

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. Oil prices have more than tripled, leading prime minister Fraser ("FRAY-zer") to announce this morning that Australia's oil resources will be nationalised and managed by the 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

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 save--or devastate--Australia's economy. 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 song is about Brenda Spencer, a 16-year-old girl who shot up a school. It's 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 bonnet of a car, talking to NEIL as he works on the engine. 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 some of us into his office for a  
one-on-one meeting.

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 choke her? She likes it when you choke 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 they are making fun  
of Bruce for being in trouble with the principal. Bruce leaves  
with Pappagallo.

ZED

I have a lot of girlfriends. They give me  
presents.

Zed pulls a locket, a button, and a barrette out of his pocket.

CUT TO:

7SP FIELD OFFICE, INTERIOR - MORNING

Pappagallo is seated at his desk. A photo of oil derricks is  
mounted on the wall behind him. The nameplate on his desk  
indicates that he is the CEO of 7 Sisters Petroleum. Pappagallo  
has a list of employees' names in front of him. He has drawn lines  
through the names of some of the employees, and circled 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

That may be, 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 for ourselves and build a little refinery around it.

BRUCE

They'll know it's out there. Sooner or later they'll come for it.

PAPPAGALLO

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

BRUCE

What does this have to do with me?

PAPPAGALLO

We'll start a new life while the rest of the world goes to the dogs. I want you there 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.

Bruce starts shaking his head.

PAPPAGALLO

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.

ZED

What did he offer you?

BRUCE

He's bugging off to an outpost in the desert. He wants a few of us come with him.

Pappagallo joins them.

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

While we're 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 is trying to ignore him but Pappagallo is in his face and going for broke.

PAPPAGALLO

What's so special about Debby? You've got no one else in your life? No family? No parents?

Bruce turns and walks away. His manner suggests Pappagallo has touched a nerve. Pappagallo grabs him and stops him from leaving.

PAPPAGALLO

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. Zed helps Pappagallo up. Pappagallo nods and mutters a few words. He waves to Zed to join him in his office. Zed jumps and cheers.

CUT TO:

HOUSE INTERIOR, KITCHEN - MIDDAY