

screens, and even computer games being played by ravers. Each rave would have an escapist or science-fiction based name like 'Field of Dreams' or 'Cyber City 96'.

Early raves were sometimes advertised in youth magazines and on posters at universities and in music stores. They were more often promoted secretly through word of mouth and last-minute flyers, which gave raves a sense of mystery, rebellion and exclusiveness. Early raves were often alcohol-free events, but in time became associated with party drugs. This, along with the repetitively hypnotic nature of rave music, concerned many parents.

## MANGA AND ANIME

The rave scene also became an entry point for popular Japanese **manga** print cartoons and **anime** film animation, which seemed to fit in with the global and make-believe world of raves. Anime artists and techniques have had a great influence on animated television and film, reflecting the ever-more globalised nature of popular culture. Raves were more interactive than a typical concert or nightclub experience, so the ravers felt more involved in the 'music event' as opposed to a passive audience being sold a 'music product'.

## 'BIG DAY OUT'

In Sydney, the annual 'Big Day Out' music festival began in 1992 and eventually spread around the country, attracting local and international acts. The festivals brought a wide range of musical styles together, and are a revealing representation of the eclectic nature of popular culture in Australia from the 1990s onwards.

## TELEVISION IN THE NINETIES

### PAY TV AND THE SIMPSONS

Very few Australian households were without a television set in the 1990s. By 1995, the viewing public could choose to pay for extra channels through **subscription television** companies such as FOXTEL and AUSTAR. Regional centres began to develop their own programs for the specific needs of their communities as free-to-air regional stations were established. With a wider choice of programs, popular culture became more diffused. Producers of television programs were trying to catch the attention of a competitive market and, quite simply, people were not all watching the same programs any more. Regardless, some programs were more popular than others and productions from the United States still had a huge impact in Australia.

*Seinfeld* (1989–98) and *The Simpsons* (1989–) were not simply comedies; they also critiqued society and family life in the 1990s in a way that connected with many viewers. Australians also watched US sitcoms such as *Home Improvement* (1991–99), *Frasier* (1993–2004) and *Friends* (1994–2004). Drama series from the United States included *NYPD Blue* (1993–2005) and *ER* (1994–2009), while the science fiction world of *The X-Files* (1993–2002)

and the quirky murder mystery played out in *Twin Peaks* (1990–91) were also popular with audiences. Soap operas such as *Beverly Hills 90210* (1990–2000) and *Melrose Place* (1992–99) were clearly aimed at younger audiences who would copy the fashions of the appealing young stars. *Baywatch* (1989–2001) was also very popular—it featured an attractive cast and showcased the beach lifestyle Australians had become familiar with.

## AUSSIE DRAMA AND REALITY TV

New Australian drama included the mini-series *Banjo Paterson's The Man from Snowy River* (1993–96) and *Blue Heelers* (1994–2006), keeping Australians connected with life in rural areas past and present. The ABC continued to develop innovative Australian television with the dramatic *Police Rescue* (1989–96), the satirical *Frontline* (1994–97) and the comedy game show *Good News Week* (1996–2000). It also ventured into the world of reality television in producing *Sylvania Waters* (1992), which followed the daily lives of a family in suburban Australia. The success of the comedy series *Acropolis Now* (1989–92) indicated that Australians had matured enough to be able to laugh at aspects of their multicultural society. Lifestyle programs *Burke's Backyard* (1987–2004), *Healthy, Wealthy and Wise* (1991–96) and *Better Homes and Gardens* (1996–) all became popular additions to weekly viewing for many families.



SOURCE 4.5.8 The 1995 cast from *Baywatch* (1989–2001)

- 1 How might Australians identify or not with the characters in this promotional image?
- 2 What can you learn about the nature of popular culture in the late twentieth century from this image?

## FILM IN THE NINETIES

### GLOBAL AUDIENCES AND COMPUTER-GENERATED IMAGERY

The cinema remained an important aspect of popular culture in the 1990s despite the dominance of home entertainment mediums such as television and video cassette recorders. New 'multiplex' cinemas were built in many suburbs making it easier for people to see a range of different films at different times of the day and night.

Hollywood still dominated the cinema listings—only 15 per cent of films viewed were Australian made. However, one could argue that the productions coming out of Hollywood were not always telling US stories and many were intended for a global audience. For example, *The Matrix* (1999) was filmed in Australia, but was primarily a US production for a global audience. *Babe* (1995) was most definitely an Australian story filmed in Australia, but used facilities, production skills and technology from Britain and the United States in its making. The face of popular culture in film was becoming more diverse.

The new technology of the film industry was the use of computer-generated imagery (CGI), which gave producers and directors almost limitless potential to create special effects and fantasy characters and worlds. *Jurassic Park* (1993), *Forrest Gump* (1994), *Titanic* (1997) and *Star Wars: Episode I—The Phantom Menace* (1999) are examples of films that drew heavily on CGI technology. The success of the CGI-animated film *Toy Story* (1995) contributed to a boom in animated films utilising the same technology.

Other non-CGI films were also popular with audiences, including *Pretty Woman* (1990) and the British-made film *The Full Monty* (1997). Films that defined this decade

for many young people were *Reality Bites* (1994), which explored the lifestyle choices made by some generation Xers, and *Pulp Fiction* (1994), which combined crime, violence, comedy, flawed characters and references to pop culture within a non-linear storyline.

## 'MURIEL' AND 'PRISCILLA'

Australian films of the 1990s played an important role in reassessing Australian identity and presenting this to the world. *Strictly Ballroom* (1992) and *Muriel's Wedding* (1994) dealt with aspects of urban life in modern Australia. While still presenting many stereotypical Australian characters, these films were probably more recognisable to Australians than people overseas. Other Australian stories were being told, such as *Romper Stomper* (1992) starring Russell Crowe, which took a confronting look at racial violence in Australia. Russell Crowe also starred alongside Jack Thompson in *The Sum of Us* (1994), which followed the story of a father and his homosexual son—a story that would not have appeared on Australian screens in decades past.

Perhaps the most resounding example of Australia's cultural development in the 1990s lies in the making of *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (1994), a film about two drag queens and a transsexual from the city travelling through outback Australia to perform a cabaret show in Alice Springs. The film challenged national values and prompted Australians to redefine 'who they are'. Compared to its predecessors, generation X was more exposed to diversity in people's ethnicity, class, religion and sexual orientation. In some cases, people of this generation rejected popular culture en masse in search of their own identity, one that had become less distinctive or easily defined and more individualised.



SOURCE 4.5.9 Computer-generated imagery (CGI) contributed to the distinctive special effects shown in *The Matrix* (1999).