

as a book
ON THE BEACH
ON THE BEACH
NEVIL SHUTE

'FALLOUT is TERRIFIC'

Margaret Pomeranz - ABC - AT THE MOVIES

AVA GARDNER

Like Hollywood:
BIG STARS ARRIVE
IN AUSTRALIA

STANLEY KRAMER

FALLOUT

NEVIL SHUTE

GREGORY PECK

ROUGH TRADE PICTURES in association with SCREEN AUSTRALIA and FILM VICTORIA present **FALLOUT**
Director of Photography KATIE MILWRIGHT Editor BILL MURPHY Composer ANTONY PARTOS
Produced by PETER KAUFMANN and LAWRENCE JOHNSTON
Written and Directed by LAWRENCE JOHNSTON





'A GREAT PLACE TO MAKE A FILM ABOUT THE END OF THE WORLD' - Ava Gardner



HOLLYWOOD descended on Melbourne in the summer of 1959 bringing Ava Gardner and Gregory Peck to film the famous adaptation of 'ON THE BEACH', based on the international bestselling novel by renowned Author Nevil Shute. 'ON THE BEACH' was written following the devastating bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and Shute wrote it as a warning to the world of 'man and machines out of control'. Hollywood Director Stanley Kramer picked up the mantle to carry the message through in his film version shot on location here in Melbourne. The production of 'ON THE BEACH' was a 'media circus' and the public were thrilled at the sight of Ava Gardner,

Gregory Peck, Fred Astaire and Tony Perkins. Behind the scenes the film caused a major 'fallout' between Shute and Kramer, who had shared the same vision regarding the dangers of the nuclear threat to the world at the time. What started harmoniously, ended in acrimony for the two. FALLOUT is an exciting, fascinating and hugely entertaining documentary by internationally award winning Director Lawrence Johnston, (ETERNITY, LIFE, NIGHT). It not only uncovers the untold story surrounding 'On the Beach', but also explores the resonance of both the novel and the film in this Post-Fukushima age where Shute's predictions have become eerily prescient once more...



FROM OCTOBER 31 - EXCLUSIVE TO CINEMA NOVA

REVIEWS OF FALLOUT

Cinephilia Review

Synopsis: In 1959 Hollywood came to Melbourne in the form of director Stanley Kramer shooting the film adaptation of Neville Shute's novel, On the Beach, which posits an end of the world scenario in which nuclear war has erupted and Melbourne is waiting for an atomic cloud to travel south and kill the last surviving humans. Fallout is a documentary tracing the story of Shute himself, from his early days in Britain through to his emigration to Australia and the subsequent worldwide response to his novel and the film.

Here's another example of an excellent film picked up by only one local cinema (thank heavens for the Nova!). *Fallout* works on several interwoven levels – it is at once the story of a famous novelist whose life was filled with fascinating details. It is also a depiction of a more naïve and insular time when a Hollywood movie being made here in Melbourne was the talk of the town, as was the presence of famous stars Gregory Peck, Ava Gardner, Antony Perkins and Fred Astaire. And underlying all this is the ominous theme of Shute's novel which, when talking today about the still-relevant possible annihilation of the human species, is nothing short of compulsory reading for war-mongers everywhere.

The director's artful use of archival footage is impressive flowing along almost seamlessly into the main narrative. The film hits a nerve from the opening scene in which J.F.K. contemplates in a speech the possibility of nuclear annihilation and we then see the iconic image of a billowing exploding A-bomb. We are then taken back to a more genteel time in which we learn of Shute's early life in Ealing, England where he was an aviation engineer before pursuing writing. He then headed with his family to Oz and began churning out novel after novel with *On the Beach* being perhaps closest to his heart. Because of this, when the film's producers made script changes at odds with the novel, Shute became irate, which references another meaning of the film's clever title – a total falling out between the author and the director. The shooting of the film brought an even more renowned fallout, that between Ava Gardner and the press, the actress famously declaring Melbourne to be a good place to make a film about the end of the world.

Amongst the interviewees are Shute's daughter, Heather Mayfield, Kramer's widow, Karen, and a young star of *On The Beach*, Donna Anderson. Thankfully talking heads are not overdone. From various newspaper stills and archival footage we also get a fabulously nostalgic look at Melbourne in the 1950s including inquisitive Frankstonians turning out to watch the film's shooting.

The film also looks at the development of nuclear weaponry and the dropping of two A-bombs on Japan during World War 2. The initial devastation and deaths, followed by the ongoing tragedy of radiation sickness are shown in horrifying old news clips, and then references to ongoing nuclear testing in the USA and Australia drive the point home – a man-made Armageddon felt like a real possibility back then. At the time, Shute deliberately wanted to bring these issues to public consciousness and he ultimately achieved his aim, his famed novel sold 100,000 copies in six weeks and the film helped kick-start nuclear disarmament talks.

Fallout finishes with a sobering thought for an era in which many fanatical governments combine medieval attitudes with 21st century technological weaponry: perhaps Shute's then-futuristic novel, with its foreboding of tragedy still points to one possible, terrible future.

