Copyright Statement

The digital copy of this thesis is protected by the Copyright Act 1994 (New Zealand). This thesis may be consulted by you, provided you comply with the provisions of the Act and the following conditions of use:

- Any use you make of these documents or images must be for research or private study purposes only, and you may not make them available to any other person.
- Authors control the copyright of their thesis. You will recognise the author's right to be identified as the author of this thesis, and due acknowledgement will be made to the author where appropriate.
- You will obtain the author's permission before publishing any material from their thesis.

To request permissions please use the Feedback form on our webpage. [http://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz/feedback](http://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz/feedback)

General copyright and disclaimer

In addition to the above conditions, authors give their consent for the digital copy of their work to be used subject to the conditions specified on the Library Thesis Consent Form
Chapter 13: MOVING SOUTH

Keeping up a brisk pace, the cast and crew moved to the Great South Rd on 4 April to film David’s meeting with the traffic officer. The publicity kept in step with the film’s progress, with the Waikato Times on 3 April running a story: “somewhere between Huntly and Hamilton, a speeding cream convertible Ford Thunderbird will be chased and stopped by a traffic officer. No ticket will be issued. The anxious driver – the only occupant in the car – will be given a stern warning and sent on his way. Later, the traffic officer will stroll down a Hamilton street and find the car abandoned.”¹ The article included pertinent comments from O’Shea; “‘This is no travelogue or publicity film. We’re interested in the people. The English or Continental cinema goer doesn’t want to see the beautiful scenery, he wants to know what the people are like. It’s a no-holds-barred film’ he added, with a twinkle in his eye.”² (This was virtually a paraphrase of John Grierson’s famous comments when he visited New Zealand in 1940.) Local interest in the film was obviously high as the Waikato Times ran a second item the following day under a photograph showing O’Shea, his son Patrick, Tony Williams and Michael Seresin clustered around a camera as they “wait on a bank to film the scene where a car, converted by David Manning, played by Colin Broadley, is stopped by a traffic officer.”³ The reporter noted “a little group of autograph hunters huddled around the lamp-post where the white Thunderbird, used in the film sequence, would stop.”⁴

The major dialogue sequences for the hitchhiking between Broadley and Cornwall were filmed with the Ford car fixed on a trailer and towed through Cornwall Park, which, with its rural setting in the centre of Auckland and its liberal sprinkling of sheep, made an ideal location (Ford had loaned several vehicles to O’Shea for the duration of the shooting). With camera mounted on the trailer, Tony Williams and his crew were able to gain steady, clear footage of the car’s interior. The Ford was a relatively large vehicle so when the car was actually travelling on the road, by removing the lid from the boot, the camera operator was able to fit himself and the camera inside and shoot scenes through the window. Other scenes (such as the young Maori hitchhiker) were shot in the conventional fashion from the roadside. While the mounting of the car on the trailer was an efficient method of shooting a conversation in a moving vehicle, it also complicated filming and continuity. Interior scenes were
intercut with exterior shots which had to be filmed on different days. For example, the roadside shot of the Maori hitchhiker, which shows the Ford speeding past him, was to be juxtaposed with a trailer-mounted shot of David’s critical comment to the driver, “You could have picked him up!” Close attention to continuity of dress and dialogue was crucial. But audiences expected a feature film to have a variety of camera angles, and O’Shea and Williams were always ambitious to achieve interesting visuals despite the pressures of the budget and the schedule.

Plate 16: O’Shea and his crew make the final adjustments prior to shooting the interior sequences in the car mounted and towed on a trailer through Cornwall Park

These car scenes are of major importance both to the storyline and to David’s development as a character. The businessman represents everything from which the younger man is trying to escape, a man who measures his success by his possessions and his commercial achievements. As Broadley pointed out, the driver’s character is “making me react even more [strongly] away from the brittle hard attitude, and probably one of the reasons that started me running away was that attitude.” Morton’s angry reaction to David’s criticism of him – which results in a heart attack –
was filmed near a Te Kuiti farm. Broadley recalled being puzzled by the script. “When the guy is having a heart attack, he’s still trying to order me out of his car. Well, I guess that’s part of the character, but even so, it puzzled me.” An effective detail which reinforces the drama of the situation is the sound of the car horn set off by the dead man collapsing onto the steering wheel. During the shooting of the sequence, Broadley had accidentally hit the horn and this gave O’Shea the idea of using it as a dramatic device. Broadley added: “Gil was a marvellous dead body. He made no reaction, no matter what we did or where we were going. He just shut himself off so his mind was inactive to everything that happened, and he was as floppy as a dead man would be.” Having dragged the heavy body to the gate, David pauses to thump the top of it to express his frustration and despair. At the time, O’Shea instructed Broadley to bang on the gate for some time. However, in the final cut, he would decide to shorten the whole scene, and insert a cutaway of the dog. The dog belonged to a local farmer and O’Shea, seeing the dramatic possibilities of having the animal barking loudly, incorporated it both in the scene where the body was being disposed of, and the subsequent scene where it was discovered. Like the horn, the dog was one of those extra details that occur to a director on location. The fact that the death and the discovery were filmed on the same day (according to the logic of film production) helped to crystallise this creative link.

Plate 17: Tom Morton (Gil Cornwall) has a heart attack while he and David Manning are wrestling for the driver’s wheel – a scene shot with the car on the trailer
The whole of the farm sequence, including the discovery of the body, was shot that day. On the following day the cast and crew travelled to Wellington to film the embarkation and Cook Strait ferry sequences. (The scripted transition – a dissolve from the ferry tickets in David’s hands to the hands of the uniformed ticket collector on the ferry gangway was realised effectively.) Always alert for ways both to keep costs down and to maximise local colour, O’Shea used a real ticket collector. He had the crew firstly film the official with the tickets in his hand, and then shoot the Ford,
with David at the wheel, driving past him (a documentary kind of scene with which O’Shea was thoroughly familiar). To complete the sequence, Broadley pulled the car off to one side and let the other cars go past, while Tony Williams went on board himself, set up his camera, and waved for Broadley to drive the car up the ramp. The scene is typical of the extent to which the team was filming “on location” using local people as extras.

O’Shea had originally chosen Auckland actress Helen Smith for the part of Celia, the girl who was to encounter David on the Cook Strait ferry. During the shooting of the Auckland scenes she auditioned for the camera and, he recalled, “did a wonderful test, an unbelievable one, so we cast her in that role.” She was given the job of continuity for the early part of the shoot as a way of familiarising her with film production. Unfortunately, when shooting began for the South Island scenes, Smith proved unable to sustain the quality of the performance she had given during the screen tests. This posed a major problem for O’Shea, who by this stage was already busy with budgetary and organisational problems. As he explained in a letter to John Graham:

“[Smith] packed up completely in front of the cameras. I persevered with her for a week, but stopped in time … for two reasons – (a) we could retrace our steps without too much difficulty; and (b) she was at a complete breaking point – and I feared I might have a serious case on my hands of a nervous breakdown. The peculiar thing was that she just couldn’t transmit any emotion other than glacial frigidity, which as you will realise would have ruined that whole conception of the end of the film.”

By this stage all the scenes in Christchurch and those showing the trip to the West Coast had been shot. In spite of the time and money involved, O’Shea made the decision to discard all the footage of Smith and re-cast the part. Deirdre McCarron, who worked in Auckland as a model and had done some acting, was suggested. In O’Shea’s words, “I got her number from someone [and asked] ‘Can you come down to Christchurch immediately? We want to shoot a test with you.’ She was great, lovely.” He added to Graham: “I think you know her – she knows you – and saw your play [Lest We Resemble] … As a playwright and producer myself, I think – and hope – you’ll be surprised at the performance we are getting out of her. Albeit, she has assumed an almost completely different personality – warm, simple, sympathetic – from the one she had on when we flew her down from Auckland, which was fairly
brittle, silly, sophisticated. What she will be like when her part in the film is over, I cannot imagine.”

The sequence on the ferry was filmed during a normal crossing with a small crew consisting of Williams, Seresin, O’Shea and Smith. The rest of the crew were on board as passengers. Although no longer acting in the film, Smith had expressed the wish to continue as production manager. She had rapidly developed considerable expertise in production since the commencement of shooting in Auckland. In order to signal a change in personality, O’Shea decided to alter the name of McCarron’s character from “Celia” to “Diana”. The scene of the crossing included shots of other passengers on deck. Throughout the shoot, bystanders were often asked if they were willing to appear in the film. They were not offered payment but required to sign release forms.

In a scene en route to Christchurch, the car pulled up by a stream. As Broadley remembered, “this was the one time in the whole movie that I felt it was a pity we weren’t in colour rather than black and white, because the autumn colours of the trees around where I go and wash my face … looked so colourful. All the other bits of the drama suited the black and white, but not this [scene].” Although Broadley felt at times that O’Shea left him free to interpret his own thoughts and feelings, there were occasions when the actor felt over-directed, and it seemed to him that O’Shea spent an excessive amount of time on some scenes. He cited this scene as an example: “John would … ‘over-direct’ each little scene, so that he wasn’t aware of how many seconds[it would take up on the screen]; so when I get out of the car and I stroll down there and wash my face, that really is a long time when nothing is happening except setting a scene, and that could have been done in a lot quicker time.” This is, of course, a stylistic issue, and a Hollywood movie is likely to be a lot more condensed than (say) a film by Antonioni.

The sequence at the motel exterior in front of the phone box in Christchurch is an important one. For Diana to “go wild in Westland” appears to be just an amusing escapade. For David it is involved in his flight from the law, but he also seems attracted to her, initially perhaps as a distraction. The scene is also important in not only showing the developing relationship between them but in exploring their
individual motivations. David’s decision to head towards Westland results primarily from his being on the run from the law. In Diana’s case she simply seems attracted to the spontaneity of the idea. Yet they both have secondary motives. David sees Westland as not only an opportunity to avoid the consequences of his actions but also as a place where he can be free of the strictures of society which have not only left him dissatisfied but, in his eyes, have resulted in his predicament. (It is likely that many audience members, raised on a steady diet of cowboy movies, would probably have recognised the link between the American and New Zealand notion of heading west, a place where one could escape from urban life and values and begin anew.) While at this point in the film his motives would have been apparent to an audience, Diana’s would have less so. They may have felt that the idea that a “well brought up young woman” would throw her lot in with a man she’d only just met was less than credible. Yet, by opting to “go wild in Westland” Diana was reflecting a desire to escape from her conventional existence. She’d had a good education and no financial worries as her father was wealthy and work throughout the country was plentiful. Yet for her to impulsively head westward with David was entirely plausible in a film which, by this point, had shown that adherence to the social norms and financial security were insufficient for New Zealand’s youth. Thus, although apparently acting from differing perspectives, in opting to run away David and Diana had much in common.

The motel owner was played by the president of the Drama Society of Christchurch, an experienced radio actor. The motel interiors were one of the few times when the film was shot out of sequence. During a period when they were unable to shoot on the Franz Joseph glacier because of the weather, O’Shea elected to use this time by having a motel interior set up in a dance hall alongside the Hari Hari Hotel. (It is, of course, standard procedure for some interior scenes to be kept for those days when bad weather prevents outdoor scenes being filmed.)

**Caltex And Cars**

Early the next morning David drives the Ford Fairlane into a Caltex station where the attendant is seen placing an ‘Open’ sign on the footpath. The sequence at the Caltex petrol station features Harry Lavington who had played the role of the impoverished gold prospector Tim Shanahan in O’Shea’s *Think About Tomorrow*. His uniform is
unusually neat and presentable, indicative of the fact that Caltex was a major sponsor for the film, providing petrol for the duration of the shooting. However, their product is not referred to directly in the film, whereas the Ford Fairlane again receives a positive mention in this scene. Earlier, Morton had told David to “just keep working hard like I have if you want a car like this”. Despite the long drive it has completed, the car is gleaming, its whitewall tyres and the bodywork and chrome shining in the morning sun. As he fills the car with petrol, the attendant comments, “Nice job, this … Wish I had one like this. Car like this stands out. Got real class”. Although O’Shea recalls such positive comments as just being part of the script, he was no doubt aware the sponsors would be pleased. “Product placement”, which is sometimes spoken of as a recent development, has in fact been a necessary part of low-budget film-making since the beginnings of the industry. Broadley has always been uneasy about the scene for a different reason: “It is overacted because Harry doesn’t appear to be a casual guy there just all on his own, he actually appears to be interested as to where I am going and what is happening, and that’s rare in petrol pump attendants.” Arguably, this was a deliberate dramatic device to heighten the tension by contrasting the runaway’s taciturn attitude with the cheerful friendliness and curiosity of the other man.

The relationship between David and Diana had, until this point, been somewhat stilted. She had been portrayed as a neatly dressed, well brought up young woman whose clipped, British-style accent showed that she had obviously gone to the right sort of Christchurch schools. Consequently her willingness to go off travelling with a man she hardly knew, and to spend the night with him in a motel was something of a mystery. In an effort to develop her character, the scene in the motel room was designed to show her more insouciant side. Dressed in David’s shirt, standing in front of a mirror, she drapes some of her hair over her top lip to form a moustache, and laughs at the absurdity of the reflection as her companion, returning from the petrol station, comes up behind her and joins in the visual joke. Broadley recalled that “Deirdre McCarron was good at putting on characters … and when she was playing round I think Tony [Williams] thought it would be a good idea to include some of that in the film”.
At this stage in the film the relationship between David and Diana was still unclear, so much so that subsequently Broadley and O’Shea had differing interpretations of it. The couple had spent the night in a motel yet they were not shown as having had a sexual relationship. After clowning in front of the mirror, Diana took off David’s shirt, and even though he is next to her he takes no notice of the fact that she is standing there in a bra. Broadley recalled that at this point “it was just like we were brother and sister, it was sort of platonic. ‘The morning’s beautiful and so are you’ was my line, but that’s a line that is not necessarily a sexual line.”

O’Shea had a very different view of their relationship. “Of course it was sexual … You don’t shack up in a motel with a double bed for a platonic relationship! There’s no question of it being platonic.”

