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## Book Review: There's a Fax from Bruce, by Bruce Beresford and Sue Milliken 0

BY JAN KERSHAW ON JULY 30, 2016

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After reading this correspondence between film director Bruce Beresford and producer Sue Milliken, I am amazed that *any* movies ever make it to the screen. In the opening fax of the book (18 October 1989) Bruce discusses the right actor for the leading man in **Black Robe**. He wants to use Sam Neill but the Canadian financier doesn't and then there is speculation about Timothy Dalton (but there may be a Bond movie coming up), William Hurt (doing a play and not reading anything), same for John Malkovich and Bruce doesn't think Nick Nolte is right for the role.

Beresford displays a dry wit when speaking of film financiers: "Finance people often call the tune on casting and are renowned for their lack of knowledge". Canadian actor Lothaire Bluteau, virtually unknown on the international scene, eventually got the role. In spite of casting being sorted, it was still another 6-7 months before filming began.

Of course, by the time casting is underway many years work has already been done as the road from idea to screen is usually very long and winding. A saga I particularly enjoyed concerned two young, naïve producers from Queensland who wanted to make a film about women interned in a Japanese POW camp in WWII, which eventually became the movie **Paradise Road**. They say finance of \$10 million is all in place and provide Milliken with an outline of the story but seem very reluctant to provide the script.

Their naivety is on display when they ask Milliken and Beresford to sign a document agreeing not to disclose or copy their script before they will release it, something the producer and director have never agreed to before.

Nonetheless, Beresford has the script a month later and I love his response to the would-be producers: "I know you won't mind that I've had it duplicated and arranged for its sale around London at the tube stations." There are some touching stories recounted about the experiences the women had in the Japanese POW camps such as raising children in the camps and how difficult it was to stay alive but "even harder to stay alive and decent". Milliken was first approached about the project on 1 July 1992 and filming finally began in May 1996.

By including personal matters, such as the death of Milliken's beloved dog Rita only days after her mother in law died, books they've read, and inside industry gossip such as how Beresford felt about Goldwyn's promotion of **Black Robe** – "I complained about the pathetic press handouts...uniformed, misspelt, and seemingly aimed at a class of five-year-olds" – the reader can see the warm relationship between this producer and director and the strength and persistence required to get films to the screen.

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Through friendship, resignation, humour and “as deals collapse at the eleventh hour and stars go feral”, **There’s a Fax from Bruce** pulls aside the curtain to reveal the true nature of making films, shattering all our illusions about the glamour of the movie industry.

**There’s a Fax from Bruce** is available now in paperback and eBook through [Currency Press](#).

Reviewed by: Jan Kershaw

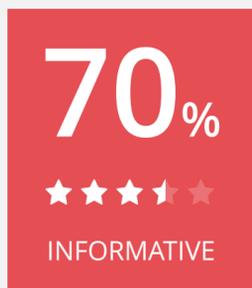
Rating out of 10: 7

Publisher: [Currency Press](#)

Release Date: June 2016

RRP: \$29.99 incl GST

- [Currency Press: There’s a Fax from Bruce](#)
- [Bruce Beresford’s website](#)
- [Sue Milliken’s website](#)



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