Pure S (or, as it was more scandalously known, Pure Shit) is one of the most culturally instructive films of the Australian revival of the 1970s. Anyone who wore those lamentable denim flares or drove an FX Holden or smoked any of the illegal substances of the decade will experience nostalgic pangs upon viewing the new print of the film, which is now available on DVD. In its account of young people in search of nirvana, Bert Deling's film provides at the very least a most valuable milieu study, as well as an insight into what was controversial in the mid 1970s. But to say that is perhaps not to pay adequate attention to the filmmaking prowess on display. Philippa Hawker’s eloquent account of the film’s origins, and the details about its texture and the kind of reception it inspired, goes a considerable distance towards rectifying this. The new print restores Tom Cowan’s brilliant colour photography and makes obvious to a new generation Deling’s control over what may seem a fragmented narrative, as well as over a large – and mainly neophyte – cast, and Hawker’s analysis arrives at a perceptive appraisal of where the film stands in relation to the lives, and life, it explores.

Brian McFarlane
Series Editor