Part of the problem was the censorship climate of the period which forced film-makers to be indirect and ambiguous. Referring to the love scene on the beach at the Hokianga between David Manning and Laura Kosavitch which showed her kissing him on the upper thigh as he was standing up, O’Shea recalled that “the way the scene was cut [reflected] ‘European practices’. You couldn’t actually show any of that … in the movie at all. In those days the sexual taboos were very much alive. We got an R Certificate in England … because of the sex scenes.”

Having already depicted the relatively risqué seduction scene on the Hokianga Beach and planning a further love scene between Diana and David, O’Shea did not want to be seen as having a excessive amount of sex in Runaway and preferred instead to let the audience draw its own conclusions about the couple’s relationship in the motel. “We didn’t have any sexual scenes as such. We’d exhausted those.”

The gaps in the portrayal of Manning’s relationships with women were to plague Runaway throughout the production and to leave the viewer with a sense of missing information. The clearest relationship was with Laura Kosavitch who presumably wanted to seduce the young man simply to relieve the tedium of living in a small New Zealand town. The relationship with Diana was obviously more complex but the film had two problems – it was focused too much on David, and it had difficulty finding adequate ways to convey indirectly what the Censor would not allow it to show directly.
Westland

Westland was David’s dream. Williams’s camerawork captured a range of images of its natural beauty contrasting sharply with the deserted ghost towns and abandoned coal mines. For David, the wildness of the area offered security for a man on the run. In a voice over to the accompaniment of a montage of Westland, David soliloquised that, “We’ll be nothing against a wall of mountains; a thin streak”. The fact that his sister was living in the area was an advantage. The bush would be his refuge and the girl who seemed pliable enough to follow him and not to ask too many questions would be his companion and lover. As Broadley described it, “I say I may never come back and she says I may never come back too so let’s have a thing together. [We were] looking forward with anticipation rather than looking back in anger”.

After abandoning the car, a simple sequence notable for a tracking shot similar to the one used in the Remuera garden, they reach an abandoned hut where they pause to rest. David tells her to lie down and makes a fire with a minimum of materials (assisted in fact by accelerants), covering her with a blanket and leaving her sleeping. On his return, having visited his sister in Hokitika to obtain additional supplies of food and clothing, he finds her huddled only in a blanket by a dying fire (even though she had curled up fully clothed on the bed before falling asleep). In spite of the privations of the journey and her long sleep, her makeup and hairstyle remained remarkably intact.

The composition of the two-shot of the young couple seated in the hut was indicative of Tony William’s ability to keep extending his skills as the shooting of *Runaway* progressed. A more conventional set-up would have had the pair alongside each other but, as Colin Broadley pointed out, “the positioning in the scene, with both of us in the middle and her head immediately below mine is one of Tony’s things. It is quite unusual to do a scene symmetrically like that.” The sequence was reminiscent of a European art film. After his explanation David turns to her and they make love. The reason for the blanket-only covering was now obvious – a dramatic device to enhance the eroticism. (A publicity still, showing Diana loosely wrapped in the blanket would be used in the promotion of the film.) By today’s standards the sequence is tame and tender. Broadley remembered his screen kiss with Deirdre McCarron as simply part of the role which he was called upon to play. “It was a bit more sexy than it was with
Laura [Kosavitch], but I still remember feeling not at all aroused when we were doing this ‘dance’ before the camera. As you can see, it was more of a spiritual lovemaking than tactile … It was more of a joining of partners, a meeting of soul mates. That’s how I felt about it. That’s probably what we were trying to indicate as well, more of a fraternal, spiritual connection, and the body connection came in as part of that, but without focusing below the belt.” 16 After kisses in close-up the camera discreetly pans away to a series of tracking shots featuring treetops framed by clouds. In an earlier lovemaking sequence (with Laura), the camera had panned away to sand dunes. The sky imagery suggested a more elevated type of love. It also provided a visual sequence with the poetic quality of recent films such as Resnais’s *Hiroshima Mon Amour*. In a clever transition, a brief series of low angle tree shots cut to an eye – level tracking shot (taken from a boat which moved alongside the actors) of the trees at the lake edge. Diana and David are seen moving quickly past the trees which fringed the shore and emerging into a clearing by the lake edge. In a portent of events to come, the sound of an echoing gunshot is juxtaposed with the slow pan shot of a beautiful, serene lake surface. The couple moves on and, in a brief sequence which reflected the values of its time, David picks Diana up and carries her to save her getting her feet wet.

Built by the film crew, the hut’s unlikely location close to the river bank was governed by the director’s dramatic requirements. As O’Shea recalled, “Anyone with any brains could see that it was a stupid place to have a hut because the river would continually flood and they would be swept away.” This showed O’Shea’s insight into the nature of film for, as he pointed out, “no-one ever raised the problem, no-one ever questioned it, actually. Films have got the ability to force belief of what you see, and people … don’t even think it’s a funny place to have a hut because it’s there.” 17 Although it worked visually and dramatically, the siting of the hut caused some production problems. O’Shea told a journalist, “The work on the Lake Mapourika set has caused the unit a good many headaches. Quite apart from their adventures in the recent wet weather, when the lake rose, their site was awash, and hasty evacuation was the order of the day.” 18

The hut and the events surrounding it were pivotal to the film. The hut shown in the film would have been far too small to accommodate a camera crew and technical
equipment and therefore the interior was re-created inside the main lounge of the Hari Hari Hotel. O’Shea recalled that “the art director, Tom Morrall, was from television, the early days of television, and he made [the set] all sparkling clean. When we went into it we just laughed and flung dirt at it and I remember Tony going in and ripping half the paper off the wall to make it look really used and antiqued [sic]”. Together with the lighting, this ageing created the authentic appearance of a bushman’s hut in a remote part of the country where warmth and shelter were the only things that mattered. The scene shot in this location are some of the film’s most effective.

Plate 19: Shooting the interior sequences of the hut at Lake Mapourika in the main lounge of the Hari Hari Hotel

The setting at the lakeside contained two elements which David was seeking – remoteness and tranquillity. Here, with a woman who cared about him, he could find peace. Unfortunately the sense of peace is broken by the arrival of Clarrie, the deer stalker, played by Barry Crump. He is seen first in a rowboat on the lake, with the camera showing his reflection in the water, then following the armed figure striding towards the house. The next shot is one of the film’s most striking – the fire and the
back lighting showing Crump as a dark armed figure, with the low camera angle emphasising his dominance over the couple seated either side of the flickering flames. O’Shea had by this time developed great confidence in the creative and technical ability of his young Director of Photography – a confidence justified by the quality of shots such as this one.

Plate 20: David Manning and Diana Morton (Deirdre McCarron) face bushman Clarrie (Barry Crump) in the hut’s interior.

The original character of Clarrie, the toothless loner in the “Celia” script was fine-tuned by O’Shea to suit Crump’s tougher image. The new occupant of the hut was a younger man who carried a rifle, killed deer for a living, and ate venison. From the entrance of the hunter, the mood is one of growing tension. The revamped scruffiness of the interior, enhanced by the low lighting, was an environment as alien to David and Diana as it was home to the hunter. The economy of movement and terseness of the dialogue in this well directed and acted scene evokes the stressful situation that now confronted the runaway and his companion. Crump had the best lines including the ambiguous “Nothing belongs to no-one around here”. Refusing the tinned food
offered by David, he wipes his knife on his sleeve (Crump would normally have wiped it on his thigh but this was too low an angle for the camera) and cuts himself a slice of venison. Seating himself on the bed next to the ill-at-ease Diana he thrusts a piece of venison at her and enjoys her shuddering response to his line, “Just shot it the other day.” Later, with the rain pounding on the roof, chewing nosily and edging closer to Diana, he suggests lewdly, “We’re in for a wet night”, eliciting an angry look from David who pointedly picks up the hunter’s rifle. This scene showing the three of them with David in the foreground, was cleverly composed. Taking his directions as to the positioning of the gun from Tony Williams, Broadley pointed the barrel down so that it visually divided the background image of Clarrie leaning suggestively forward towards a shrinking Diana.

Lake Maparika was as beautiful as it was tranquil but the filming of a scene that supposedly took place the next morning proved to be very challenging. The aim was a long shot that showed David and Diana in a small boat fishing in the centre of the lake, framed by the mountains and by the morning sun. This difficult shot required actors and crew to rise very early in the morning, travel by road for about three quarters of an hour to the edge of the lake near the Franz Joseph glacier, and then by boat for fifteen minutes to the lakeside location to set up the camera before the sun rose. O’Shea recalled that it had taken 12 days to get the shots that he wanted at dawn without the lake’s surface “being ruffled by wind and motorboats and that sort of rubbish.” Tension had been mounting between O’Shea and Dickie Lauder, the Scottish production manager, who had difficulty fitting in with the rest of the Runaway production team. Lauder deliberately created problems at the lake and in O’Shea’s words, behaved like “a real bastard because he kept disturbing the surface of the lake [with his] little runabout boat. He was just stupid.”

Following the spectacular long shot the couple are shown in medium shot attempting to change places so that David could row to shore. The boat rocks unexpectedly and Diana falls overboard. For Deirdre McCarron the scene was a difficult one as the waters of the lake, in the early morning, were chilly. To prevent any possibility of hypothermia her skin was oiled and she wore additional garments under the clothes seen on the screen. As she flounders in the water her companion hesitates, and looking down sees a vision of the dead body of Tom Morton floating past, the image
he had seen earlier as he gazed over the side of the Cook Strait ferry. In the finished film the low angle shot of David Manning’s face, if scrutinised carefully, showed momentary flashes of light. Carefully contrived symbolism as to his confused state of mind? Unfortunately the real reason was processing problems. Much of the footage of this difficult sequence was ruined as the result of a laboratory accident leaving the director to salvage what he could. This was probably “the most significant problem” he had to face during the making of the film. In his words:

The whole scene of Diana falling out of the boat [had to be] changed completely because of an accident that had nothing to do with anything other than the fact that when the material went to the laboratory there was a printing breakdown, a negative processing breakdown and we only had a fraction of the 800 feet we shot. That had a characteristic blemish every 18th frame; for 2 frames it flared out and if you look at the film very closely you’ll realise we used some of those shots because we had to make the sequence hold up at all. We’d been to that damn lake for 12 days at a 3am start to get there at dawn and it was infuriating to find, when we finally got it shot, that it was damaged in the processing. So we used a little bit of it but of course it wasn’t used in the way we had expected to. I had to use scenes from him looking over the side of the ship as it came to the South Island and all that whole motif was reintroduced to build up that particular scene, [to] recreate a sense of guilt on his part.23

Unfortunately, the completed sequence confused everyone, both actors and audience. David’s hesitation as he watches her floundering was to be shown in separate shots edited together but Broadley was unclear about his motivation or the timing of his actions. “I didn’t discuss it with John. I had no motivation for saying anything much, and I was just puzzled about what my reaction to this was supposed to be. Here was me, trying to be an actor reacting, and wondering what my reaction was supposed to be … [so] it’s not as well done as I feel it could have been.”24 It was an example of how practical problems can sometimes overwhelm the finer points of acting or directing.
David, having pulled Diana into the boat and given her his jersey, rows her back to shore. In long shot she is seen bare from the waist up standing by the hut changing into a dry garment. Broadley recalled that “her getting undressed and then dressed again was shot twice, once in long shot with the skull and horns of a deer [in the foreground]. This was done for the local market, but for the overseas market we did a close-up of her so you could see breasts and nipples as she was getting undressed, which made it go into the X-rated or R-rated category overseas, which was a better way of guaranteeing audiences.”

The lakeside sequence following Diana’s fall from the boat ended up as one of the film’s least successful. Uncertainty on Broadley’s part as to what he was trying to convey, a bad laboratory accident that left the film short of vital footage, an assistant producer who was uncooperative, and a rapidly disappearing budget all added pressure. The result was that there was insufficient time for later key sequences to be rehearsed and shot carefully. Increasingly, the priority was to get scenes in the can before the budget was exhausted. The lakeside sequence marked the beginning of this phase. To add to the pressure, Colin Broadley was experiencing personal financial difficulties. In a bizarre parallel to his David Manning role, O’Shea recalled that he was “being chased by the police at the time [as] he must have been going bankrupt in Auckland, or something.” Worried sick and under pressure, Broadley began eating compulsively, which is why “he got so fat. He couldn’t stop eating puddings.” The increasing weight of the star provided an additional challenge for the film crew. O’Shea recalled, “Colin had been a nice stripling at the start, but at the end I had to dress him in huge jerseys and corduroy pants. [Furthermore] there was no shot of him side on; it’s always back on or front on. Tony was extremely good about photographing him to conceal his girth.”

Perhaps the most satisfying scene filmed at Hari Hari was the film’s opening sequence, shot during the period when they were unable to go to the glacier because of Colin Broadley’s twisted ankle. O’Shea was particularly pleased with this sequence for which he gave much credit to Williams, Michael Seresin and his son Patrick O’Shea “who made a wonderful camera crew.” He described it as being “a most ingenious and difficult [scene] for a camera crew to arrange, especially with the limited equipment we had at that time.” The scene, shot as a single take,
commences, in O’Shea’s words, with “an abstraction which focus-pulled quite cleverly into a woman’s face. She opens her eyes and listens. On the word ‘Diana’ she turns and with each footfall the focus had to be changed on the camera and the camera crew accomplished this very cleverly. She turns a corner past a screen and then walks towards the camera. The light switches on and she speaks. It was a wonderful bit of timing.”31 The scene, very much in the “art film” tradition, was like a reminder of the excitement that had initially inspired the whole Runaway project – not merely to tell a story but to push the boundaries of an exciting medium.

