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Those Dashing McDonagh Sisters Australia's first female filmmaking team

Mandy Sayer

An entertaining and inspiring biography of three sisters to transformed Australian cinema.

The trailblazing McDonagh sisters were the first women in Australia to form their own film production company. Between 1926 and 1933, while they were in their mid-twenties, these sassy sisters produced four feature films and a number of documentaries. The youngest, Paulette, was at the time one of only five women film directors in the world. Phyllis produced, art directed and conducted publicity. And the eldest, Isabel, under her stage name Marie Lorraine, acted superbly in all the female leads.

Together, the sisters transformed Australian cinema's preoccupations with the outback and the bush – and what they mocked as 'haystack movies' – into a thrilling, urban modernity. Although the trio didn't set out deliberately to blaze a trail of feminism, their collective confidence and independence were striking at a time when there were few career options available to women.

In *Those Dashing McDonagh Sisters*, Mandy Sayer narrates the sisters' remarkable story, from daughters of a respected Sydney surgeon with a love of theatre and the arts, to their first feature film, *Those Who Love* (1926), an instant hit, to their controversial final film, *Two Minutes Silence* (1933). Today, their most famous feature, *The Cheaters*, is frequently screened at international film festivals around the world, most notably in New York and London, to rapturous reviews.

'Engrossing and entertaining. An inspiration for filmmakers and artists today and anyone who dreams.'
Jan Chapman

MANDY SAYER is an award-winning novelist and narrative non-fiction writer. Her work has been published in the UK, the United States, Brazil, Germany, Japan and China. Sayer's honours include the Vogel Award, the National Biography Award, the South Australian Premier's Award for Non-Fiction, *The Age* Book of the Year for Non-fiction and the Davitt Award for Young Adult Fiction. She was the recipient of the 2021 Hazel Rowley Literary Fellowship, which supported her research and writing of *Those Dashing McDonagh Sisters*. She lives in Sydney with her husband, writer Louis Nowra, and their rescue dog, Basil. For more information, visit mandysayer.com.au.

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