

AUSTRALIAN PICTURES: In Theory and Practice

NOW in Australia investigating the possibilities of making a full-length film about Australia for Ealing Studios, London, is the Scottish film director Harry Watt. *Target for To-night* is his best-known film, but he has also directed several other British productions, including *Nine Men*, as well as collaborating on the Crown Film Unit documentaries, *London Can Take It* and *Christmas Under Fire*.

I like the sound of Harry Watt. He has been giving his views on film-making to the Australian papers and judging by a bunch of clippings which I have just received he seems to have been talking very good sense. His idea is that the Australian film industry should concentrate on developing a type of picture which is the equivalent of the Hollywood Western. The Western, he very rightly says, has been the backbone of the American industry: it cannot be successfully made in Britain because Britain

has no wide open spaces, no spectacular outdoor scenery of rolling plains and towering mountains, and no pioneer history of tough men winning a living from the wilderness; but Australia has all that, and so Australian producers should specialise first in simple, picturesque stories, full of brisk and exciting action. Bigger and more sophisticated films could come later.

NOW this is so exactly what I have myself written about Australian film production in the past that it would be surprising if I did not find myself wholeheartedly in agreement with Mr. Watt. Perhaps on this occasion I may be permitted to repeat something I wrote in 1938 when reviewing an Australian film: "Australia should concentrate on drama of physical action (the equivalent of the Western) which exploits the magnificent outdoor scenery and the excellence of Australian photography instead of tackling a novelettish story like this . . ."

That was said in a review of *The Broken Melody*. I wonder how many



HARRY WATT
Takes his work seriously

readers recall its naive crudities, and those of similar films like *The Silence of Dean Maitland*? By producing these elaborate emotional melodramas the Australian film industry was, of course, trying to show the world that it had reached adult status, but it merely succeeded in revealing that, far from being grown up,

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