

1981

A film by FIREBIRD

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Actors needed! There's no money in it, but it will be fun.

Shooting in Broken Hill, NSW, Australia, March 2022.

A narrative set in the shared universe of Awaiting: Nonfictional
Delusion, Heads Will Rock: A Chronicle Of Postapocalyptic Mayhem,
and the first 3 films of a popular Australian postapocalyptic film
franchise.

FADE IN:

AUSTRALIAN OUTBACK - MIDDAY

"Oil donkey" (AKA pumpjack) pumping. Credits. The title "1981" appears, taking up most of the frame. A few notes of screeching violin plays. These are the same notes we will hear at the end of the film. We hear the notes of Happy Birthday beginning to play on a music box.

CUT TO:

AUSTRALIAN OUTBACK, HOUSE INTERIOR, BEDROOM - MORNING, JANUARY 1981

DEBBY, a punk-rock girl with long brassy blonde hair, sits propped up in bed with a music box on her pregnant tummy. She is turning the crank of the music box, playing Happy Birthday. RADIO ANNOUNCER can be heard faintly in the background. Debby doesn't play the last two notes of the song because she is interrupted by the loud ringing bell of a timer coming from the kitchen. She sets the music box down and leaves the room.

We can now see BRUCE asleep in the same bed. He slept in a work cap and a denim work vest which has been heavily personalised to make it more punk. On one side there is a nametag patch. On the other side there is a patch with the company logo of 7 Sisters Petroleum ("7SP"). Above the 7SP patch Bruce has painted "I DRINK" [7 SISTERS PETROLEUM].

CUT TO:

HOUSE INTERIOR, KITCHEN - MORNING

Debby is preparing breakfast. Closeup of frying pan with bacon. The radio can be heard more clearly now.

RADIO ANNOUNCER

In the United States territory of Puerto Rico, explosions destroyed several Air National Guard aircraft. Police suspect it was yet another act of terrorism in a massive wave of violent rebellion currently sweeping the US. Researchers in South Africa have identified several new cases of a mysterious and deadly immune deficiency illness affecting young men. The researchers suspect that the mens' illnesses are being caused by an unidentified virus. Biologist Paul

Ehrlich predicts hundreds of millions will starve before the end of the decade. Ehrlich's predictions are highly respected and he is well on his way to winning a bet with professor Julian Simon. Ehrlich bet Simon that prices of raw materials will continue to skyrocket with no end in sight. Economist Deanna Binns has been invited to address the Australian parliament later this year. Binns believes that Australia should adopt economic policies similar to those of Chile's ("CHILL-eez") reactionary dictatorship. With unemployment and inflation already over ten percent, Pinochet ("PEE-no-shay") style reforms could devastate Australia's economy. Oil prices have more than tripled, and prime minister Fraser ("FRAY-zer") announced this morning that Australia's oil companies will be nationalised and managed by the Australian government.

Debby brings a bacon and egg roll on a plate to Bruce in the bedroom.

CUT TO:
BEDROOM

Debby leans over and whispers into Bruce's ear.

DEBBY
Time to get up Brucie.

BRUCE
(Mumbling) Fuelling the world.

DEBBY
I made you brekkie.

Debby playfully shoves the sandwich into his face. Bruce gets up.

BRUCE
Could you wrap it up for me? I have to go.

DEBBY
I'll wrap a couple up for Neil and Zed, too. Put on some pants.

The camera reveals Bruce's backside. Despite having slept in his vest and hat, on his bottom half he is wearing only his underwear, and his underwear is merely a g-string that shows off his butt cheeks. Bruce puts on pants and makes a minimal attempt to get ready for work. Debby returns to the kitchen to wrap up the sandwiches.

INTERCUT:

DEBBY/BRUCE

DEBBY

Did Pappagallo have you working late again?

BRUCE

He's preparing for something big. But he won't say what it is.

DEBBY

Fraser nationalised the oil companies.

BRUCE

It's about bloody time.

DEBBY

Is that good news or bad news?

BRUCE

It worked for Chile ("CHEE-lay").

DEBBY

I mean, are you going to lose your job?

BRUCE

It could go either way. I might be promoted. I might be fired.

CUT TO:

KITCHEN

DEBBY

There are going to be three of us soon.

Bruce emerges from the bedroom and smiles. He embraces Debby. He gives her a peck on the lips and a peck on her pregnant belly.

BRUCE

I'll do whatever it takes to keep us going. If it weren't for you, I'd tear this whole bloody world to the ground.

Debby hands him three sandwiches wrapped in newspaper. Bruce walks out the door. Debby takes a bite out of the sandwich that was on the plate. She returns to the bedroom to find a human-shaped oil stain on the sheets. She sighs and removes the sheet.

RADIO ANNOUNCER

In local news, the Tynong ("TIE-nong") North and Frankston murders remain unsolved after three more women's bodies were found last month. And speaking of serial killers, now back to the music. This is The Boomtown Rats with "I Don't Like Mondays."

CUT TO:

7SP FIELD OFFICE, EXTERIOR - MORNING

The back of ZED's denim vest reads, "I DON'T LIKE MONDAYS EITHER." Zed is leaning under the hood of a car, talking to NEIL as he works on the car. Neil is in a wheelchair and also dressed in a denim vest. Neil sometimes asks Zed for assistance reaching things. The 7 Sisters Petroleum office is run down. Everything looks worn out and there's graffiti on the sign by the front door.

