INTRODUCTION

One of Australian cinema’s gravest oversights in the last two decades is that it has not – for whatever reason – provided further opportunity for Ray Argall to follow up his directorial career in the wake of his 1990 debut, *Return Home*. This acutely, and tenderly, observed account of the tensions and anxieties – and the rewards – of ordinary lives was perhaps less likely to appeal to those addicted to multiplex action flicks. However, it was certainly well received critically when it appeared; in fact, it seems hardly to have attracted a single adverse reaction. Argall’s only other feature, *Eight Ball* (1993), has scarcely been seen at all. And yet – as Deane Williams’ sympathetic and astute reading of the film, which identifies resonances that go beyond the network of lives in the foreground, reveals – Argall has the qualities of a genuine humanist filmmaker. Maybe he is just as happy as cinematographer or editor on other people’s films, but those who rightly admire *Return Home* would welcome a new film over which he had the major control.

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