Hill  
Macchina on Wentworth, Parramatta  
Naji's Charcoal Chicken & Kebabs,  
Arncliffe

**Bottom row (l-r):**

Allegro, Double Bay  
Una's, Darlinghurst  
Salty Rooster, Manly  
Cosmopolitan Cafe Double Bay

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has to offer, contact Cafe Reporter  
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# CAFE REPORTER



THE WAY WE WERE

## FRIENDS IN LOW PLACES

By Jeff Bird

*"During the decade from 1965 to 1975, there were reputed to be about a dozen illegal casinos operating openly in the Sydney area, but senior police consistently denied they existed."*

**The media called them "colourful Sydney identities". They had nicknames like Mr. Big, Mr. Sin and The Prince. In reality they were gangsters and they made millions from illegal casinos, mostly in Kings Cross and the Eastern Suburbs, during the 1960s and early '70s.**

Stories later emerged that they had allegedly achieved this in partnership with some of the most powerful police and politicians of their day.

During the decade from 1965 to 1975, there were reputed to be about a dozen major illegal casinos operating openly in the Sydney area, but senior police consistently

denied they existed.

One of the most notorious gambling clubs of the era, the Forbes Club in Darlinghurst, conducted business with impunity, even though it was openly sign-posted and was located only metres from the nearest police station.

One journalist who visited the club told of going into the kitchen for a sandwich and finding it full of boozing police officers.

In his book *The Prince and the Premier*, David Hickie quoted an underworld source as saying that NSW Liberal Premier Askin and Police Commissioner Hanson were each receiving \$100,000 a year from one club alone. Apart from graft

and corruption, the clubs were also a conduit for drugs, prostitution and gangland violence.

In order to tackle these problems the Wran Labor Government decided to legalise casinos in 1976, leading to the demise of the illegal clubs.

Alan Saffron, whose father, Abe Saffron, was dubbed "Mr Sin" by the media, later wrote a book in which he said: "The truth is that my father was a visionary and the founder of the modern entertainment industry, providing clubs, pubs, gambling and sex to the public – all of which is legal today".



# CAFE REPORTER



## SYDNEY ICONS

### ETERNITY MAN

By Jeff Bird

*"For the next 37 years, he roamed the streets of Sydney writing his message on the footpaths in yellow chalk; Sydneysiders would awake to find his mysterious 'one word poem' without any clue about the identity of its author."*

**The story goes that Arthur Stace was born in Balmain in 1884, growing up in abject poverty because his parents and two brothers were always drunk and his sisters were prostitutes. He had to fend for himself by stealing and had no education. During the First World War he served in France, was wounded and after returning home became a hopeless alcoholic.**

Eventually a magistrate warned him that he would be sent to jail unless he reformed his ways. So he found God, gave up the drink and got a job. In 1930, he went to church and heard a sermon by a fire-and-brimstone preacher who told his congregation: "I wish I could shout ETERNITY through all the streets of Sydney".

As Stace later recounted: "Eternity, Eternity, Eternity – his words were ringing through my brain as I left the church. Suddenly I began crying and I felt a powerful call from the Lord. I had a piece of chalk in my pocket and I bent down and wrote it. I had no schooling and I couldn't have spelt 'Eternity' for a hundred quid, but it came out smoothly in beautiful copperplate script". The legend of The Eternity Man was born.

For the next 37 years, he roamed the streets of Sydney writing his message on the footpaths in yellow chalk, usually in the early hours of the morning; Sydneysiders would awake to find his mysterious 'one word poem' without any clue about the identity of its author.

When he was finally outed, he gave a few interviews to journalists. He estimated that he had written his message about 500,000 times. He even demonstrated to journalists how he could barely write his name.

By the time he died in 1967, his was one of the legendary stories of Sydney folklore. It was a particular favourite amongst Christians, who marvelled at how the Lord had taught an illiterate to write and spread his message to the world in such elegant script.

Stace would have had a chuckle. As he used to tell his followers: "The great question is not what you make of Eternity. It's what Eternity will make of you".

# INTERVIEW



## RICHARD BRANCATISANO

By Kristina Foster

*Richard Brancatisano sits inconspicuously in a quiet back-street café in Waterloo. He looks just like a regular guy in a faded t-shirt and jeans, but this handsome actor is anything but.*

**Brancatisano lights up the big screen in the indie rom-com *Alex and Eve*, in which he plays a Greek Orthodox man who falls in love with an Islamic Lebanese girl, played by Andrea Demetriades. Set in Sydney's western suburbs, the characters' relationship becomes challenged by the disapproval of their families.**

"The story is about love overcoming generational differences. It's very relatable," he explains. "My father is Italian and my mother is Australian, and they would have experienced similar situations."

Brancatisano grew up in suburban Carlingford in Sydney's Northwest, attending the prestigious Kings Grammar School. His father was a doctor and his mother a schoolteacher. When asked if his parents ever meddled in his relationships and wanted him to marry an Italian girl he smiles broadly and laughs. "No. My parents have always been so supportive of everything I do". Brancatisano has been dating singer/songwriter Erin Marshall for several years. "My girlfriend is Australian but my parents wouldn't care what nationality or religion she is."

The parents of *Alex and Eve* in the film forbid their children to continue their relationship. Eve's mother plans for an arranged marriage to a Muslim man from Lebanon; Alex's father threatens to disinherit him.

"It gives you an insight into two different cultures, their beliefs and their practices, and you really walk away from the film loving both cultures and understanding them more," the 32-year-old points out. *Alex and Eve* offers a timely, feel-good insight into Islamic family life within a much-misunderstood multicultural pocket of Sydney.

Starting his career on *Home and Away* and starring in two seasons of recently cancelled US TV series *Chasing Life* before scoring his role in *Alex and Eve*, Brancatisano's acting career has followed a solid upwards trajectory.

"I remember auditioning for the role in *Alex and Eve*. I was in a hotel room in New York, on a publicity tour for *Chasing Life*, and I had a Skype call set up with Andrea and the director, Peter Andrikidis. It was the worst Skype call ever," he recalls. "The call dropped out several times. At one stage whilst reading the

script I couldn't see them at all. With all the technical difficulties, Andrea and I joked around and didn't let it get to us. I think that's what got me the role."

On screen Brancatisano sizzles with his co-star, Demetriades; their infectious chemistry provides a hopeful tonic for Sydney singletons and ticks all the boxes for hopeless romantics. From their characters' meeting at a harbourside bar to their kiss on a Bridge Climb date, the recognisable settings enhance the local charm of the story.

On set, Italian Brancatisano was surrounded by Greek actors constantly giving him advice on how to 'play a Greek.' "Tony (Nikolakopoulos), who plays my Greek dad George, was always joking around. In the scene where my character gets caught in church admiring someone else's wife, he kept really slapping me around. He said he was treating me like a real Greek son," chuckles the actor.

***Alex and Eve* is in cinemas now.**

*Images: TMPublicity*



