

Wake in Fright

Australia 1971

Directed by
Ted Kotcheff

Screenplay
Evan Jones
Based on a novel by
Kenneth Cook

Cinematography
Brian West

Music
John Scott

108 mins

Cast
Doc Tydon
Donald Pleasence

John Grant
Gary Bond

Jock Crawford
Chips Rafferty

A true cinematic experience tonight, with a screening of a carefully restored copy of a controversial film whose prints were lost for 40 years.

A welcome re-release of Ted Kotcheff's controversial "Ozploitation" thriller, which played briefly in the UK under the name *Outback* before going missing in the early 70s. Hailed by Nick Cave as "the best and most terrifying film about Australia in existence", Kotcheff's bleak and raggedy epic earned notoriety for its extended kangaroo-hunt set-piece. Pleasence is electrifying as the alcoholic doctor whose erudite nihilism gives voice to the void. Lost for decades, the film has been handsomely restored from original negative elements with the support of the National Film & Sound Archive of Australia.

Mark Kermode, The Observer

Wake in Fright plays like the demonic antithesis *The Adventures of Barry McKenzie*, the famously crude early 1970s comedy. Brilliantly directed by Kotcheff, the film has the disorienting and menacing quality of Joseph Losey films such as *Accident* and *The Servant*. Kotcheff goes out of his way to capture the sweltering beauty of the outback – and the emptiness and boredom that blight its inhabitants' lives.

Geoffrey Macnab, The Independent

A slow, circling descent into Australia's dark, deep-drinking soul - and one of the nation's greatest, if most confronting films. Despite the title (taken from Kenneth Cook's 1961 novel), *Wake In Fright* derives its brand of feral menace not from monsters, masked killers, or any of the other avatars of conventional horror, but rather from a sober-eyed perspective on a society reeling under the malign influence of its own basest impulses. A circular nightmare of one man's descent into his own - and his nation's - nature, the film exposes to the unforgiving sun's glare (or to a mesmerising roo-hunter's spotlight) all the more insalubrious aspects of Aussie life that never make it into the tourism ads: the deep-seated cultural cringe, the passive-aggressive mateship, the levelling 'tall poppy syndrome', the homosocial misogyny, the alcohol-fuelled abandon. Long thought lost, Kotcheff's classic can now be seen again in all its windscreen grandeur - and should not be missed.

Anton Bitel, Film4

Kotcheff went on to give us *First Blood* and *Weekend at Bernie's* and nothing this strange and vivid ever again. The original tag line - 'Have a drink, mate? Have a fight, mate? Have a taste of dust and sweat, mate? There's nothing else out here.' Spot on.

Mark Stafford, Electric Sheep

Our next screening...

The Past

Tue 3 Mar 2015 8:00pm

Dir: Asghar Farhadi

Beautifully filmed Iranian drama about a man forced to confront his abandoned wife.