ZED

She's really toey. Now she's up the duff. You reckon the baby feels it when he roots her?

NEIL

Shut your gob. Bruce is coming.

Bruce approaches. Zed straightens up and turns to him.

ZED

Have you heard the rumour?

BRUCE

We're being nationalised.

ZED

No, the other rumour. Pappagallo is bringing everyone into his office. One at a time.

BRUCE

He's firing us.

ZED

That's not what I heard. I heard he's picking the best of us for a special project. I hope he picks me!

NEIL

You just said he's picking the best. So you know he's not picking you.

Bruce hands sandwiches to both of them. Zed and Neil start eating. Zed talks with his mouth full but Neil is more polite.

ZED

Aw, Debby still cooks for me.

NEIL

She never cooked for you.

ZED

Yes she did. She was my girlfriend before Bruce stole her from me.

NEIL

She went on one date with you.

ZED

One date she'll never forget.

NEIL

One date you'll never forget.

BRUCE

Or shut up about.

ZED

(To Bruce) You ever strangle her? She likes it when you strangle her.

BRUCE

No she doesn't. And that's why you only got one date.

ZED

One date so far.

Bruce moves to attack Zed but Neil grabs his arm. Bruce tugs so hard that he pulls Neil's wheelchair sideways.

NEIL

Pay him no mind. The last woman he was
inside was his mother. He's all talk.
He'd never try anything with Debby.
Especially not with you around.

Neil lets Bruce go. Bruce feigns another attack and Zed flinches.
Bruce walks away and begins work on another nearby vehicle.
PAPPAGALLO appears. He is a middle-aged businessman wearing a 70s
suit and a wide tie.

PAPPAGALLO

Bruce, can I see you in my office?

Neil and Zed make schoolboy sounds, as though making fun of Bruce
for being in trouble with the principal. Bruce leaves with
Pappagallo.

ZED

I've had a lot of girlfriends. They give
me presents.

Zed pulls a locket, a button, and a barrette out of his pocket and
shows them to Neil. Neil ignores him.

CUT TO:

7SP FIELD OFFICE, INTERIOR - MORNING

Pappagallo has a nameplate on his desk indicating that he is the
CEO of 7 Sisters Petroleum. A photo of oil derricks is mounted on
the wall behind him. He is writing on a piece of paper. He is
drawing lines through the names of some of his employees, and
circling others. We see him circling Bruce's name as Bruce enters.
Bruce doesn't sit down and Pappagallo doesn't bother asking him
to.

PAPPAGALLO

You've probably heard we're being
nationalised.

BRUCE

That oil doesn't belong to you. It
belongs to everyone.

PAPPAGALLO

Yes, but it takes the brains of people like me... people like us... to get it out of the ground and turn it into something everyone can use. So a few of us are going to take one of the oil donkeys and build a little refinery around it. We'll have a peaceful community out in the desert while the rest of the world goes to the dogs.

BRUCE

They know the pumpjack is out there. They'll come for you eventually.

PAPPAGALLO

I've already destroyed the records. They'll never find us.

BRUCE

What's this got to do with me?

PAPPAGALLO

I want you to come with us. You're the best mechanic I've got.

BRUCE

No I'm not. Neil is.

Pappagallo looks out the window at Neil.

PAPPAGALLO

We need someone... with more... mobility.

BRUCE

Can Debby come?

PAPPAGALLO

Once the compound is built you can send for her. Four weeks. Six tops.

BRUCE

No way.

Bruce walks out the office door. Pappagallo gets up and follows him.

CUT TO:

7SP FIELD OFFICE, EXTERIOR - MORNING

Bruce goes back to work on the car. Zed runs up to Bruce. Pappagallo joins him.

ZED

What did he offer you?

BRUCE

He's making a new town out in the desert.
He wants me to go with him.

ZED

Are you going to go?

BRUCE

I have everything I need right here.

PAPPAGALLO

You don't have a future. I could offer
you that. Come with us. We'll live like
kings.

BRUCE

Not without Debby.

PAPPAGALLO

When we're just getting started we can't
have dead weight mulling about, getting
in the way. Unless you'd allow her to
be... community property.

ZED

(Giggling) Breeding stock.

BRUCE

No thanks.

Bruce keeps trying to get his work done as Pappagallo hounds him.

PAPPAGALLO

You think you're happy here? You want to
run with the dogs? The punks? The
misfits? You're a nobody with nothing to
do. And nowhere to go.

Bruce has been trying to ignore him but at this point Pappagallo
is in his face and going for broke.

PAPPAGALLO

What's so special about Debby? You don't
have anyone else in your life? No family?
No parents?

Bruce brusquely turns and walks away. His manner suggests he's
given up on getting anything done at work today, and he's heading

home, possibly never to return. Pappagallo grabs him and stops him from leaving.

PAPPAGALLO

So that's it. You lost your parents. Well
you know what? We all lose our parents.
If we're lucky enough to live that long.

Bruce angrily shakes Pappagallo off of him, but Pappagallo grabs him again.

PAPPAGALLO

Bruce....

Bruce punches Pappagallo and knocks him over. Zed runs to Pappagallo's aid. Bruce starts walking home. Pappagallo gets up and waves to Zed, inviting him to join him in his office. Zed jumps and cheers.