At this time the Hokitika Guardian carried a report of a talk which Dicky Lauder, the Production Manager, had given to a local “institute” (not specified) on the film’s shooting. It is somewhat ironic that Lauder, who had earned O’Shea’s ire for his irresponsible behaviour “was at great pains to point out that riotous living and moral laxity that was attributed to film units by local people in every part of the world was an old wives’ tale, and complete fiction. They were far too busy and too absorbed in their work to have time or energy for riotous living.”32 Lauder had gone on to explain to his audience that “Pacific Films wished to employ largely New Zealanders. As there is no New Zealand film industry this means amateurs.” In a reference to the culture of mutual assistance which had developed among the cast and crew, Lauder pointed out that “a well-known Whataroa personality, Barry Crump, another gifted amateur, has finished his part as a deer-culler and stayed on … endearing himself to the rest of the gang by undertaking any sort of job that needs doing and proving very efficient and helpful.”33 The presence of the Runaway crew had obviously generated a considerable amount of local interest in the Hokitika area for the newspaper item ended with the comment: “We shall miss the unit when they go. They have given a decidedly exotic flavour to the Hari Hari atmosphere.”34

Despite having achieved some good moments on film, John O’Shea was not going to miss Hari Hari. As his letter to John Graham from the Hari Hari Hotel on 1 June 1964 showed:

[The production is] grinding on remorselessly. The South Island portions of it have been an agony brought about by a number of different factors, all of which have kept me frantically busy. I thought at one stage of sending out an
SOS for you to come down here, but I feel the film has disrupted people’s lives sufficiently and is causing enough worry not to involve you in it further – especially as the financial aspects are giving me a great deal of worry. I’m stuck down here, must keep with the film to get it completed, but with almost equal urgency must get round the backers to get their dough out of them, something I will not do by phone but only by personal calls. Anyway, the phone down here is almost useless.35

O’Shea, although obviously under a great deal of pressure, strived to remain optimistic. Explaining to Graham that he had not had time to send him a dialogue transcript, he went on to reassure the writer that script changes had been minimal.

[There have] only been ad hoc alterations as to the detail – we changed the name of Celia to Diana to more suit the actress; and Clarrie becomes a younger man as I got Barry Crump to play the part. He does it excellently, too. You’ll be pleased to know that the scene in the hut – rain and all – is one of the best scenes in the film and just about exactly as we imagined it. By and large, the dialogue changes have been to fit the location. Instead of Clarrie being a whitebaiter, he’s now a deer stalker – instead of living on herbs etc., he eats venison steak in a rough cranky way.36

John Graham in Auckland had felt increasingly isolated from the production and replied promptly that he was “delighted to hear from you after all this time.”37 The letter went on to express misgivings which Graham had been having in the previous weeks:

I heard a long time ago that you cast Deirdre to replace Helen. I confess I was gravely upset by the news … I couldn’t see that she could ever play the part and began to wonder what was happening to Runaway. How could a woman who had, to my knowledge, no idea of acting, play such a part as was written? If, as it seems, you have pulled this off, my sincere congratulations.38

Graham also expressed concern at feeling marginalised:
I do wish that I had heard from you long before now. It would have saved me a lot of embarrassment from people who had news of the film, and who were not directly connected with it, but who thought that I knew what was happening. Coupled with this … rumours, no doubt perniciously instigated, that Barry Crump had re-written the script and that the film now begins on the West Coast with a “Sings Harry” theme.40

And:

I have been in a bit of a stew about it all. This might indicate to you John, that I have been very close to the film and cannot objectively retire from it. I have been and always will be, deeply involved in it. I would dearly love to have been more closely connected with its making.41

His increasing disquiet had been somewhat allayed by O’Shea’s letter, particularly his comment that “the film is as we planned it – and I am delighted that we have been able to keep so closely to script.”42 Graham replied: “my friend, your letter lifts me high”43 but added: “I think I have nearly driven Phyl [his wife] to distraction by the blackness of my mood over the past few months.”44

O’Shea’s letter also referred to a previously discussed idea of publishing a manuscript of the screenplay but commented: “now it will have to wait until the film is released anyway – and as that is set for October, you will still have little enough time to work on it from the end of June.”45 O’Shea’s excuse seemed somewhat lame. There is no doubt that Graham would have eagerly responded to the challenge of getting the publication of the screenplay ready in time for the film’s release. It is more likely that O’Shea had misgivings about allowing Graham to read what had become the final version of the original Runaway script that, in spite of the assurances in his letter, had undergone some major alterations. And, as problems multiplied on the shoot, it is understandable that O’Shea would have been reluctant to open another front that could have involved yet more demands on his time.

Meanwhile the film crew continued to create visually memorable scenes. Clarrie the hunter had decided to call in the police, presumably hoping that he would be left alone
with the girl. They arrive in a striking shot of an amphibious plane swooping in directly above Clarrie as he stands at the edge of the lake. Realising his position, David quickly collects his backpack informing Diana: “I’m on my own now. I’ll try and get across the Pass.” Nevertheless Diana accompanies him. With difficulty they ford a swift flowing stream but David’s pack falls into the water and is swept away. With only the clothes they are wearing, they head towards the glacier and the Pass.

Plate 21: Barry Crump and Selwyn Muru assist the crew during the shooting on the Franz Joseph glacier

Having completed shooting at Lake Maparika the cast and crew moved onto the Franz Joseph glacier. It was here that Broadley twisted his ankle on an icy slope, – the result of what O’Shea recalled as “fooling around” – creating a further setback and the need for some rapid rescheduling. While the ankle healed, the Hari Hari interior scenes were completed, including the Christchurch motel and the lakeside hut. When Broadley recovered from his injury, shooting on the glacier continued. On 6 June 1964 the Hokitika Guardian carried an extensive report on the film’s shooting under the headline “Filming Nears End”. “The Film Unit’s stay is drawing to a close,
and *Runaway* should be ready for release by Christmas.”47 (Having spent many years establishing Pacific Films as an independent company, John O’Shea would have been irked by the reference to the “Film Unit” which most readers would have associated with the National Film Unit.) The story explained that the crew “have been working mainly on the Franz Joseph Glacier whenever weather permitted, at a site 9000ft up the face. The 12 members of the unit are developing into hardened climbers, scrambling over crevasses with 30lb loads.”48 The article further informed its readers that “the four girls [are] as tough as the men,”49 and mentioned another difficulty of working on the face of the glacier: “One can hardly imagine anything more exasperating than continuity work day after day on a glacier which is imperceptibly moving and changing all the time.”50 Interestingly enough, O’Shea recalled that shooting the scenes on the ice was not as difficult as might be imagined, and not “quite as onerous as the scenes at the lake. Because we went there at the normal time we were not so dependent upon the sky and the weather.”51
The escaping pair, heading towards the Pass, reach a hut (which conveniently has an ice axe and a pair of climbing boots that fit Diana). They are being pursued by four men. Mindful of economies of scale O’Shea had cast his set designer Tom Rowell as the First Constable and the unpopular production assistant Dickie Lauder as Police Helper (with a brief speaking part). As the police party close in, Diana twists her ankle. Unable to continue she urges David to go on. Leaving her to the law, the runaway David Manning trudges off to an unknown destiny, via a montage of shots.
which range from a close-up of his boots walking through the snow (in reality, Tony William’s boots) to an aerial shot. For a few seconds, the aerial shot reveals the shadow of a plane, and alert audience members may have assumed that he is being tracked by an aircraft. Not so; it was merely the camera plane, and there was not enough footage available, thus making the shadow unavoidable. The spectacular characteristics of the scenery were exploited by a series of shots which Williams took from the cockpit of the light camera plane, which flew towards the walls of ice while he filmed. Williams was trying to obtain the most dramatic footage possible in order to give the film a memorable and poetic climax. As O’Shea recalled, “that was extraordinarily difficult and [Tony] had the most awful nightmares after the first time he tried it, being in front of the plane and flying straight at the wall of ice and shooting it and then relying on the pilot to climb out of it.” In the final shots of the film, Manning trudges relentlessly on becoming increasingly exhausted as he makes his way up the icy slopes. Reaching the crest he pauses for breath and gazes forward. In front of him is a range of snow covered mountains. Resolved, he steps forward towards the frozen wastes. While the ending remained open, the odds of Manning surviving – as a “man alone” – seem virtually nil.

Paul Day once quoted some lines by the German poet Rainer Maria Rilke to encapsulate the suicide of John Mulgan. They also serve as a comment on the fictional David Manning, whose likely death in the frozen wastes also seemed equally self chosen:

And we, who have always
Thought of happiness climbing
Would feel the emotion that almost startles
When happiness falls.53

The ending of the film seems to aspire to the sublime, in the style of a European art film; but at the same time has many resonances for a New Zealand viewer, aware of so many wilderness heroes, ranging from the real life Edmund Hillary and Arawata Bill to the literary figures created by Mulgan, Denis Glover, Barry Crump and other writers. There was also O’Shea’s sense of Manning as symbolising the nation itself, as he struggled forward towards an uncertain future. John O’Shea, too, faced an
uncertain future. He too could be seen as a New Zealand hero who had survived an extraordinarily difficult shoot and brought back the footage for a feature film. O’Shea was now to return to Wellington to not only face the challenge of post-production, but also to face the mounting financial problems. Editing would be a more familiar and more controlled situation, but returning to the city was in some respects like David Manning returning to face the music – which, in O’Shea’s case, also meant dealing with Graham’s worries about how the script had been changed. Writing earlier to John Graham, O’Shea said: “[I have] to get the film edited and out by October. Hence, I am about to make some changes in the script which, I feel, will be unimportant finally but will shorten our shooting time. The motel sequence I am going to trim back to the barest bones. One reason is because the actor we used at the reception desk (shot in Christchurch) is not good enough to sustain the scene inside the cabin, and the other is because we are shooting the whole thing on a set down here, and must make do with what we have in the way of facilities. So – the shower scene might go, for instance.”54 O’Shea was obviously running out of time and tolerance as he concluded that “Hari Hari is a hell of a place – working conditions and everything else is very different from Opononi. I’ll be delighted to get back to Wellington.”55
1 Waikato Times, 3 April 1964
2 Ibid
3 Ibid
4 Ibid
5 Colin Broadley, interview, 15 June 1995
6 Ibid
7 Ibid
8 John O’Shea, interview, 21 May 1997
9 John O’Shea, letter to John Graham, 1 June 1964
10 John O’Shea, interview, 21 May 1997
11 John O’Shea, letter, 1 June 1964
12 Colin Broadley, interview, 15 June 1995
13 John O’Shea, interview, 21 May 1997
14 Ibid
15 Ibid
16 Colin Broadley, interview, 15 June 1995
17 John O’Shea, interview, 15 June 1995
18 Hokitika Guardian, 6 June 1964
19 Runaway Revisited
20 Ibid
21 John O’Shea, interview, 21 May 1997
22 Ibid
23 Runaway Revisited
24 Colin Broadley, interview, 15 June 1995
25 Ibid
26 John O’Shea, interview, 5 February 1998
27 Ibid
28 Ibid
29 Runaway Revisited
30 Ibid
31 Ibid
32 Hokitika Guardian, 6 June 1964
33 Ibid
34 Ibid
35 John O’Shea, letter, 1 June 1964
36 Ibid
37 John Graham, letter, 8 June 1964
38 Ibid
39 A reference to New Zealand poet Denis Glover’s 1951 poem, “Sings Harry”.
40 John Graham, letter, 8 June 1964
41 Ibid
42 John O’Shea, letter, 1 June 1964
43 John Graham, letter, 8 June 1964
44 Ibid
45 John O’Shea, letter, 1 June 1964
46 Runaway
47 Hokitika Guardian, 6 June 1964
48 Ibid
49 Ibid
50 Ibid
51 Runaway Revisited
52 Ibid
53 Rilke, Duino Elegies, “The Tenth Elegy”

und wir, die an steigendes Glück
denken, empfanden die Ruhmung
die ans beinah besturzt
wenn ein Glückliches fällt.

54 John O’Shea, letter, 1 June 1964
55 Ibid
The original script, the result of the joint efforts of John Graham and John O’Shea, contained a number of scenes which for one reason or another never appeared in the completed film. In some cases these scenes would have made little difference to the film’s quality, but in others, their omission diluted Runaway’s dramatic impact. Although the original script devoted a considerable amount of space to the recurring theatre motif, it made no appearance in the finished film except for the opening. Whereas the script begins with David Manning clambering out of a luxury runabout, the film starts with the sequence described in the previous chapter, with Deirdre McCarron moving slowly through a confined space as Manning’s voice intones, “Diana, Diana, let us make a beginning.” Her voice is then heard replying, “Our love and comforts will increase, even as our days do grow.” This is followed by the beach sequence.

This mysterious opening, the only residue of the theatre strand, serves several functions. In symbolic terms, the phrase “Let us make a beginning” could well refer to the second attempt by Pacific Films, after a break of a decade, to create a New Zealand feature film industry. The second sentence could suggest an optimistic future for the industry as it develops its skills and expertise. The scene also re-asserts Pacific’s ambitions to make an artistic film, and not merely a straight forward commercial entertainment. There is, however, a considerable risk of confusing the audience. Diana and David certainly made a beginning, but rather than their love and comforts increasing their relationship ended in apparent tragedy. After this opening scene, Runaway followed a strictly linear progression, so the scene functioned purely symbolically, not as a flash-back or flash-forward.

It is difficult in the finished film to recognise elements that in any way symbolised the impending economic problems facing New Zealand. Certainly, the nation was living – like David Manning – beyond its means, and it was incumbent upon it to make a new beginning, to rethink its materialistic priorities. New Zealand also appeared to be drifting, heading for a fall. But it made little sense to interpret other narrative aspects of the script (such as Manning’s relationships with various women) in allegorical
The most obvious gaps in the finished film are those related to characterisation. Although the garden conversation between father and son is a strong scene, it would have been further strengthened by more knowledge of the father’s character which the proposed scene of him in his role of headmaster would have provided. Admittedly the film generally keeps his son at the centre of the action and scenes in which he did not appear are few.¹ Despite the amount of exposure that David Manning receives, his own motivation is often unclear. It could be argued that Runaway attempts to show what Robin Maconie perceptively termed “the tragedy of inarticularity,”² or that it followed Antonioni’s precedent in relying heavily on subtext, but even visually literate film goers had difficulty understanding the film’s central characters sufficiently to feel emotionally involved with them.

