

## **“BUSHRANGER ORIGINS”: PRODUCTION NOTES**

### **ACQUIRING RAW REALISM**

An aspect of Bushranger Origins was my intent on the actors, featured extras and extras not looking ‘clean’. Even muddy rain-water was threatened to be applied in order to acquire a ‘lived-in’ appearance. Many of the players had ‘day and / or night jobs’, in corporations, headed by management who refused to allow their employees to grow full-face beards, sideburns or mutton chops. Real facial hair is always better than stuck-on wigs, moustaches and the like. While there were some male players who ‘bit the bullet’ in their quest to become a bushranger player, others came to the improv studio or location exterior, looking anything but nineteenth-century ready. A lot of attention was then paid to making them up. In some cases, hair-styling was needed. Hands were another aspect, commensurate with the ‘right’ / raw look. In jail-cell and court-room scenes I wanted manacle abrasions around necks and ankles. In some instances, male players actually acquired these, while getting into scene-playing, during rehearsal. One man became so immersed in ‘pulling on’ a convict-bushranger identity he elected to brutalise his ankles. Things suddenly became too real. Needless to say, an instant stoppage was put to that method of raw realism.

### **AUTHENTICATION / REALISM OVERKILL**

Bushrangers and bushranging was, by its very nature, a gun-related subject. Fortunately for the project and those who played in its drama scenes, I happened to discover the Victorian Re-enactment Society: a small group who are particularly versed in the bushranger period. Amongst the group were several registered Armourers; skilled in flint-lock pistols and musket usage. Most players, including women, didn’t mind having to be around, or, carry a gun. A few even delighted in finding out how noisy the old pieces were, when discharged, by way of black powder. There were one or two instances though, when over-zealous would-be bushranger types [males] couldn’t control their desire to try impulsive authentication. A break-out scene had two male Extras, as Police Constables: one of which was concealed behind a desk and the other behind a cupboard, were lying in wait for a historically illustrious bushranging gang-leader to enter a room. The gang-leader entered, pistols drawn. The Constable behind the desk suddenly leant out of the shadows, fired and retired. The gang-leader responded with a shot. The Constable, behind the cupboard emerged, fired. The sound of the discharge and smoke momentarily stunned the bushranging gang-leader player, who then lingered. The Constable player strode forward and proceeded to ‘seriously finish the gang-leader off’, with the butt of his gun; not content with having pretended to shoot him. His spur-of-the-moment extemporisation scared the hell out of the bushranging gang-leader player, who required lots of convincing to return to the set while the exuberant Extra was lectured about exaggerating the authenticity.