Melbourne Film Festival Review

It has always been noted a good documentary hones in on a specific angle of an important message. Rather than trying to fit a great deal of information into one film, taking the insights of something minute is often far more successful at touching the viewers. Lawrence Johnston returns with *Fallout*. Despite its all-encompassing title it does exactly that, honing in on a single and important message.

Fallout examines the life of English novelist and engineer, Nevil Shute, and his untold story of bringing awareness to the implications of nuclear war. The thought of nuclear war doesn't linger too obtrusively on this generation's mind but it certainly did during the Cold War. Hiroshima and its history during World War II is a well-documented mark on humanity's conscience. *Fallout* makes the right decision on giving sound documentation to this aspect without over-doing it. Nonetheless Johnston still manages to enable the right amount of shame and distress revealing film clips of Hiroshima survivors. All of them are scarred, on the outside and within. All of them are diseased and no light glints from their eyes. They have no hope because for them, their families and their infants are all infected with radioactive disease and know suffering is all they're headed for.

Fallout doesn't linger too long on tragedy. This documentary's objective isn't to simply bombard us with manipulation of ethos. There is a plethora of different voices providing facts and anecdotes. Paul Ham, noted Australian historian, talks vividly on the matter.

Karen Kramer, Stanley Kramer's wife, also talks exuberantly about Stanley Kramer's direction of the film and the events that followed. There is also more than enough footage and evidence. The most unexpectedly haunting example is director of the Manhattan Project, Robert Oppenheimer. The footage of him speaking, "Now I have become death, the destroyer of worlds. I suppose we all thought that, one way or another" sends chills.

Exploring Nevil Shute's life and the aftershock of his novel "On The Beach" is like turning over a rock and finding undiscovered minerals. Exotic, frightful but glittering minerals from a past we can't understand. *Fallout* is a wonderful journey through history.

Review Score: FOUR STARS (OUT OF FIVE)

Runtime: 86 Minutes

Brisbane Times Review

Lawrence Johnston's documentary *Fallout* skilfully weaves together several narrative strands related to *On the Beach*, the novel and the film. There is an account of best-selling author Nevil Shute, whose contemplation of atomic war produced a book with a vision of the future that still resonates. There is the reality of nuclear attack, as it was experienced in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

And there is the drive, more than 50 years ago, to make a film of *On the Beach* and re-create what Shute imagined, bringing Hollywood stars to Melbourne to portray a small cast of characters coming to terms with the end of human existence. Johnston has found complementary interview subjects who bring a range of perspectives to his narrative.

He has some powerful archival footage that highlights both intimate and historical perspectives, nostalgic moments and the horrific reality of the aftermath of nuclear war. The film has an involving sense of urgency as well as reflection and reconsideration: it's a story about the past but also about the present and the future.

Sydney Morning Herald

In 1959 Hollywood came to Melbourne with all its attendant glitter and star power. Respected producer and director Stanley Kramer ventured down under with leading stars Gregory Peck, Fred Astaire, Anthony Perkins and the glamorous Ava Gardner to shoot his film adaptation of *On The Beach*, a chillingly prescient novel about the end of the world. Kramer's film was a big budget adaptation of Neville Shute's cautionary doomsday novel set in the aftermath of a nuclear war that had devastated the northern hemisphere.

A poisonous radioactive cloud was slowly drifting southward, and the population of Melbourne were fated to be amongst the last survivors left on earth. The crew of an American submarine who are searching for remaining signs of life have landed in Melbourne, where they join the locals in the inevitable wait for the end. They had about five months left, and their lives were overshadowed by the pall of death.

Drawing upon extensive archival footage and some clips from the actual film as well as production material, Australian film maker Lawrence Johnston (*Eternity, Night*, etc) has assembled a fascinating, intelligent and very informative behind the scenes documentary about the film and the controversy it caused. While the beautiful Gardner was the main attraction for the press, the likes of Astaire and the affable Peck were afforded more privacy during their stay down under.

But *Fallout* also offers a detailed portrait of author Shute, an expatriate Englishman who became one of Australia's most successful authors of the time. This revealing documentary describes in detail how he was very critical of some of the changes Kramer had made to his novel. Kramer was well known for the social issues he had explored in many of his classic films like *The Caine Mutiny*, *High Noon*, *The Defiant Ones*, etc, and he wanted to deliver a potent anti-nuclear message with the film.

Not only is this terrific documentary a look behind the scenes of the making of a historically significant film, it is also a study of the impact the bomb has had on the 20th century as well. Johnston places the novel and the film in its historical context against the backdrop of the nuclear age and the very real fears of mass destruction in the age of nuclear proliferation. There are revealing interviews with Kramer's widow as well as Shute's daughter, and author and journalist Gideon Haigh, who provides a wealth of information about Shute and his engineering background and his novels. Johnston's material unfolds in clear and chronological fashion that makes for fascinating viewing. As well as clips from the film itself, Johnson has also incorporated a wealth of archival footage taking us behind the scenes of the production. And local audiences will get a buzz out of seeing some historical footage of the streets and sights of Melbourne at that time.

The title itself is very clever as it contains a number of ramifications including nuclear fallout as well as the disagreement between Shute and Kramer over the film. One of the very best documentaries of the year, and a must see for film lovers!