The character of Isobel, although crucial to the story, remains somewhat flat and insipid, a problem that could have been alleviated by the inclusion of three scripted scenes that were dropped. In the first scene, David, having cut in on Isobel and Tana, dances with her. In the words of the script, “Isobel’s sensuality has emerged. The voluptuousness that has been hinted at before breaks out in her every movement and gesture”. This sensuality, which adds an additional layer to her apparently shy personality, would have provided a greater understanding of the young woman and Manning’s attraction to her. The second and crucial omission, a scene between Isobel and David after the dance in the early morning in his boarding house bedroom. In the script, David and Isobel had made love in his bedroom rather than, as the film suggested, merely chatted and danced together. This love making is crucial to an understanding of the young man’s subsequent frustration – his feelings of anger, isolation, and abandonment. Of particular significance is the final line in which Isobel bluntly informed him that, in spite of what they have just shared, she could not go away with him because she was “going to marry Tana”. All of this would have helped to explain why Laura’s subsequent racist taunts triggers off his assault on her.

Why was the love scene deleted? Time or budgetary constraints were not an issue at this stage. Unfortunately for O’Shea, Kiri Te Kanawa flatly refused to do the

terms – unless one read the scenes with Laura as a warning that commerce with Europe offered no solution!
“bedroom scene”. In today’s context it seems absurd for an actress to balk at a scene that merely required her to lie in a bed, completely covered by bedclothes, and speak a few lines of dialogue. However, in the early 1960s pre-marital sex, even though widely practised, was still regarded as a shameful activity. Te Kanawa, having had a strong Catholic upbringing, and hoping to make a name for herself as an opera singer, had no wish to be tarnished with a sexy image. Since O’Shea could not afford to replace her, he had to make a major compromise. In a script revision, written at the time, he notes that “Our intention is to delete the idea that David has a love affair with Isobel – rather that they become friendly and that he would perhaps fall in love with her if she had not been going to marry Tana.”3 Both of the problems involved here – sexual reticence, and limited casting options – were characteristic of the period when the film was made.

A third short “Isobel” scene omitted from the film is her speech to David, “If we had to come back and live again as something else, I’d like to come back as a hedgehog … When they’re frightened of getting hurt, they just pull their heads in, and roll up into a prickly little ball … I wish I could do that”. The later scene when David is in the car with hard headed businessman Tom Morton would have had more impact if the “hedgehog” conversation had been retained. When Morton drives past a young Maori hitchhiker, David angrily tells him “You’ve got room!” Immediately following this incident Morton, spotting a hedgehog, deliberately swerves and splatters the little creature on the road. The juxtaposition of the young Maori and the hedgehog would have triggered thoughts of Isobel resulting in David’s angry demand to stop the car. This motivation is lost in the completed film.

In the original script Isobel is a constant presence in David’s mind, even when his relationship with Celia is developing. In a scene at the motel where he and Celia are about to spend the night, he sees her returning with supplies from the local shop and is reminded of Isobel. This scene was also omitted, further weakening Isobel’s importance.

The scene of David’s discussion with the young Polynesian in the railway carriage, confronting him with the economic realities of life for Pacific Islanders, was never filmed. Had it been shortened, it could have added a further insight into his thinking,
and helped to give the film a broader perspective than David’s. The short scene that followed, in which he looks at the caged sheep was also dropped – a typical example of the way the script was pared down in production, helping in some instances to keep the film tightly focused but tending in other instances to deprive the narrative of broader dimension.

The sequence with Tom Morton contained some strong dialogue about his market-driven values, but the failure to explain more clearly that Diana was his daughter was an opportunity lost, (in contrast to the script that had made the relationship quite clear). This fact would have added a tension to the relationship, with David afraid she would eventually discover he had been indirectly responsible for her father’s death.

Plate 24: Shooting the final “scene that never was” in which Athol (Clyde Scott) and Sandra (Doraine Green) discuss David Manning’s death

The ending, which had David trudging away to an icy demise encapsulates many of the film’s shortcomings. It leaves the viewer with too many questions: Did he have any plan? Was he likely to perish? Was he aware of this? Was it a death wish? If so, why? He had won the love of a woman and the charges against him were not
really that serious and hardly warranted a self-chosen death. While a neat ending is not a compulsory requirement, a film has to provide viewers with information on which to base their speculations. *Runaway* should have included the final scripted scene of the conversation between Athol and David’s former girlfriend Sandra. Despite its brevity, this scene would have been more substantial than what John Graham dismissed as David’s “plaintive bleat [‘Diana’] from the snow ridge.”

Sandra’s attitude is uncaring and predatory while Athol is wistful and disturbed by his friend’s fate. Both mirror attitudes and values that the audience could have understood, and it might have helped each viewer to define his or her own position. Juxtaposed with Athol and Sandra’s comments, the seagull, as the final shot, would have provided a visual link with the opening beach sequence and its symbolism of freedom, loneliness, and escape and might have conveyed a stronger sense of catharsis than the somewhat abrupt ending of the completed film.

In listing these missing sequences, however, one must bear in mind the successful nature of the shoot. It is remarkable that O’Shea managed to cover as much as he did. The editing of any film is, to some extent, a salvage job, and the editing job that John O’Shea and Tony Williams did on *Runaway* was certainly no exception.

**Dubbing**

Although the dialogue had been recorded on location, it had all to be re-recorded in a Wellington studio using the original or substitute actors. Although *Runaway* was determinedly a New Zealand production in a New Zealand setting, the desire to give it more of an “English sound” was apparent in the dubbing. In the early 1960s an educated British accent was still regarded as the norm in drama, for local as well as overseas audiences. Although British dramas such as Karel Reisz’s *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1960) and Tony Richardson’s *A Taste of Honey* (1961) had featured characters “markedly less mannered, particularly in their use of abrasive vernacular speech,”

“correct” or “standard” English, as spoken by handsome young stars such as Dirk Bogarde, Richard Burton, Laurence Harvey, Kenneth Moore, Laurence Olivier, Peter O’Toole and Richard Todd were still imitated by New Zealand actors. O’Shea was mindful of the need to produce a film that would appeal to overseas audiences. He therefore decided not to challenge local habits in drama, but to have the main characters speaking with educated British accents. Paradoxically
this decision was also a way to avoid disturbing New Zealand audiences, accustomed all their lives to hearing only British or American accents in the cinema or on the stage.

During the shooting all the dialogue had been recorded live on the understanding that it would be re-recorded in post-production. William Johnstone, Alma Woods and Harry Lavington were all originally from Britain. Deirdre McCarron, although a New Zealander, had a speaking voice that could have come straight from a private English girls’ school. Broadley recalled that the voice she uses in the film was “her normal speaking voice, but it was a ‘put on’ normal speaking voice.” Consequently it was acceptable for the soundtrack. Gil Cornwall, although New Zealand born, had spent a number of years acting in London and had a speaking voice that was “acceptable”. Nevertheless it was suggested that his voice be dubbed by a Wellington-based actor.

As he recalled, the reason in his case was economic: “It was to save the expense of me going to Wellington … I said, ‘No, I wouldn’t do that’ because I thought that my own speech was very much part of my personality. … All New Zealand worked on a shoestring in those days, and I think John just said, ‘I can’t afford it’, and I said, ‘Well I’m going to do it anyway’.” Cornwall won the argument and dubbed his own voice in Wellington.

Although Colin Broadley had a pleasant speaking voice, it was replaced on the soundtrack by Wellington actor Barry Hill whose pronunciation was more English. As Broadley explained, “I’m such a good mimic and I’d been influenced a bit by Crumpy [Barry Crump] during the film. They were so cheesed off with my putting on a light voice and ‘Crumpy’ accent anyway, that [my voice] didn’t have enough authority.” He had the consolation of being pleased with the dubbed voice as “he sounds just like I would have sounded … [Hill] was a good mimic because he was able to hear what I said and how I had said it on the guide tracks that came with the film. He was able to imitate me quite successfully”. The voices of the two Maori actors Kiri Te Kanawa and Selwyn Muru were left intact – presumably on the basis that audiences would accept a non-Oxbridge accent from indigenous actors. Barry Crump’s heavy antipodean accent was also unchanged as it enhanced his portrayal of the rough New Zealand bushman. To have him offering Diana a piece of a venison while intoning in a cultured English accent, “How about a bit of deer? I shot it
yesterday” would have been absurd. It seemed that a New Zealand accent was acceptable if the character was Maori, a comic Pakeha or a villain.

This “Englishness” in the dialogue of Runaway was not an affectation on the part of the film-makers but simply a reflection of the period. A serious film or play required “serious” accents. Ian Richards in his biography of writer Maurice Duggan (a contemporary of Graham and O’Shea) pointed out that “Duggan’s whole mode of speech was to become so carefully cultivated that none of the intellectuals he met in the future would suspect his accent was merely acquired.”¹¹ Maurice Shadbolt, commenting on Charles Brasch, a contemporary of Duggan’s and the editor of the nationalist magazine Landfall noted that “he deplored the New Zealand accent … He saw uncouth philistines where I merely saw uncouth countrymen.”¹² For O’Shea, Europe was still the ultimate benchmark.

Music

In considering the music for the soundtrack O’Shea realised its importance as a way to repair some narrative weaknesses by reinforcing the required moods. He was also excited by the opportunity to follow the adventurous musical approach of films such as L’Avventura and Hiroshima Mon Amour. The problem was that composing and performing music – or buying the rights to existing music – could be very expensive. He came up with an excellent solution in commissioning young New Zealand composer Robin Maconie (who was to turn 22 on the day of Runaway’s première). In a later article on the Runaway music, the New Zealand Listener pointed out:

[John O’Shea] already knew of Robin’s ability as a film composer. Television viewers may recall the experimental film The Sound of Seeing, [1963] a collaboration between Robin and Anthony Williams, the cameraman for Runaway.

Mr O’Shea thought that Robin’s style of composition would suit the demands of the script. “If I hadn’t, I would have asked some-one else.”

Before Robin left for Europe, the two discussed the film script and the possible musical requirement. As shooting had not then started, Robin was
able to write only one piece of music before he left – the title song which was recorded by the Auckland night club singer Rim D. Paul.13

As Maconie recalled, “My involvement with film came about through Tony Williams. I had written a score for Hamish Keith’s Epstein film in 1960 and Tony contacted me. We collaborated on Sound of Seeing … and later on a road safety film [Keep Them Waiting] for the Traffic Department.”14 However, a further complicating factor for O’Shea was that a few weeks before the shooting of Runaway commenced, Maconie had left for Europe to further his studies as a composer. As Maconie recalled:

In 1963 I needed two things: a secure grounding in technique and a sense of tradition. As a specialist in avant-garde music, and as a New Zealander, I had neither. By the age of 20 I was a reasonably fluent pianist with a small repertoire of contemporary works and had invitations to play at events like the Stenberg Recital contest in Auckland and the Bela Siki masterclasses. I was also beginning to compose. My interest in playing piano came into focus on the new music that interested me as a composer.15

Maconie was in some respects a risky choice. He had no experience in writing film music (a complex business, in its precise emphasis on timing and mood). He was, however, viewed as something of a young prodigy, and he was happy to tackle the challenge of writing in a popular as well as an avant-garde idiom (his natural inclination). His combination of youthful talent and great willingness to do what he could for the project without any prima-donna demands made him the perfect choice in the circumstances. The problem for O’Shea was how to collaborate with a composer living in Vienna. International phone calls were likely to be difficult and prohibitively expensive. The plan was that Maconie would write themes and orchestrations purely from copies of the film footage and from written instructions as to the intended moods of each sequence. This was a risky business since a composer normally worked in close collaboration with a director, with music being extensively revised. Once again O’Shea, with his limited resources, was forced to compromise. At least he knew Maconie and had confidence in his abilities. It was also relevant that Maconie belonged to the same age group as Manning and many of the film’s other characters.
Before Maconie had left for Europe, detailed arrangements had been made to send him “a 16mm copy of the relevant scenes together with a detailed shooting script with exact timings. [He] was to view the film on a hired editing machine and compose the music for it.” But this arrangement went badly awry. As Maconie recalled:

In the event I received only the rough edited shooting script, the film copy having been posted to “Vienna, Australia” [instead of Austria]. To be fair it made no difference to me as I had no money to pay for studio time and equipment as a student. The notes I recall were detailed, the [main] character of a type I could empathise with, and of course I knew who I was working with. Tony and I had worked together on a short The Sound of Seeing which is “about” the way visual and musical individuals perceive the world, and the theme of the misunderstood and lonely rebel is one we had often discussed and one that I certainly identified with (not in a family sense, but in a social sense) as a composer with a driven interest in avant-garde music trying to make a way in the conservative, socialist environment that was New Zealand in the 1960s.

(Both the composer in The Sound of Seeing and Maconie himself as a young man fitted that description.) O’Shea had given Maconie’s friend Tony Williams “the task of compiling a list of the musical requirements [which] included such details as the length of a scene in seconds, the number and type of camera shots used, and an indication of both the direct and indirect meaning of the sequence. This produced a manuscript of 16 foolscap pages which was airmailed to Vienna, where Robin was taking a three-week course in German.

With this detailed list complementing the script, Maconie set to work. Not being able to view any of the footage, the challenge was daunting. Maconie sacrificed the remainder of his German lessons (which he had felt he needed before going to study music in Germany with composers such as Karlheinz Stockhausen), and set to work. In a letter to his mother he described the process.

The Runaway script arrived. I gave up going to classes. Couldn’t do anything else: I had a week to write nearly half an hour of carefully-tailored music. So,
full of excitement I sat in the student restaurant all day and worked. This went on for some days.

Tuesday, I decided on what kind of music I’d write. Wednesday, I wrote eight minutes’ worth. Thursday, I wrote the music for the crucial scene and another little piece. Friday, I started to find the going rather tough … I wrote the organ improvisation, my first piece for organ and in Bach style. I’m pleased with it, but it took an awful lot of work.

