



movie of the week

Stone (1974), ABC2, 10 10pm

Sandy Harbutt's movie hasn't really improved with age but it hasn't deteriorated either, offering insights into generational issues 35 years ago and rightly deserving its niche in the hall of cult flicks.

Just as the current series *The Making of Modern Australia* reflects on cultural and social transitions, *Stone* contains sedimentary layers of time and tide involving the environment, the law and justice, extremes of rebellion and conservatism ... love, lust, pain, class issues, drugs and leather – the full monty – but with sufficient naffness to justify one critic remarking that “like a badly stained pair of Levi's, it needs the piss taken out of it”.

Unconventional cop Stone (Ken Shorter) goes undercover with a biker gang when members of the Gravediggers start falling like dominoes to an assassin with a dry sense of the Agatha Christies.

None of your walk-up biff at Sydney Airport back then, nor the mumbling ennui of Brando's Black Rebel dude, Johnny Strabler.

The action is choppy and sexy with a well-cultured sense of outsider appeal and a trawl through the closing credits throws up more than just the ensemble mob and hangers on (like this writer) attracted to the sleaze and glamour at Sandy's place,

perfectly situated in Bent Street, adjacent to the old Neutral Bay tip.

Where are they now? Shorter wrote some years ago from a miserably cold dressing room in Bournemouth – or somewhere on the English repertory circuit – still performing with commitment. Helen Morse (who also did the cozzies with Margaret Ure) will soon be seen in *The Eye of the Storm*. Rebecca Gilling has returned to Eden. Garry McDonald remains active and convincing, while Ros Speirs served time at Wentworth. There's also Annie Nalian, James C. Steele, a young Drew Forsythe and Leonora Cornall, who should have been a star ...

Unsung and seldom credited, Ed Jeffreys was the film's providore of “substances”. He, like the film, is long gone and far away.

Yet, *Stone* still inspires renegades and enthusiastic Japanese tourists to hit the highway alongside *Mad Max* bikers from time to time.

In 1999, a commemoration fang for the movie saw thousands of bikes hit the F2 Freeway heading north from Berowra.

But the conservatives win in the end. The old Forth and Clyde Hotel in Balmain, reopened for a scene in the film, has become a gentrified private residence.

Doug Anderson