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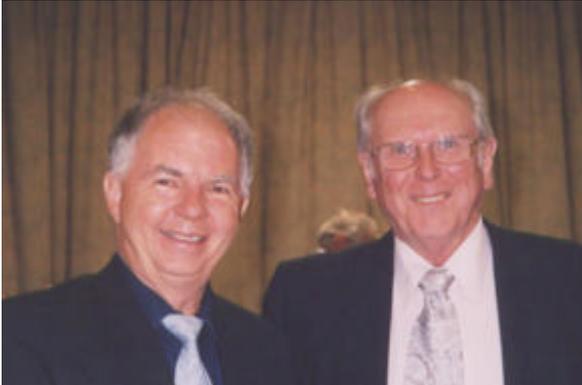
FACT SHEET

Week beginning 6 February 2006

Media Studies

J.P. McGowan: *Biography of a Hollywood Pioneer*

Background



At the Adelaide Launch of *JP McGowan: Biography of a Hollywood Pioneer*, biographer John J McGowan (left) is pictured with Take Time's Tony Ryan.

Born in Terowie in SA's Upper North in 1880, John Paterson McGowan became one of Hollywood's most prolific pioneers: actor, director, screenwriter, producer, and industrial advocate for the motion picture industry. Claimed today by South Australia as Hollywood's First Australian, he was in fact in US movies from 1909, before Hollywood even opened up. He is the only Australian to have been elected Honorary Life Member of the Directors Guild of America. Known as *The Railroad Man* for his specialisation in action movies involving railroads, he made common the image of the terrified beauty tied to a railway track – his first wife was Helen Holmes of his iconic silent series *The Hazards of Helen*. John Paterson McGowan died in 1952.

The Book

This work, the first biography of the Australian-born adventurer, covers a screen career panning 30 years and over 600 productions from the dawn of the silent era. It chronicles his entire life and places him within the context of the times in which he lived and worked. Previously unknown details are unearthed on his family background and early life, as well as his participation in the Boer War and his move to the United States of America. The work concludes with a comprehensive filmography of McGowan's work. *J.P. McGowan, Biography of a Hollywood Pioneer* was written by writer and director John J McGowan who lives and works in Adelaide, South Australia. The book is published in 2005 by McFarland (USA) – <http://www.mcfarlandpub.com/book-2.php?isbn=0-7864-1994-6> and available in Adelaide from Mary Martin Bookshop. Writer John J McGowan's email address is john.mcgowan@internode.on.net

References

There are no J P McGowan movies readily available in Australia on VHS or DVD. However it may be possible to locate some through a websearch of USA collectors.

For a good overview of film production during the Silent Film Era, a good reference is *The Parade's Gone By*, by Kevin Brownlow (Ballantine, New York, 1968).

The first "gum-leaf mafia": Australians in Hollywood 1915-1925

This LaTrobe University website gives a good overview of of early Australians in Hollywood and is an interesting link for Media Studies students. The article is remarkable for the fact that, pre John McGowan's book, it actually mentions J. P. McGowan and that the information given about him is accurate.

http://www.latrobe.edu.au/screeningthepast/firstrelease/fr_16/jdfr16.html

TAKE TIME Website - www.taketimeradio.com
Email - t.ryan@ala.asn.au