Saturday I wrote only the “Hokianga Glide” sequence which lasts two and a-half minutes. Sunday, I finally finished and began copying out the score.19

Film scenes require precisely timed musical “stings” at key moments. As Maconie recalled, “I did compose a number of ‘stings’, as the score reveals, but I was not happy with them, not being able to visualise the film, and only one I recall was eventually used. Of course in the absence of visuals I had to paint in fairly broad strokes.”20 In undertaking his task he developed a structure which he followed for each scene.

1. A timing schedule with attention to **climaxes**, **foreground** and **background**, i.e. where music is **dominant**, where it is the **lead** (i.e. no dialogue), and where it is **secondary** (below dialogue).

2. A tempo was chosen and a structure then worked out in terms of chronological time scale e.g. for \( d=80 \) there would be 40 beats every \( \frac{1}{2} \) minute.

3. The music **builds** to the important moments and dies away afterwards, or cuts back as the case may be.

4. The lead-in and fade out of each scene is composed to be edited to fit.21

He was, in a sense, re-discovering for himself the basic rules of film music. (*Runaway* was a steep learning curve for all concerned.) In addition to the technical problems, he was under a terrible time pressure to complete the music in time for it to reach New Zealand, to be rehearsed, performed and recorded. He began copying out
the score on Sunday and was due to leave for Cologne by the following Thursday but
unfortunately, “the arduous task of copying out the instrumental parts of the score was
complicated by a change in accommodation and the news of a death of a friend.”

By Wednesday evening in the second week:

I was exhausted and my right eye was hurting. But I had finished all but the
cello part. Next morning I rose at 6.15 and took the first tram into the centre
of town … At the restaurant by 7.20 or so. Started to copy right away. At
8.30 I had one piece left to do. I had breakfast. By 9.45 it was all finished. I
shoved all the stuff into a huge envelope and sprinted to the P.O. It caught the
11.30 plane that day.

As well as the score itself, the composer included two and a half pages of detailed
hand-written instructions headed “Notes on interpretation of the score to Tony
Williams”. On the front page of the score Maconie wrote, “This score was composed
in Vienna between the 25th and the 30th August 1969.” The statement was probably
placed there to demonstrate the pressure he had been under. The completion of the
music was indeed an astonishing achievement, and a brave and generous contribution
to the film since it put his own reputation on the line, leaving his music to be
performed and edited beyond his control. But it was in this spirit that so many others
had worked on Runaway, reconciled to the lack of resources, time and money because
the project was so important and the chance to extend one’s experience so unusual.

A perfectionist by temperament, Maconie was pleased that he could at least supply
detailed notes that suggested how the music should be played and mixed. For
example, “Hokianga Glide”, written to accompany the sequence where Manning
meets Laura Kosavitch, is offered a lift and then driven into Hokianga in the
Thunderbird, was accompanied by these suggestions:

2/4 should be always in mind: triplets must sound like triplets. Upper strings
harsh and thin sound. Piano like a vibraphone, is light staccato touch and full
pedal. Cello is a sinister mutter. The technician turns up the volume to begin
the “Hokianga Glide” but the music doesn’t change till later, when the Viola
and Cello give a rhythm. Cello should be amplified to sound like a bass. No
vibrato of course. All strings with mutes. Viola passages use a little vibrato, but with discretion.  

Maconie was evidently pleased with his striking music for this sequence, which was comparable to some of the music used in *Hiroshima Mon Amour*. The idiom was contemporary, and reflected Maconie’s preference for a small number of instruments with emphasis on timbre and crisp rhythms. (Stravinsky had for some years been his favourite composer.)

For Sequence 4, “Mud Scene and Chase” Maconie was even more specific, detailing the ways in which he hoped that particular bars would be played.

The instruments should all play loudly, though with mutes and left pedal for pno [sic] and the technician should keep the overall sound level down to what suits. Pno should not dominate. NB Viola and cello Bars 21 – 23 and cello 25 – 28 should if necessary be turned up a little. Piano up for bar 40 only. [Cello and violins] bars 47 & 50 should sound frenzied and unclear. String 52 – 57 use all the bow – savage strokes on the strings. Cuckoo clock sounds from piano must be well in the b/ground – they lighten the mood but mustn’t dissolve the tension.

When Maconie’s music arrived in Wellington it was recorded by a group of musicians from the NZBC Symphony Orchestra at Broadcasting House under the baton of Patrick Flynn. (The organ passages, played by Brian Findlay, were recorded at the Wellington Town Hall.) They too had limited experience with film music. Flynn had a stopwatch in one hand and a baton in the other.

[He and his musicians] set out to fulfil Robin’s intentions with an accuracy involving fractions of a second … Flynn found during the recording sessions that human error as to tempo can err. “The stopwatch showed,” he said, “that although the players were absolutely certain they had kept up a steady beat, they were often lagging about ten seconds at the end of a passage”.

How important the timing of such music is can be seen in one example of the work done for Runaway. A section of the music 54 seconds long had to establish a complete change of mood by accelerating to a climax which comes exactly on the last second.

“Although the music was difficult to play,” Mr Flynn said, “we were able to rehearse and record the score in two days. The players were very cooperative.”

Given the circumstances under which he had to work, it was inevitable that Maconie’s music was insufficient to cover all of Runaway’s scenes and sequences. Consequently Patrick Flynn also wrote some music for Runaway [which he described as] “fill-in pieces such as the opening and closing music that are often necessary after the film has been matched to the main score”. These sections were written for an 18-piece jazz band and recorded in Auckland by local players.

Maconie’s music for Runaway would receive few comments from critics. But it was as notable in its own way as the camerawork of his friend Tony Williams. Maconie went on to become a significant composer and a leading music critic in England. When he wrote music for the film, his very lack of experience helped him to avoid some of the stereotypes of film sound-tracks.

By the 1960s film music had established itself as a genre in its own right. Themes as diverse as the soaring orchestral “Tara’s Theme” from Gone With the Wind or the “Harry Lime Theme” from The Third Man proved extremely popular. Similarly, songs from films were heard frequently on radio hit parades (such as “Three Coins in a Fountain” and “The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance”). Some films also became associated with famous pieces of classical music. Such music had strong publicity value. European art films had largely followed a different tradition, employing avant-garde composers to create mood rather than melody. Chamber music replaced orchestral scores, for artistic as well as economic reasons. Michaelangelo Antonioni’s L’Avventura, for example, was very sparse in its music. Composed by Giovanni Fusco who had many film soundtracks to his credit, it helped create a vogue in art
film circles for music that shared some of the formal qualities of modernist filmmaking.

The most exciting results that Maconie produced were in this European idiom. There are sequences such as the drive into Hokianga that both sound and look like the art films with which Maconie, Williams and O’Shea were thoroughly familiar. Such music is still rare in New Zealand film, though there are some striking sequels such as Jack Body’s sparse music for Vincent Ward’s Vigil (1985). Most subsequent New Zealand films have preferred to follow Hollywood approaches.

Where Maconie was less comfortable was his attempt to write popular music. An example was Runaway’s theme song, sung by Rim D. Paul in the Hokianga dance hall sequence. The melody, although rather repetitive, had the potential to become a theme to be used with a variety of tempos and orchestrations at various points in the film to provide musical continuity. Presumably Maconie held back from this since he would have regarded such a procedure as too obvious, too “Hollywood” in style.

Maconie’s music is problematic for those who prefer a more orthodox, less experimental approach. For example, in an assessment of Runaway’s music carried out at my request, New Zealand composer Gary Daverne commented:

It had little, if any impact on me. I felt the music was naive and immature, generally inappropriate and did little for the film. It was unconvincing, non effective and certainly not memorable … This is not film music and does not compare favourably alongside other film music of the same period. Just because music is written for film does not necessarily make it film music. Film music has particular characteristics, style and feel. It should be able to stand alone and create a picture without the visual scenes.

To support his contentions Daverne listed a number of scenes where the music seemed to him inappropriate or too avant-garde:

The scene where Kiri was on the beach, featured guitar chords, which did not fit the mood or scenery.
The clarinet music was too sinister and discordant for the scenery.

Guitar chords used by solo Maori guitarist were not in the usual Maori style. It had more of a jazz feel than was fitting for a rural country scene.

The flute, cello and violin music in the mud scene was out of character. It gave no tension building for the viewer.

Avant-garde music should not have been scored for the love scenes. Love is harmony. How can dissonance and love be compatible? Dissonant, angry and disjointed music does not work for me in the love scenes.

The solo clarinet did not work on the ferry boat scene and bears no relationship to the scene changes. In fact I found it quite distracting.

In many places, the music gave a sinister feeling to scenes of landscape and beauty, where more scenic or panoramic melodic themes would have been more appropriate.\textsuperscript{29}

Such criticisms focus particularly on the unusual mix of genres. \textit{Runaway} is most vulnerable to this line of attack. Is it a festival and art house film, or does it aim to be a popular movie, (say, a “road movie” or a “rebel without a cause” drama)? It is occasionally possible to combine the two (for example, in Goddard’s \textit{Breathless}), and O’Shea seemed to be trying to perform this balancing act, but his attempt had a mixed success.

Maconie was also aware of the possible shortcomings in his music, attributing it in part to the unusual circumstances under which it was composed. Although he had provided detailed notes with his manuscript, he recalled:

I had no control over the recorded balance and would have preferred closer miking all round for every instrument, in particular the piano, which at times should sound warm and resonant, at other times icy, distant and compressed. The overall ensemble sound lacked ambience; a bit of mysterious reverberation was absolutely necessary to suggest the music as being in the
mind of the protagonist. Unfortunately I did not have the technical know-how nor the foresight to spell these requirements out.

(Subsequently Maconie became an expert on recording acoustics.) He was also disappointed in the performance of the song. John Graham, as the original lyricist, had been annoyed that most of his lyrics had been deleted, thereby reducing the message of the song to an ineffectual repetition of a few vague lines. Maconie was similarly unhappy about the fate of his version:

I had no say in the orchestration or interpretation of the song … I had no particular liking for the music which is based on a Mantovani – style (i.e., essentially wordless) idiom of the late 1950s and is thus designed for a suave alto sax lead and laid-back singing strings in the background.

Maconie (who had little involvement with popular music and obviously approached the song as a challenge in meeting the requirements of a genre or formula) would have been quite happy for it to be handled satirically: “At best, performed in strangled, polite, terribly BBC Salon Orchestra mode, it could be perceived as an ironic commentary on the emotional state of the hero.” In the film, the song is intercut with shots of a subdued and confused looking Manning. When Maconie saw the finished film, he was particularly critical of the sequence. “It is totally against the grain, and a complete misunderstanding of the song and the lyric in context, to have the song interpreted as a confident or heroic statement by a leading character in full possession of his emotional faculties.” However, to suggest that Manning was in “full possession of his emotional faculties” is surely an oversimplification. Rather he was a young man torn by conflicting loyalties and self doubt. While the intercutting of his face with the oft repeated lyric “Run away, run away” could be interpreted in more than one way, it was not obviously sung in a confident or heroic spirit.

The sheet music and a recording of the song was released at the same time as the film. Maconie understood the commercial rationale behind this effort was to produce a song hit, but suggested it would have been better “sung by a female – i.e. about her lover who has left her”. He added the perceptive comment: “The whole point of Runaway is the tragedy of inarticularity.” The treatment of the song was not his
only disappointment. He was also unhappy with the way the organ was played during final scenes. He recalled that “I specifically asked not to include a crescendo. (This piece was modelled on JS Bach’s organ prelude ‘Durch Adams Fall’ which I studied in [Olivier] Messiaen’s class; I was later told that at the Wellington première Fred Page was asked what the piece was, and he said it was Bach, which amused me.)”

The whole process of the composition, playing and recording of the *Runaway* music was a microcosm of the film itself as an attempt to achieve an effective, creative product under almost impossible circumstances. The music (like the film) was admirably ambitious and imaginative, and completed with heroic determination, but inevitably the results were uneven, including a somewhat awkward marriage of different genres. Nevertheless, Maconie was one of the many young people associated with *Runaway* who was grateful for the opportunity and did in fact go on to have an impressive career in his field.
Runaway contained over 750 scenes, nearly all of which feature David Manning.

Robin Maconie, letter, 27 November 1994

Runaway script, p26a

John Graham, letter, 15 October 1964

David Parkinson, History of Film, London, Thames and Hudson, 1995, p 194

Ibid

Ibid

Hill was “paid” by being briefly featured sitting at a table in one of the early nightclub scenes.

Colin Broadley, interview, 26 February 1995

Ibid

Ibid

Ibid

Ibid

Ibid

Ibid

Ibid

Ibid

Ibid

Ibid

Ibid

Ibid

Ibid

Ibid

Ibid

Ibid

Ibid

Gary Daverne, “Runaway: The Music”, Auckland, manuscript, August 1997

Robin Maconie, letter, 27 November 1994

See Appendices 13 and 14

Robin Maconie, letter, 27 November 1994
III. RECEPTION
Chapter 15: RELEASE

Apart from some of the music being recorded in Auckland, all the other post-production activities were centred in Wellington where O’Shea was based. Mindful of the need to maintain public interest in the film he persuaded television to screen a news item. When Graham (who had not heard from the production team since the June 1964 letter from Hari Hari) saw the news item he immediately wrote to O’Shea. “I am wondering how things are with you and what progress you are making in what must be a pretty arduous task. Phyll and I saw TV last night and were very interested in what had taken place during the later sequences.”

The letter also reminded O’Shea about a previous arrangement: “You were going to let me have a copy of the amended dialogue so that I could get moving on a publisher’s text. Quite frankly, I think there is plenty of time for that. Before I do it I feel I must get some feeling from the actual film. Or do you think that what was on paper has actually carried through into what will be the finished work?”

While not wishing to unduly pressure his busy partner, Graham was feeling neglected. As indicated by his previous letters, he took his writing very seriously and had developed a strong affinity with the key characters. Since February he had followed all the publicity that the production of Runaway had generated. Apart from the occasional letter from O’Shea and a few snippets gleaned from mutual friends, like any other member of the public he had to rely on information published in newspapers and magazines. He had expressed his anxiety in his lengthy letter about such issues as the replacement of Helen Smith. He was understandably anxious that his characters, plot activities and dialogue might have been compromised by O’Shea. Mindful, however, that he had agreed to his partner having the final say as director, he avoided expressing his misgivings too directly. Instead he enquired quietly (but pointedly) whether “what was on paper has actually carried through into what will be the finished work?”

