

They're rough, ready and real...



people
With PETER COSTER

The BUTTERCUP BUNCH

With self-effacing frankness the usually self-aggrandising Paul Makin of some radio and TV notoriety said to Kirk Douglas: "This is the first time I've ever met a legend."

A small smile twitched the corners of the mouth of the ageing Hollywood actor who as everyone must surely know by now plays two parts in the much-publicised "The Man From Snowy River." The film itself could prove to be an anti-climax.

However, when Douglas realised that the first interviewer he met was what would be politely termed a "starlover" he knew that the first press day for the \$3 million film up on the Buttercup Section of the high country was going to be a pleasant day even if it were cold and overcast.

Douglas has been overheard to say: "The only trouble with this film is that all the other guys have got the wrong accent." He, of course, speaks in an American accent and because of his two roles in the film as the old prospector "Spur" and Harrison ("who made his pile when Pardon won the Cup") some people think that he will dominate this Australian film.

If he does it will not be entirely incorrect as I discovered when taking a tippie in the Commercial Hotel at nearby Mansfield after the day's filming. There, in the snug, I met Shane Woods, from nearby Woods' Point, who said that this former goldmining town was founded by his relation, one Mabel Woods, an American.

I remarked on this feminine name and young Woods quickly pointed out that John Wayne's name was Marion before he changed it.

So an American was the founder of what was to become one of the richest goldmining towns in the blustering 1880s and another American and a German found gold on what was called the "Spur." So it appears that the researchers for "Snowy" have got their script right.

But, whatever influence Kirk Douglas has on the movie markets of the United States and Europe, the breathtaking interest in this film is the group of bush horsemen who muster at the station after "the colt from Old Regret had got away."

This rolling land on which "Snowy" is being filmed under the grey clouds of the Buttercup Section is mostly owned by three families, the Purcells, the Hearn's and the Lovicks. Jack Purcell said through his beard, from under his battered hat as in his Driz-A-Bone coat, gaiters, boots and spurs he led his horse onto the set: "When the film mob first arrived the make-up girl looked at 10 of us locals lined up on our horses, and said 'There's nothing I have to do.' She looked at Frank Hearn who had his old hat



GUS MERCURIO ... lightin' up.

pulled down over one eye and said 'you don't even have to change your hat.' Nothing much has changed up here since my dad was born here 100 years ago."

Frank Hearn chewed a fag end through his patchy, yellow beard and grunted: "Yeah, she kinda liked the hat." Jack Lovick, on a horse beside him, said how he'd taught the kid from Snowy River to ride.

Tom Burlinson, who plays the boy who becomes "The Man From Snowy River" has been with Jack Lovick and his sons John and Charlie for three months "learnin' to ride bushman style," said Jack sucking the rag ends of his moustache. "I've taught him gentwhine Orstralian balance ridin'."

The Lovicks have been up on the Buttercup for 100 years like the Purcells and run horse treks in the



The Wild Bunch from the Buttercup ... FRANK HEARN, JACK PURCELL and JACK LOVICK.



JOHN NASH ... ridin' tall.



BRIAN WALLACE ... ridin' hard.



TOM BURLINSON ... ridin' bush style.



TOMMY DYSART ... just learnin' to ride.

Bogong High Plains and Mt Howard. There's also a Mt Lovick. They run 104 horses. Bush horses. Stock horses who "snuff the battle with delight."

These bushmen and their sons are the "cracks who've gathered to the fray" for today's scenes on the set of the Harrison homestead that the film crew built in eight weeks—slab-sided huts and the shingle-roof house, the smithy's forge and the yard where Harrison bellows the reward of "one thousand pounds" for the colt and 40 horsemen boil out through a gate wide enough for five.

This is stirring stuff. The bushes and their horses do snuff the battle with delight and Douglas finds himself in front of this wildly whooping mob as they make the ranges ring.

In the afternoon Douglas lets his stand-in take the lead. Not because he can't handle this mob of yahooing bushmen. But, because if he comes a cropper director George Miller will get himself into a greater lather than the colt from Old Regret. Old "Regret," by the way, is name of the the mare from which

played the pokies. I kept my eye on one a them. It was doin' nothin'.

Just sittin' there like a broody hen. I wondered when it was gonna lay an egg. Then I put in me money and hit the jackpot." Everyone up here on "Snowy's" after that.

The horses mostly do their own stuff, but when they have to throw riders and drag them in the stirrups they get some special tuition from stunt co-ordinator Heath Harris, who did the horse stunts on "Breaker Morant" and head wrangler John Baird, who has worked on "The Last Outlaw," "The Getting of Wisdom" and "Against the Wind."

John Nash plays the "Tall Man." Tommy Dysart, who sang in "Jesus Christ, Superstar," is still learning to ride his horse. Gus Mercurio, who says he's always wanted to be "a horseman who can act rather than an actor who can ride," is rolling his own in the saddle.

Back in Mansfield where some of the wild bush horsemen take a drink at the end of the day the conversation doesn't seem to have changed much in spite of Kirk Douglas et al: "Ya know I went to one a them clubs in New South and

Fires, fights, falls and fun

Kirk Douglas' stand-in is English stuntman Bill Stacey who worked with Douglas 20 years ago on the "Devil's Disciple."

He says: "He's doing most of the riding. We're both very fit. But, I'll do the really rough stuff. Still he's game. If he can do it he will."

Stacy says that I should see his latest film "Road Games" where he drives a car pulling a boat which is crashed into by an 18-wheeler truck doing 120 kmh: "We had fun on that one."

Stacy says he's did stunts on "biggies" like "El Cid" and "Exodus."

He adds: "I do fights, fires, falls and cars. But, no motorbikes. I don't like motorbikes."



BILL STACEY ... fightin' fires, falls and cars