

GETTING THROUGH

Year of release: 1929 • Screenplay: Jim Gerald

Essentially a burlesque on the new "talkie" phenomenon,¹ *Getting Through* is a silent comedy film accompanied by off-screen dialogue, including the voices of its three Australian stars - Jim Gerald, Essie Jennings and Phyllis Du Barry. The film's genesis can be traced back to 1928 when Gerald, by then one of Australia's most popular vaudeville and revue comedians travelled to America hoping to establish his career outside Australia. While in Hollywood he co-wrote and produced several two reel films including *Getting Through*. After returning to Australia in early-1929 Gerald toured that film as part of his live stage shows. First exhibited in Adelaide on 2 March the audience was led to believe the picture was a talkie. When the screen was raised at the film's conclusion Gerald, Jennings, Du Barry and members of Gerald's revue company could be seen still seated at a table with megaphones and scripts in hand, having provided all the dialogue live.²

The storyline depicts the troubles of an Australian family as they attempt to pass through an America customs office. "The inimitable Jim Gerald," writes an Adelaide *Advertiser* reviewer, "is held back and even when he appears as grandma is refused admission. When he gets through the audience is treated to a surprise view of studio life, and if the talkies ever repeat what is said behind the scenes somebody will be killed in the rush for the early doors"³



Source: National Library of Australia

Getting Through was reportedly filmed at the Texard Studios, located on Santa Monica Boulevard, Hollywood. The American actors identified to date were John Luttmann, Marion Mace. The film's first known public screening/performance in Australia was as a support to Gerald's revue *Not Likely*⁴ in Adelaide in early March 1929. At the end of July 1929 he included it during his company's minstrel revival at the Fullers' Theatre, Sydney (27 July-2 Aug.). *Getting Through* was also likely presented during Gerald's New Zealand tour for *Tivoli Celebrity Vaudeville* in late-1929, and possibly revived during the early-1930s.

MAJESTIC
THEATRE

Our New Programme A Riot
Another Startling New Show in 20
Scenes, and Includes

JIM GERALD'S "TALKIES"

A Comedy of the troubles of an immigrant and his family trying to get through the Immigration Office in U.S.A., entitled

"GETTING THROUGH"

This picture was taken at the Tee-Art Studios, Santa Monica Boulevard, Hollywood, during Mr. Gerald's recent tour through America, and he is supported by leading film stars, including

MISS MARION MACE and JOHN LUTZMANN.

Prices as usual. Plans at Theatre. Phone 2366.

News (Adelaide) 4 Mar. 1929, 2.

1929: Majestic Theatre, Adelaide; 2-8 Mar. [possible world premiere]
2 reels; black and white; silent (with live dialogue)
- **Dir/Prod.** Jim Gerald.
- **Cast** incl. Jim Gerald, Essie Jennings, Phyllis Du Barry, John Luttmann, Marion Mace.

FULLERS' THEATRE
JIM GERALD AND HIS COON ENTERTAINERS AND THE TALKIES

2.30 Daily. 8 Nightly

Popular Prices:—Mats.: 2/5½, 2/, 1/6, 1/. Week Nights: 8/, 2/, 1/. Sats. and Holiday Nights: 4/, 2/ (plus Tax). Phone MA3338 for Bookings.

Sun (Sydney) 27 July 1929, 4.

SEE ALSO

[Jim Gerald](#) • [Jim Gerald Revue Company](#)

¹ Gerald referred to his film as a "speakie." (See "Speakies," 4).

² Any male support voices in 1929 were likely acted by Gerald's brother [Lance Vane](#) and/or Reg Hawthorne, with the female parts being taken by [Letty Craydon](#) and/or Linda Foy.

³ "Majestic Theatre," 10.

⁴ *Not Likely* was first staged by Gerald in 1926.

FURTHER REFERENCE

"Majestic Theatre. Jim Gerald Again." *Advertiser* (Adelaide) 4 Mar. 1929, 10.
"New Show." Jim Gerald's 'Talkies'" *Sun* (Sydney) 28 July 1929, 6.
"Speakies' at Majestic: Clever Burlesque Presented." *News* (Adelaide) 4 March 1929, 4
"Stage, Filmland, and Vaudeville Topics." *Saturday Journal* (Adelaide) 2 Mar. 1929, 23.
Talkies Also at Majestic: Jim Gerald Burlesques New Movie Craze." *Register News-Pictorial* (Adelaide) 4 Mar. 1929, 13.



Above: **Essie Jennings**.

Source: Frank Van Straten. *Tivoli* (2003).



Right: **Phyllis Du Barry**.
Courtesy of Robert Colomb