There is, however, no record of Graham having received a reply to this letter.

The release of Runaway, the first New Zealand feature film for eleven years, was a major event in a country where the cinema was a leading form of entertainment. Throughout the shooting O’Shea had ensured that his film had received plenty of
coverage. And once *Runaway* was ready for its première he prepared a press kit containing a detailed description of the film, the players and production personnel. For example:

Filmed against breathtaking backgrounds which extend from the warm beaches of Northland to the ice-bound wilderness of the Westland glaciers, *Runaway* tells a tense dramatic story of a young New Zealander, David Manning (Colin Broadley), who finds himself in financial difficulties in Auckland, and tries to escape from city life. He heads for Northland, where he mixes with both Maori and European, and endeavours to adjust himself to life there. However, a torrid love affair with a wealthy, spoilt Yugoslav girl (Nadja Regin) who falsely alleges to the police that he has assaulted her, forces him to leave the district, with the intention of going back to the mountain country of Westland, where he was happy as a child.4

The summary of the plot concludes with details of the climax which is described as “both exciting and realistic, and brings *Runaway* to a tense, dramatic conclusion.”5

The style of the press release is significant. Although basing his film to some extent on European art cinema, O’Shea deliberately tailored the text to read like the description of a thriller:

New Zealand can be proud of this compelling, intimate, adult motion picture, for here is not only a film that forcefully presents the face of contemporary New Zealand to the world, but also provides thrilling entertainment by any standards. Great credit must go to producer – director John O’Shea, for his courage, talent, ambition and assurance in creating a film that meets world competition head-on and emerges with flying colours.6

Media hype is a necessary part of all film marketing. What is interesting in *Runaway*’s case was the way the publicity played down any “high culture” aspects such as the thought-provoking way the film transferred the concept of “man alone” to a post-war setting, or highlighted the alienation of contemporary youth in a conformist, prosperity-obsessed society. Neither was there any suggestion that the
film might have an allegorical dimension in representing New Zealand’s position in the world, nor did the publicity emphasise the more adventurous aspects of the film’s visual and musical style. As O’Shea recalled, “You wouldn’t get a Lido [Auckland’s art cinema] audience anyway – they wouldn’t go to see a New Zealand film. Lido audiences were snobby … [so] I had to market it as a mainstream film.”7 Thus the description is liberally sprinkled with words and phrases such as “breathtaking”, “tense dramatic story”, “torrid love affair”, “aggressive businessman”, “tense, dramatic conclusion” and “compelling, intimate, adult”. But, while the press release would attract considerable interest, it also ran the risk of raising false expectations in the minds of the journalists, critics and audiences who would be anticipating an exciting adventure story generously laced with sex.

The copy for the newspaper advertising reinforced this emphasis:

NEW ZEALAND’S GREAT DRAMATIC STORY FILM! The most talked-about film in years!

A DARING, INTIMATE LOOK AT THE LIVES OF YOUNG NEW ZEALANDERS – AN ADULT, EXCITING STORY OF A MAN ON THE RUN – AND THE WOMEN IN HIS LIFE! FRANK … AND PROVOCATIVE!

IN THE BEGINNING IT WAS ONLY ESCAPE … but he was a young man in a hungry hurry … his blood on fire … and he discovered that life is a mixture of good and evil … the passionate, desperate and lonely … and he meets them all … from the warm beaches of Northland to the ice-bound wilderness of Westland glaciers … the New Zealand YOU KNOW … for the FIRST TIME in a film that is compelling, intimate and BRILLIANT ENTERTAINMENT!

O’Shea did have plenty of opportunity to create a climate of positive expectation around the release of *Runaway*. The publicity generated by the arrival of relatively minor star Nadja Regin reflected the high level of public interest in feature films and the fact that it was a New Zealand film – particularly one with “adult” subject matter
– had great novelty value. Here was a film set in familiar landscapes with talented New Zealanders such as Colin Broadley, Kiri Te Kanawa and Barry Crump (not yet as well-known as they would later become, but of interest to the media as rising stars). Press stories during *Runaway*’s shooting and the dramatic advertising had contributed to the growing public interest. O’Shea’s next opportunity to build the momentum was *Runaway*’s “world première”. Following the successful precedent which he had established with *Broken Barrier*, he planned a major event at the Plaza Theatre in Wellington on 22 October 1964. An impressive-looking invitation issued by “Pacific Films in association with Amalgamated Theatres and New Zealand Film Services” informed guests that the world première would be held “In the distinguished presence of Their Excellencies The Governor General and Lady Fergusson” and that a “supper party” would take place “after the screening at the Caltex Lounge, Lower Taranaki Street”. The occasion was, of course, “black tie”.

Plate 25: The Runaway poster
As with *Broken Barrier*, O’Shea had done well to obtain the involvement of the Governor General and his wife, Lord and Lady Fergusson as it enabled him to describe the occasion as the “Vice Regal Premiere of *Runaway*”. In the 1960s, when royal visits to New Zealand were occasions of great excitement, the Governor General had a much higher public profile than today. Sir Bernard Fergusson, a monocle-wearing British peer who represented Queen Elizabeth II, was held in high regard by a nation which still maintained a strong affinity to the mother country. In hindsight, it is ironic that the British queen’s representative was helping to launch a film which had nationalistic implications. But in spite of his monocle and his very British manner, Sir Bernard had a perceptive understanding of New Zealand culture. Maurice Shadbolt recalled that at the 1963 Katherine Mansfield awards dinner the Governor General “invited those present at the function – a hundred or more – to look around and consider how many Maori were present. The answer was none … There was an uncomfortable shuffling in the audience. Then a long silence. The Queen’s emissary wasn’t supposed to carry on like this, to say anything pertinent.”

O’Shea also invited the Prime Minister Keith Holyoake, but he sent a polite apology:

Thank you so much for the invitation you have so kindly extended to Mrs Holyoake and me to be present at the World Première of *Runaway* on Thursday, 22 October, at the Plaza Theatre, Wellington. Much as we would like to come, I regret that we cannot have that pleasure as Parliament will be in session that evening and it is always difficult for me to be away from the House on a sitting day. I should like a representative of the Government to be present at your Première and have asked the Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon J.R. Marshall, if he could do so. Mr Marshall will be pleased to attend, and it would be appreciated if you would be good enough to get in touch with his Private Secretary to make the necessary arrangements. May I take this opportunity of offering you my warm good wishes for the film’s success.

The attendance of Sir Bernard and Lady Fergusson and the supportive tone of the prime ministerial letter demonstrated the level of public interest. At the première, distinguished guests were placed in the front row of the cinema. As well as the
Governor General and Lady Ferguson (together with their aide-de-camp and lady-in-waiting) and the Deputy Prime Minister, these also included the Hon. Dean Eyre, Minister for Tourism, and his wife, and the Mayor and Mayoress of Wellington.

The day before the première, O’Shea was delighted to receive an enthusiastic telegram sent from London by Nadja Regin.

Wishing you lots of success stop regret not being able be with you on Thursday to share the excitement of the day my love and warmest wishes to everyone in the unit. Yours Nadja Regin.12

O’Shea also organised “premières” in other parts of the country and arranged for some of the Runaway actors to be present to increase the level of public interest. Although Tanya Binning played a relatively minor role in the completed production, her public profile was sufficiently high for O’Shea to bring her to New Zealand from Los Angeles and fly her to various parts of the country. The detailed schedule prepared for her illustrates O’Shea’s marketing efforts which were as elaborate as a military campaign:

Oct 21 Miss Binning arrives Auckland (ex. Los Angeles) 9.05 a.m. Wednesday, October 21st (Flight TE 531)

Both leave Auckland Special Flight 403 (depart Auckland 12.40 p.m.) Arrive Christchurch 2.45 p.m.

WARNERS HOTEL

Mr. Strack to pre-arrange press, radio, TV interviews for Miss Binning, preferably at hotel.13

The schedule continued with her flying to Dunedin the following day for further media interviews and, after an overnight stay, leaving Dunedin for a short flight to Invercargill. That night at the Invercargill première she was scheduled for a stage appearance, followed by supper and cocktails with press and radio representatives and the Mayor, at the Grand Hotel. There were further live engagements scheduled at
Christchurch and a final appearance at Auckland’s Civic Theatre on October 26 before returning overseas the following day. While Tanya Binning was on stage in Invercargill, fellow actor Selwyn Muru, was providing press interviews, and appearing onstage at the Octagon Theatre in Dunedin with the local city mayor. Barry Crump and Helen Smith travelled to Invercargill, Dunedin and then Christchurch, where Crump signed autographs at Whitcombe & Tombs bookshop. At 7.30pm he joined guests of honour Minister of Transport and the Mayor of the city on the stage at the Savoy Theatre. John O’Shea and Deirdre McCarron, having attended the Vice-Regal première in Wellington on Oct 22, travelled by car for Palmerston North where, after press and radio interviews, they made a stage appearance with the Mayor and local MP. In this section of the schedule is an interesting footnote. “Mr. O’Shea will be accompanied by Mrs. O’Shea, and Miss McCarron (Mrs Seresin) by Mr Seresin.”14 Director of Photography Michael Seresin had by this time married the leading lady. Tony Williams and Colin Broadley were both flown to Auckland for that city’s première where the guests of honour included “Mr R. Muldoon, M.P., Parliamentary Under-Secretary (Finance)”. The guest list also included a range of individuals from the political and artistic communities. One invitee replied from his home in 55 Esplanade Rd, Mt Eden:

Dear John,

Many thanks for your kind invitation to be present at the premiere of Runaway at the Civic Theatre on Friday next. We will both be there on this most important occasion, and hope you will break a house record. You seem to have whipped up a vast amount of interest, and could get a lot of your money back in the first week. The splash release looks like a worth-while policy. This thing has got to go, or feature film production in this country will return to limbo.

Kindest Regards, Rudall and Ramai.15

“Rudall” and “Ramai” were the Haywards16 who had continued to be active as filmmakers but not been able to produce a feature-film since Rewi’s Last Stand more than quarter of a century earlier.
The day after the Wellington screening, Runaway opened in central Christchurch to the accompaniment of a brass band and marching girls. The Christchurch Press, under the headline, “Film Premiere Draws Crowd”, reported that “crowds packed the pavement in front of the theatre and the theatre itself was full for the performance. Among those present were the Mayor (Mr G. Manning), the Minister of Transport (Mr McAlpine), and one of the actors, Barry Crump. Both Mr McAlpine and Mr Crump spoke briefly during the intermission.” Barry Crump stated that “all of us who have worked on this film have put a hell of a lot into it, and there has been no effort spared to make it as good as possible.”

He concluded, somewhat laconically, “Now we will see if it is any good. I think it will be okay.” At the conclusion of the screening the Minister of Transport was judicious in his choice of words. The paper reported him as being “grateful to have the opportunity to see the film which he had been told was one to remember”. He went on to congratulate “all those connected with its production”, and with an eye to export potential, “commented that it showed that although New Zealand was a small country it could produce first-class goods.”

Two days after the Wellington première, O’Shea received a brief, courteous letter from W.B.[Bill] Sutch on a Department of Industries and Commerce letterhead.

My wife and I wish to thank Pacific Films for their invitation to be present at the premiere of Runaway. Could we also take this opportunity to congratulate you on the production.

O’Shea had received maximum publicity from the premières, and the official reactions had been positive (albeit in some cases rather measured). But now Runaway faced its major test – the reaction of the New Zealand cinema-going public.

The nation-wide interest in Runaway was reflected in the wide coverage in newspapers and magazines throughout the country. Thousands of people went to the film (it ran for 3 weeks in Auckland’s Civic Theatre) and opinions as to its merits were widely aired. Reactions were exceptionally varied. The Dominion carried a relatively short item the following day. Under the heading “Screen Bid to Change N.Z. Image”. “[John O’Shea] apparently intended to create a film which would give people overseas a new image of New Zealand. He wanted to dispel the image of New
Zealand as a pair of ‘social security islands’ by portraying a venturesome young man filled with passion.” Attempting to make a balanced assessment, the item continued: “O’Shea does not seem to have succeeded in creating an image of a new kind of passionate Kiwi, but he certainly provided last night’s audience with many glimpses of New Zealand life.” While complimenting the film on its excellent visuals, the article concluded: “that the feebleness of much of the acting may prevent the film from gaining international stature.”

Its sister paper the Evening Post carried a more detailed analysis under the heading “A Ritzy Premiere For Feature Film.” Again borrowing from O’Shea’s introductory remarks about “social security islands”, the writer went on to praise the production for its boldness and artistic qualities and drew particular attention to one actor:

Kudos goes to Colin Broadley, who conveys the passions of youth in the leading role of a mixed-up kid … Broadley plays the part consistently well … [His] stilted acting in the opening sequences of the film looked like an unhappy augury for the rest of the show, but once Broadley got into the open road heading towards Hokianga the acting perked up.

The love scene was described as “the kind of sequence which even Rock Hudson didn’t achieve so early in his career” – one of the many curious examples of reviewers reaching for Hollywood comparisons.

Under the heading “Fine Photography in N.Z. Film”, the Christchurch Press highlighted what the critic considered the most impressive aspect of the film was the “fresh sharp black-and-white photography [that] makes New Zealand’s first dramatic feature film, visually most attractive. Anthony Williams … has a real feeling for the country’s scenery and offers an abundance of it.”

Despite three paragraphs on the camera work, the unnamed critic expressed reservations about the film generally. Although reassuring potential viewers “that they will not be disappointed”, the review noted that Runaway was “at its most successful as a travelogue-cum-documentary”. What troubled the Press most would also trouble many other reviewers: “And what is the film, in fact, trying to say?”
The review pointed out accurately that the film did not satisfy the usual Hollywood narrative conventions. “Had Runaway been treated as a ‘fugitive from justice’ suspense story it would have been more successful. But David’s chances of escaping seemed slight from the start. The necessary tension was replaced by a sense of inevitability.”

