

Bob Ellis, Currency Press

★★★★

**"THREE DOLLARS is
easily the best Australian film
this year"**

Rod Chester, The Daily Telegraph

"As rich an experience as life itself, so full of subtext, themes and messages"

Drew Turney, FilmInk Magazine

★★★★

**"A rare gem of a film...
(Connolly) delivers yet again
a film of substance,
tension and truisms"**

Nicole Watts, elevenmagazine.com

**"A drama of conscience,
raising important questions
of contemporary politics
and public morality"**

Evan Williamson, The Australian

★★★★★

"One of the richest and most credible glimpses of family life we've seen on screen for a long time... I was surprised to find myself laughing... I was just as surprised to find myself having a little weep"

Julie Rigg, ABC Radio National

"A powerful film that resonates long after the final credits have rolled. THREE DOLLARS encourages you to scrutinize your own beliefs"

Luke Benedictus, *The Sunday Age*

FROM ELLIOT PERLMAN'S BEST-SELLING NOVEL AND THE DIRECTOR OF *THE BANK*

Three Dollars.

IT'S ABOUT CHANGE

Search The Vault
Browse by Date
Showbiz Calendar
Slanguage
RSS feeds
Handheld Access

CHARTS AND DATA

TV Production
Film Production
Additional Charts and Data

RESOURCE GUIDES

Hi-Def
Visual FX

RELATED SITES

Broadcasting & Cable
Multichannel News
Video Business
DVD Exclusive



suggestion Eddie's fall from grace may be connected with her, but this strand follows a less predictable and more satisfying path.

Bulk of female company Eddie keeps is with wife Tanya (Frances O'Connor), an academic surviving on short-term contracts, and daughter Abby (Joanna Hunt-Prokhovnik). Pictured in well-staged flashbacks as students with mutual passion for punk-era group Joy Division, Eddie and Tanya's relationship hasn't exactly gone stale; but mortgage payments, job insecurity and the financial pressure of caring for a sick daughter have taken some of the sheen off.

When Eddie is assigned to survey vacant land earmarked for residential development, he refuses to declare it free of toxic waste he's found. His boss Gerard (David Roberts) decides Eddie is a disposable troublemaker. When Tanya is suddenly axed from the academic payroll, Eddie is left with only the titular sum of money in his bank account.

Eddie is presented as a man whose decency and principles cruelly contribute to his downfall. Screenplay seems to say that these once-desirable assets are now liabilities in a world of bottom-line business managers. In the final act, however, pic loses its well-measured rhythm with Eddie becoming part of the skid-row community in record time.

Film's worthwhile message about the fragile line between just making ends meet and losing it all is abruptly switched to overdrive here, and plays like a rush tactic to bring Eddie's connection with Amanda full circle.

Actors are impressive, especially O'Connor as Tanya, whose transition from sparkly student to worried wife provides a touching counterbalance to Eddie's unflagging optimism. In his third stint with Connolly, following "The Bank" and the Connolly-produced "The Boys" (1997), Wenham makes a solid Everyman as Eddie, though a little too low-key in spots.

Tech package is pro across the board, with *d.p.* Tristan Milani's warm lensing of family scenes contrasting with the clinical blandness of office environs. Composer Alan John's haunting variations on a basic theme are also standout.

Camera (Cinevex color), Tristan Milani; editor, Nick Meyers; music, Alan John; production designer, Luigi Pittorino; costume designer, Sandi Cichello; sound (Dolby Digital), Andrew Ramage; assistant director, Brendan Campbell; casting, Jane Norris. Reviewed at Dendy Opera Quays, Sydney, Feb. 11, 2005. Running time: 119 MIN.

Variety is striving to present the most thorough review database. To report inaccuracies in review credits, please [click here](#). We do not currently list below-the-line credits, although we hope to include them in the future. Please note we may not respond to every suggestion. Your assistance is appreciated.

