

CINESOUND VARIETIES

Year of release: 1934 • Screenplay: Vic Roberts and George D. Parker

A variety film made by director Ken G. Hall for Cinesound Productions, *Cinesound Varieties* was initially screened as a support to the full-length feature, *The Silence of Dean Maitland* (1934). Presented in two parts the first, "Evolution of a Waltz," has music director/composer [W. Hamilton Webber](#) and the 30-piece State Orchestra demonstrate the evolution of the waltz. The second part, "Nautical Nonsense" is a musical revue featuring more than 60 variety artists and musicians, including comedian [Fred Bluett](#) and his Boy Scouts (as Sydney pirates), [Tom Katz and His Saxophone Band](#), Angela Parselles (soprano), the Lowell Bros, the Cinesound Octette, and the Cinesound Beauty Ballet. The production was filmed at various locations in Sydney, including a showground, the State Theatre, and on the harbour. The Cinesound Studios could not be used as Charles Chauvel was making a feature there at the time.



Stills from the original motion picture. Source: [Australian Screen](#).

Reactions to the film from critics were either overwhelmingly negative or tended to ignore it. In its review of the world premiere of *The Silence of Dean Maitland* in Hobart on 12 May, for example, the *Mercury* reported merely: "There is light contrast in the effectively-presented Cinesound new variety show."¹ The *Sydney Morning Herald* critic was more circumspect, however:

Pace is the essence of a variety show, and pace is what *Cinesound Varieties* definitely lacks. The text which holds everything together is painfully weak, and the humour deplorable." The same critic did make favourable mention of Frank Hurley's camerawork, and in particular the "the extremely beautiful views of Sydney Harbour."²

The *Argus* reviewer was of a similar mind: "It is difficult to believe that *Cinesound Varieties* comes from the same studio as *The Silence of Dean Maitland* - if it did. In it all those things that should not be done are done and all that should be done are left undone."³ A little over a week later the *Adelaide Advertiser's* critic continued the attack: "A sadly overdressed musical revue which has inherited all the evils the talkies were ever heir to, except the American slang."⁴ Upon reflection in later years Ken G. Hall agreed. "It was written in a hurry and it was a bad effort. I'm not proud of it."⁵

By the end of the year *Cinesound Varieties* was being incorporated into cinema programmes around the country without *The Silence of Dean Maitland*. Typically presented as part of the support entertainment - along other shorts, reviews, newsreels, and cartoons etc, the film may have been shortened by this time (possibly with the first part removed).

¹ "Strand Theatre." *Mercury* (Hobart) 15 May 1934, 5.

² "*Cinesound Varieties*." *Sydney Morning Herald* 4 June 1934, 3.

³ "*Dean Maitland Wins: Fine Australian Picture*." *Argus* 18 June 1934, 5.

⁴ "This Week's Shows." *Advertiser* (Adelaide) 27 June 1934, 11.

⁵ Taylor, Phillip. "Ken G. Hall." *Cinema Papers* Jan. 1973, 81.

- 1934:** Strand Theatre (Hobart); 12 May - [world premiere]
 - 60 min.; black and white; sound
 - **Dir.** Ken G. Hall; **Prod.** Stuart F. Doyle (for Cinesound Productions); **Dir of Ph.** Frank Hurley;
M Dir. W. Hamilton Webber.
 - **Cast** incl. Fred Bluett, Tom Katz and His Saxophone Band, Angela Parselles, Lowell Bros, the Orlandos, Emanuel Aarons (organist), Clyde Ross, Cinesound Octette, and the Cinesound Beauty Ballet (20 local dancers)
 - The Strand Theatre season was also the world premiere of the feature film *The Silence of Dean Maitland*.
 - Filmed over two weeks on a budget of £2,500.

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 "CINESOUND VARIETIES," "JACK AND THE BEANSTALK."
 (Musical Revue) (All-Colour Musical Cartoon)

Examiner (Launceston) 24 May (1934), 8.

FURTHER REFERENCE

- "Australian Film: Proposed Musical Production." *Sydney Morning Herald* 15 Feb. 1934, 6.
 "Cinesound Varieties: Musical Travelogue Review." *Mercury* (Hobart) 19 Feb. 1934, 5.
 "Counting the Cash in Australian Films." *Everyone's* (Sydney) 12 Dec. 1934, 19-20.
 Taylor, Philip. "Ken G. Hall." *Cinema Papers* Jan. 1973, 81.

- ▶ *Cinesound Varieties* (1934) *Australian Screen*. 2 clips.



Sydney Morning Herald 9 Mar. (1934), 12.