By Hollywood standards the Press considered that the film also lacked characterisation. It had held “the possibility of a psychological character-study of an escapist, doomed by his own efforts” [but] “David’s character is never really fully established, let alone probed. He does not become a credible human being”. Other unsatisfactory aspects of Manning’s character included “heavy but unrealised gestures towards some vague ‘significance.’ ‘Is this all I am?’ David asks, kicking the skull and antlers of a dead deer. Later he asserts, ‘I’ve chosen whatever I have to face – here.’ Does this mean Clarrie, the deer-stalker? Or death in the mountains? Or what?”

The criticisms are valid if one accepts the Hollywood requirement that each scene should clearly advance the narrative. They are less relevant to a European-style art film (or for that matter, a Hamlet style of tragedy). The writer was unimpressed by any of the other actors or their roles, partly excusing their indifferent performances on the basis that “admittedly they were struggling with a script consisting chiefly of glum silences interspersed with inconsequential chit chat”. In addition to the photography, the critic did find some aspects worthy of praise, such as “the delightfully authentic dance at Hokianga, the strangely macabre disposal of the body, and, especially, Robin Maconie’s terse, disquieting music. The change from Weber-like statements to the Bach-style organ piece at the end is daring and effective.” These are thoughtful comments. Obviously aware of the amount of effort that had gone into Runaway, the writer concluded that, “all concerned, and John O’Shea in particular, must be commended for their enterprise. New Zealand has taken its first big step towards making good films – but there is a long way to go yet.”

The review was typical in the sense that its writer seemed to be performing a somewhat complicated balancing act. Its conclusion – that the film was strong in its technical aspects and its landscapes but let down by its script – would be echoed not
only by other reviews of *Runaway* but by the reviews of many later New Zealand films in the 1970s and 80s. While acknowledging the reasons for such judgements, one might have hoped for more debate about whether Hollywood narrative conventions were necessarily appropriate. Perhaps a new industry should be encouraged to experiment with other formulas?

On the same day as the *Press* review, the *Manawatu Evening Standard* published what purported to be their analysis of *Runaway*. It was in fact a word-for-word repetition of John O’Shea’s press release, replete with “breathtaking backgrounds”, “torrid love affair” and “compelling, intimate, adult motion picture”. This was good publicity for the film but it reflected the fact that independent reviewing was the exception rather than the rule in New Zealand newspapers. (“Advertorial” and “infomercial” are not new tendencies, and even in larger cities a detailed review such as that of the *Press* remained a rarity.)

Five days later the *NZ Truth* published a review under the heading “A noble effort but not yet a breakthrough” which was one of the better-informed analyses. Giving the film a rating of two stars the review opened bluntly: “David Manning is a louse. That would not be so bad, were he not also a stupid louse. Yet it is on this character that Pacific Films have pinned their flag – no matter what else might be said – it is on this character that *Runaway* comes near to inglorious grief.” Like the *Press*, *Truth* followed the Hollywood assumption that empathy for the central character was a key ingredient of a film. The reviewer, who appeared to have some knowledge of Pacific Films, commented favourably on the company’s technical progress. “Insofar as it has synchronised sound, where the earlier *Broken Barrier* was narrated, and insofar as Anthony Williams’s photographic treatment is more subdued than Roger Mirams’s dazzling catalogue of East Coast cumulus, it is a better film.”

The writer acknowledged the untapped potential for film production in New Zealand and, in spite of the film’s inadequacies, added: “I hope, indeed I pray that it sells … because, let’s face it, that’s the only way we’ll make better films.” The writer again showed his or her knowledge of the industry by commenting: “if countries like Poland can make £9 million in foreign exchange out of films which have to be subtitled even for their next-door neighbours, what is to stop New Zealand?”26 (In spite of major
economic and political strictures, Polish film-making had shown a steady growth in the post-war period. Of particular note was the trilogy of films by director Andrzej Wajda *A Generation* (1954) *Kanal* (1957) and *Ashes and Diamonds* (1958) all of which were “imbued with bitter scepticism towards the national tradition of romantic heroism, exposing the conflict suffered by the young men who took over as the older generation fell.” Two years before the release of *Runaway* Roman Polanski’s *Knife in the Water* (1962) gained him an international reputation. (Unlike New Zealand, Poland had a long tradition of feature film-making which, in spite of the post-war difficulties, enabled the industry to rapidly re-group and rebuild.)

After a patchy plot summary (in which Nadja Regin was curiously described as a “woolbroker’s daughter”) *Truth* pointed out shortcomings in the script: “In general, the dialogue (John Graham and John O’Shea wrote the script) is economic – rather too much so, for it results in a stilted delivery of some key lines without giving the plot a desirable tautness.”

Maconie’s music was described as “complex and, while eminently listenable on its own, is at times too avant-garde for the essential simplicity of the story.” Although the writer felt that in general the film achieved a high technical standard “this serves only to underline the melancholy fact that technique alone is not sufficient.” The review concluded with the depressing suggestion that “though the total domestic take is unlikely to recoup the costs, there simply is no future for a film industry here if *Runaway* does not get its box office due.”

Like the *Press*, *Truth* was careful to do its best for the industry by assuring its readers that, in spite of the film’s shortcomings, it was still worth seeing: “If, artistically, it only skims the surface of the characters and the situations it presents, … it promises more in the way of future potentials than immediate brilliance, you’ll find it is unusual and, in many ways, a rewarding experience.” The recognition of its “unusual” character did not, however, extend to any serious debate about whether or not a New Zealand film should aspire to conform to Hollywood formulas.

Geoffrey Webster, contributing a review to *The Auckland Star* under the headline “Humour and Artistic Merit, Too” began on a positive note. “All considerations of
'Well done, New Zealand' aside, this first major film of local enterprise is of considerable technical excellence. Judged by world standards, the black-and-white photography is superb.” Webster concurred with virtually all of Runaway’s reviewers as to the high quality of the camerawork, and similarly felt that the script was the Achilles heel of New Zealand film making: “The excellence of photography and production mask some of the film’s deficiencies. Chief of these is the script. Occasionally it is woefully inadequate.” Webster understood that the inadequacies of the script had provided additional dramatic challenges for “the largely amateur cast”. Like other reviewers, he was critical of the pauses during the dialogue sequences. “Too often, nobody has enough to say. So the photographer must ensure that every picture tells a story. Had the photography been only mediocre, especially in the many big, wrinkle and pore-revealing close-ups, the thing would have limped badly at crucial points.”

Webster’s emphasis on the acting was representative of the fact that local film reviewers were more likely to have come from a theatre than a film background. He complimented Gil Cornwall on his portrayal of “a self-made man of few scruples”. Perhaps tongue-in-cheek, he noted that “Cornwall also makes a convincing job of being, with dramatic suddenness, a corpse”. Nadja Regin provided “a polished performance”, whereas Tanya Binning “shapely as a water-skier, does little more than look in”. He commented on Kiri Te Kanawa “as a mildly flirtatious girl, who plays a small part with grace”. Deirdre McCarron received special praise. “She gives a warm, subdued and unvaryingly persuasive characterisation of a footloose girl [which is] wholly admirable”. She was described as having provided an excellent foil for Barry Crump who in turn “presents comically the accepted public image of his best seller A Good Keen Man”. Colin Broadley, characterised as having “a superficial resemblance to Steve McQueen” is damned with faint praise – “his work is consistently near the standards of reputable professionals”. His performance was partly excused by the script; “with a more workmanlike script he would probably have made an even better impression.” Like nearly all New Zealand reviewers, Geoffrey Webster speculated on the likely reaction of overseas audiences. He was concerned about the extent to which “audiences abroad will understand our Maori-Pakeha relationship” after a viewing of Runaway. Yet he acknowledged that “the point is well made that in New Zealand racial discrimination is reprehensible”. And
he assumed that finally the scenery would be the key aspect in the minds of overseas audiences: “Importantly, whenever Runaway is screened, audiences will appreciate that our country is not only well developed, with motorways and traffic bridges, but is one abounding in alpine hinterlands of unsurpassed magnificence.” In spite of his reservations, Webster was basically impressed by the film. He ended with the comment that: “if a film’s purpose is ‘to entertain’ [then] as entertainment it succeeds … [and] if the true function of cinema is to tell a tale in pictures, producer – director John O’Shea and his director of photography, Anthony Williams, have created something of genuine artistic merit.” Despite their praise for the camerawork, however, reviewers were not prepared to relax their demands for dialogue or to look in detail at what “telling a tale in pictures” might mean apart from striking landscapes.

On the same day the other major Auckland newspaper the New Zealand Herald reviewed the film under the headline “Film Makes Step Forward”. This was one review that did raise theoretical questions: “The older I grow, the more convinced I become that the soft attitude towards local artistic endeavour, whether amateur or in varying degrees professional, does more harm than good. As far as humanely possible, I wish to review Runaway against the standards of the professional theatre.”

These remarks exposed the difficulty all reviewers had when evaluating New Zealand’s first feature film for over a decade. Should they review it in a patriotic spirit, thereby running the risk of patronising the film, or treat it no differently from any other film, thereby failing to acknowledge the huge handicaps it had struggled to overcome? Many New Zealanders were seeing, for the first time, a major feature film with synchronised sound, a contemporary story with local locations and a cast of local actors. What frame of reference should be used - technical accomplishment, entertainment value, its ability to impress overseas viewers, or what? Should criteria be derived from Hollywood, “the professional theatre”, the art film, or be re-invented for unique context?

The Herald reviewer began by contrasting the technical achievement with the patchy script. “In appearance, in camerawork, in command over outdoor scene and incident, Runaway is first class. Its story, script and acting are not first class: on each of these grounds the film merely makes intermittent points, but they are good enough to see it
The writer saw Runaway’s local setting and content as the key ingredients for success with local audiences. “We have lived for so long on imported screen entertainment that none of us realises how starved we are for a change which can offer something characteristic of the local scene, either in incident or dialogue. Thus some of the vignettes of characterisation, fragments of incident and snatches of dialogue and slang may well be the ingredients of Runaway which the New Zealand customer will relish most.”

So much for the attempt to review the film “against the standards of the professional theatre!” The recognition of “fragments” seems a more generous and certainly a more locally specific measure.

In a reference to the James Dean film of a decade earlier, the Herald described Runaway as having a story “of another rebel without a cause … it is a role for James Dean and his ilk, among whom Colin Broadley does not belong. Casting against type can bring notable success on occasions, but this is not one of them”. The reviewer did not expand on what appears to be an assumption that a rebel should be played by a young actor, preferably in the American style. What was clear once again was the inability of reviewers to understand and relate to the type of alienated figure which Graham and O’Shea had created, in some respects more “man alone” – and in some respects more characteristic of European art cinema – than Hollywood rebels such as Dean and Brando. The Herald did, however, praise Broadley for his acting in “certain Hokianga scenes and in the excellent sequence he shares with Gil Cornwall”. Deirdre McCarron was seen as a “more sympathetic figure … for she brings to the screen a natural grace and charm which engender the sympathy of the audience”. In conclusion, the Herald reviewer acknowledged that the film had some strengths, including the Hokianga dance hall sequences, the title song, the highway landscapes of the North Island, and the “vastness of Westland [where] Runaway rivets attention and will draw deserved appreciation”. But the reviewer found the ending unrealistic: “I do not think a Kiwi party of policemen and mountaineers would let their quarry go in the way the film allows”. The review ended on a positive note – as a final contradiction of its opening position – by expressing “three cheers for John O’Shea and his company.”
The Roman Catholic newspaper *Zealandia* began its review sympathetically, describing the film as “an artistic piece of entertainment which does credit to its producer and director, John O’Shea and his small team of actors and technicians”. As with other reviewers, the paper found “the major fault in the story is in the script. It tends to be too sparse and stilted giving artificial feeling to some of the conversations”. Curiously the reviewer found fault with the realism of some of the locations, arguing that “the opening scenes at David’s office … suffer an air of unreality because they lack convincing sets”. With the actors described at best as “competent”, it was once again the camerawork that received the accolades. “It was the photography which held my attention from the beginning to the end. The temptation to use colour must have been considerable. Instead there is some magnificent black and white photography which gives film a rare quality. Fact and fantasy melt in together through a series of symbolic pictures of New Zealand scenery.” Although disappointed that “there was little build up to the climaxes through the film when David is escaping”, the reviewer enjoyed “the majesty of the Alps and the stirring organ music in the final scenes [that] brings the film to a moving but inevitable end”. The review’s conclusion typified the verdict of many local reviewers: “An artistic piece of New Zealand cinema with some beautiful black and white photography, but hampered by a poor script.” It also typified the curious silence of reviewers about what the film had to say about New Zealand. A review in a Catholic paper might well have attacked *Runaway* for its existential sense of amorality. The fact that it focused on the film as art and entertainment – rather than as moral fable – was in one sense a generous reaction, but in another sense it raised a disturbing question. Were local reviewers unwilling to confront the film’s provocative vision of New Zealand, or had the film-makers simply failed to provoke?

Advance publicity had strongly suggested that *Runaway* would be an adventure film mixed with romance and erotic titillation. Due to its need to recoup as much of its costs as possible from the local box office, *Runaway* was marketed as a mainstream adventure film. Had the publicity prepared viewers for a New Zealand version of *L’Avventura*, or a film about an existentialist-style rebel, reviewers would have approached it with a clearer framework, but audience numbers would have shrunk, especially in the smaller cities and towns. As it was, even the most discerning critics made no reference to symbolic implications for New Zealand. Nevertheless,
reviewers on the whole treated *Runaway* with respect, making some allowance for its failings. All the reviewers seemed sure they knew what a film should be – there was no discussion of the new cinematic territory that a New Zealand film had tried (or should try) to explore. The reviewers drew comparisons with Hollywood films, actors and narrative styles but never asked themselves whether these were appropriate. (A famous line from a poem by Allen Curnow seems apposite: “It was something different, something/Nobody counted on”). Such theoretical concerns had not, it seemed, trickled down from New Zealand “high culture” to the popular world of film reviewing. Links with European art films were sometimes noted but there was no general discussion of that type of film-making or of its possible relevance to New Zealand (as an alternative model to Hollywood). There was something old-fashioned in the reviewers’ preoccupation with landscape and in their concern about whether or not the film would impress overseas viewers. And yet the film reviewers did show some awareness of the historic significance of the film, and there was a corresponding restraint in their criticisms – as though the film, for all its failings needed to be acknowledged as one of the family – one of ours.

In spite of the guarded reviews, *Runaway* created considerable public interest. It was the first New Zealand feature film that many audience members had ever seen. It starred well known locals and an erotic female star from the popular James Bond movies. Furthermore it had a story that stretched from Hokianga to Westland - something for everyone. The publicity emphasised all of these features and people all over the country attended the film in large numbers. From what evidence is available, they were – like the reviewers – bemused. They had hoped for a good adventure story set in their home country, with plenty of action, glamour and an exciting storyline. Indeed, they saw plenty of scenery and some attractive actors, but for them the storyline seemed to taper off into an unsatisfactory and illogical conclusion. Some patrons were evidently disappointed and angry. Yet some were impressed and took issue with reviewers who had damned the film with faint praise. For example, a few days after its review the *Dominion* published the following letter (signed with the pseudonym “More Please”):

> Having just seen *Runaway* I would say that the review published in your columns was superficial and inadequate. It deserves better, though we do not
of course expect from this first effort the heights of acting and production. I have seen many much more hammy English films that reminded me of the Mudthorpe Drama Group. *Runaway* was infinitely better with some simple realism and warmth, and quite an effective work from the stars, who were given a rather scrappy script.38

This letter writer did agree with the reviewers in blaming the film’s shortcomings on the script while praising the camerawork. “The photography and atmospheric effects were impressive. I think it will cause real interest overseas, where the unusual local-colour short would never cause a ripple.”39 The letter ended with a curious query. “Too bad, though, that the New Zealand copy was cut. Are we all children out here?”40 No censor’s cuts had been made to *Runaway*, but perhaps the poetic editing in the final sex scene had left “More Please” confused.

Other letters to the editor were not so supportive. Two published in the *Timaru Herald* a month after the film’s release, expressed grave concern.41 The first, signed by the pseudonym “Two Mothers”, declared, “on behalf of the mothers of New Zealand who have sons and daughters of an age to compare with those depicted in *Runaway* … we would like to register our disapproval of the film.” Illustrating the New Zealand obsession with “what will they think of us overseas” the letter concluded, “We feel it gives a wrong impression of the character and conduct of the youth of New Zealand. We hope this film will not be shown overseas.” (This letter may have pleased the film-makers since it shows that some of the film’s radicalism had been noticed.) The second, signed by a Barbara Harper and published two days later, commented, “I should imagine that not only mothers, but all sections of the community would not so much disapprove but be utterly disappointed in *Runaway*.” After briefly complimenting Barry Crump and the scenery, Harper complained that the film “is painfully paltry in theme and consequence. With nothing subtle, romantic or courageous in the limp story and insipid dialogue, the whole production verges on the ridiculous.” But the writer’s real objection was on the grounds of morality. “Promiscuity and absurdity increases with every situation, from the antics of the wool-buyer’s mistress at Hokianga to the feline behaviour of the travelling city girl with never a hair out of place in the mountains of Westland.” Although wrong about the marital status of Laura Kosavitch, Harper was right to be surprised by Diana’s
constantly coiffured hair. Harper concluded: “there is much in our way of life from which adventure, humour and love could be evolved without having to resort to such a sordid and worn-out theme.”

In the same week Pacific Films received a hand-written letter signed by a “Henry J. Le Crass” who could see absolutely nothing of merit in *Runaway*. Enclosing the two hostile letters from the *Timaru Herald* he expressed his similar opinion that the picture was in very bad taste and had no decent plot. He added: “no NZ youth would do the things suggested in the picture. He certainly would not leave the girl in the ice and snow and the rescuers of the girl would never, never leave the boy to die in the Pass.” Unlike the majority of the film’s critics, the writer regarded Barry Crump’s character as being “an extremely bad type, [who] wouldn’t eat meat or drink as portrayed in the picture, or wear clothes like that, I know as I have been one.” Like the Timaru mothers he too was concerned that “for the sake of the NZ youth the picture will not be sent overseas. If so people will think NZ’s extremely crass.”

Even the camerawork found fault in the eyes of Mr Le Crass. “For a first picture, some good material absolutely wasted. Pacific photography not up to standard and no scenery shown as should be. Perhaps you may get other critics to add more. I am ashamed of the picture.” It would be easy to dismiss the letters from Timaru as merely the simplistic reactions of the narrow minded. However, their reactions typify the type of response which *Runaway*, for a number of reasons, always ran the risk eliciting from many sections of the New Zealand public. There were many proud Kiwis who saw their country as unquestionably the best place in the world, and a constant feature of their patriotism was an obsession with the way New Zealand was perceived by the rest of the world.

The early 1960s still retained the conservative attitudes associated with the 50s. One of my own strong recollections from that period was listening regularly to the 1ZB request session during the Sunday family lunch after church. A regularly requested favourite was an American song, *Dear Hearts and Gentle People*, sung by Dinah Shore, which began:

I love those dear hearts, and gentle people
That live in my home town.
Because those dear hearts, and gentle people
Will never ever let you down.
They read the Good Book from Fri ‘till Monday
That’s how the weekend goes.
I’ve got a dream house I’ll build there someday
With picket fence and rambling rose.

Trite and absurd from the cynical perspective of our own time, the song, though American in origin, encapsulated the way in which many New Zealanders perceived themselves and their fellow citizens; honest, decent, God-fearing people, secure in their commonly shared values. *Runaway* did not depict this New Zealand. It showed a young man who in spite of having access to the good life, turned his back on it and wandered aimlessly around the country, having affairs and stealing cars. All this took place in a film that was billed in newspaper advertisements and posters as being “a daring intimate drama of a young man in a hungry hurry, set in the New Zealand you know”. Small wonder middle New Zealand was upset since this was not the country they knew nor the kind of motivation they understood. (The alienated anti-heroes of *Easy Rider*, *Zabriskie Point*, and other “hippie” films were not to reach New Zealand for another 5 or 6 years.)

Those who wrote for weekly or monthly magazines had a little longer to ponder their reviews while absorbing the comments of their daily newspaper colleagues and those of the public at large. A thoughtful review (written by ‘F.A.J.’) appeared in the *New Zealand Listener* two weeks after the film’s première. It began: “Film-making is a difficult art to practise, and when both the old professionals of the game and its brilliant artists have so many failures, was it reasonable to expect that Mr O’ Shea, with all his talent and success with short films, would ring the bell with his first solo effort? How good it is to find that he has done so.” Acknowledging that most readers would by this time be aware of the film’s story, the writer pointed out that the “story by Mr O’Shea and Aucklander John Graham, has no involved plot. The interest is in the young man – in his fate.” The *Listener* saw the lack of narrative interest as being of little real concern - what mattered were the experiences of David Manning. The writer acknowledged that “Mr Broadley has the right kind of sensitive face for the part and quite a bit of acting talent” but added: “He isn’t really equal to one or two
scenes, notably the very difficult one when he tries to cover up his failure to rescue the girl when she is likely to drown – it’s a vital scene and it doesn’t come off.48 (Colin Broadley, recalling the technical problems involved in the lake scene, wryly commented years later, “I didn’t like the scene and neither did the critics”).49 Reviewing in some detail a cross section of Runaway’s actors, the Listener noted that “the surprising thing, really, is that the film holds together so well in spite of its numerous apparently inexperienced players. But they do weaken it”. The film, by this stage, had been on the nation’s cinema screens for two weeks. Consequently the reviewer was able to draw on the opinions of others and cited the “remark of a perceptive friend who had seen it several times, that Runaway is really an English-speaking continental film”. Unfortunately the reviewer did not expand on this useful suggestion, but did praise aspects that fitted this model such as the “bold opening [and] Anthony Williams’s quite brilliant and finely imaginative photography”. Also, Maconie’s music was praised for being “always apt and never intrusive”. Merit was even seen in the sparseness of the dialogue which ensured “that the film never drags”. (Many other reviewers had been irritated by the Antonioni-style silences.) The final paragraph of the review was particularly unusual in its attempt to empathise with Manning and the film’s moral philosophy:

It remains to the end sympathetic to its young New Zealander, who is running away from his past and a way of life with which he feels at odds, and trying to find himself a new, free life and perhaps even the lost innocence of his boyhood, breaks the law or the accepted moral code at every turn of the road. How can you wish him ill as punishment for what he has done? The girl asks his pursuers near the end. You don’t know him.50

Perhaps the most thoughtful review, especially in relating the film to New Zealand culture, was by P.J. Downey, President of the Wellington Film Society and a fortnightly film reviewer for 2YA radio, who wrote about Runaway in the magazine A New Zealand Quarterly Review. His analysis was lengthy and detailed, written with the knowledge that one would expect of a man with a thoughtful interest in film as an art form. From the beginning he placed Runaway in the context of film-making in New Zealand at that time.
Runaway is more than a film made in New Zealand, against a New Zealand background. It is a conscious attempt to put on the screen certain New Zealand characteristics, to portray certain New Zealand types, to illustrate certain New Zealand social situations … [and] is clearly intended to show New Zealand, and to entertain and instruct New Zealanders.

Conscious of the economic pressures he expressed the hope that “reports of its early reception” were correct in suggesting a good box office result. With a comment that O’Shea would have applauded, Downey remarked:

Presuming that Runaway will be financially successful it is apparently intended by Pacific Films that further feature films will be produced, without Government aid – a healthy sign, when one ponders the steady decline of the State-financed National Film Unit [which] seems to be permanently restricted to tourist publicity shorts and other trivia.

In many European countries, government funding for the arts was normal and indeed desirable as an alternative to commercialism. New Zealand comments such as Downey’s (or O’Shea’s) need to be seen in a context where almost no Government funding for independent film was available, and the Film Unit was at this time conservative and bureaucratised. Downey did not stress rural landscapes as other reviewers had done:

The audiences with whom I have seen the film, do not seem to have been unduly concerned with the fact that Runaway has a certain tourist orientation. But the parts they liked and identified with most readily were what I would call the urbanised scenes. Carrying flagons out of a bar, the emphasis on flash motor-cars [and] the Hokianga boarding house keeper.

Downey was the only reviewer who mentioned Alma Wood’s excellent cameo role. He went on to point out that audiences had greatly enjoyed seeing “projections of themselves, and their neighbours in recognisable settings. Even at times the recognition might have been a little embarrassing, but it was satisfying nevertheless”. Downey identified the problems the scriptwriters had in trying to provide an
entertaining film that also embodied serious social comment: “Runaway attempts to have it both ways, with the result that it becomes confusing, with the entertainment values detracting from the serious comment”. Like virtually all other reviewers he was unhappy with the script, and he saw a kind of negative synergy being created between the limitations of the script and the limitations of the acting. An example was the character played by Colin Broadley.

Since the script fails to provide suitable motivations for his actions, it was essential if the character was to be convincing that the audience should feel strongly a sense of compassion for the boy. Colin Broadley however presents him as so uncomplicated that David is dull and the audience really cannot feel concern at his fate. My own personal reaction was one of growing irritation at the boy’s stupidity.

Surprisingly, Downey was the only reviewer to discuss the fact that Runaway was derivative of the “man alone” concept.

Although the story is a melodramatic one, it is in accordance with a standard New Zealand literary theme. This lonely individual at odds with his society is to be seen in various incarnations in John Mulgan’s Man Alone, Frank Sargeson’s I Saw in My Dream, Erik de Mauny’s The Huntsman In His Career, Gordon Slatter’s A Gun In My Hand, and Ian Cross’s The God Boy.

Awareness of this tradition seems to have helped Downey to view the ending more positively than other reviewers. He saw the dramatic image of “the boy trudging off into the mountain snows” [as coming off] “surprisingly well”. That other commentators did not mention “man alone” is a salutary reminder that the New Zealand tradition of cultural nationalism remained little known in the 1960s outside of a small community based primarily in literature. Downey could not resist adding his own suggestions for the restructuring of the script: “It would be much more dramatically effective if the film were to start with the Aramoana sequence – face of the dead man in the water included. This would bring us immediately to the meeting of the two principal characters, and provide a certain air of mystery. We would see the film from Diana’s point off view.” He also suggested that further flashbacks
would have increased the dramatic power of the film which, “as it stands … is too straightforward”. Downey presumably felt that *Runaway* should have thrown in its lot more fully with “the art film” tradition. The review expressed the passionate hopes that some New Zealanders had for the idea of a serious local film industry. Its conclusion was carefully balanced:

> *Runaway* is by no means a completely successful film. As a New Zealand feature film we need not feel that it is an embarrassment to us. It is of particular interest to a New Zealand audience because of what it tries to say. And because of the technical competence, and occasionally the cinematic flair with which it has been made, it gives promise of even richer things to come.  

Unfortunately, thoughtful reviews such as Downey’s and the *Listener’s* were scarce. The film appears generally to have fallen between two stools, satisfying neither highbrow nor popular audiences sufficient to keep the film in the cinemas for a long season. It opened in each city with a great burst of publicity, but this exhausted itself after a few weeks since word-of-mouth was too mixed to sustain attendances. Nevertheless, there was enough interest to attract a reasonable number of people. The film ran for 3 weeks in Auckland and 3 weeks in Wellington – long enough to create an impact, but only long enough to recoup two thirds of its production costs of £57,000. The next challenge for *Runaway* was to seek success overseas.
In 1965 I spent a month in Poland and in Wroclaw was shown through their features studio. I remember being impressed by the motivation and commitment of the young film-makers I met who were working in conditions of considerable privation – in contrast to my own prosperous country where the production of a feature film was a rare event.