Date in print: Mon., Apr. 25, 2005, Weekly

- * [Print this](#) | [Email this](#)
- * [View most popular articles, reviews](#)
- * [License / syndicate this](#)

[Back to top](#)

[The Last Sign](#) 4/11/05 5:54pm

[Cachimba](#) 4/11/05 5:53pm

[Queens](#) 4/11/05 5:51pm

[The Children](#) 4/11/05 5:49pm

[Brice De Nice](#) 4/11/05 5:46pm

[Fragile](#) 4/11/05 5:30pm

[Empire of the Wolves](#) 4/11/05 4:10pm

[The Longest Penalty in the World](#) 4/8/05 12:46pm

[Smile](#) 4/7/05 6:00pm

[Seoul Raiders](#) 4/4/05 5:24pm

[Current Reviews...](#)

BOX OFFICE TOP TEN

Sponsored by:

Weekend: Apr. 22 - 24, 2005

* in millions

1	The Interpreter	\$22.8	6	Fever Pitch	\$5.5
2	The Amityville Horror	\$13.7	7	Sin City	\$3.7
3	Sahara	\$9.0	8	Guess Who	\$3.5
4	A Lot Like Love	\$7.6	9	Robots	\$3.4
5	Kung Fu Hustle	\$6.7	10	King's Ransom	\$2.1

[view full chart](#)

[view box office news](#)

FROM ELLIOT PERLMAN'S BEST SELLING NOVEL AND THE DIRECTOR OF THE BANK

Three Dollars.

IT'S ABOUT CHANGE



"It's a provocative portrait of contemporary Australia... It's got plenty of charm and wit and it's highly entertaining. But, taking its cue from Elliot Perlman's provocative novel, it's also a searing portrait of John Howard's Australia... It should become part of many a lively debate"

Peter Thompson, Sunday



"A beautifully made snap shot of contemporary Australia... There should be more Australian films made like this one"

Megan Spencer, The Movie Show



"A refreshingly honest and compassionate film"

Jaimie Leonarder, The Movie Show

"One of the richest and most credible glimpses of family life we've seen on screen for a long time"

Julie Rigg, ABC Radio National

"An appealing fable of shattered illusions"

Colin Fraser, SX

"A powerful film that resonates long after the final credits have rolled. THREE DOLLARS encourages you to scrutinize your own beliefs"

Luke Benedictus, The Sunday Age

"A high class film"

Sunday Herald Sun

"This is the film Australia has been waiting for: a thoroughly, absolutely credible check on how we now live as a nation"

Noel Purdon, The Adelaide Review

"I have seen nothing finer from Wenham. His Eddie has astonishing depth and sensitivity.

This is a film of profound and troubling ideas, with many scenes of heartrending power... A drama of conscience, raising important questions of contemporary politics and public morality...

The film can be taken as a sorrowful critique of the unfeeling market forces that rule our lives and as a touching study of friendship and survival"

Evan Williams, The Australian

"Robert Connolly is a natural master of film... A fascinating work, filled with little treasures of observation, performance and technique... Engaging and a pleasure to watch"

Andrew L. Urban, Urbancinefile



"A rare gem of a film... (Connolly) delivers yet again a film of substance, tension and truisms"

Nicole Watts, elevenmagazine.com



"THREE DOLLARS is easily the best Australian film this year"

Rod Chester, The Daily Telegraph

"I can't think of an Australian film which has captured marital happiness so truthfully"
"Wit as well as warmth"

Sandra Hall, The Sydney Morning Herald

"David Wenham's near-flawless performance gives the sense of seeing an entire life on screen"

Rob Lowing, The Sun-Herald

"Wenham's performance, a subtle blend of resilience and quiet desperation, is one of his best... Not since Lantana has a film taken us so far into the headspace of an Australian man"

Lawrie Zion, The Australian

"A powerful film that resonates long after the final credits have rolled... THREE DOLLARS encourages you to scrutinize your own beliefs"

Luke Benedictus, The Sunday Age

"Painfully funny"

Vicky Roach, Marie Claire

"One of the best Australian films yet made"

Bob Ellis, Encore Magazine



"Could be the best film produced in Australia this year. A story worthy of a nation's rapture"

Emily Williams, Scene

FROM ELLIOT PERLMAN'S BEST SELLING NOVEL AND THE DIRECTOR OF THE BANK

Three Dollars.

IT'S ABOUT CHANGE



David Stratton Reviews Three Dollars

★★★★★ 1/2

Three Dollars is the latest film from Australian director Robert Connolly who brought us *The Bank*. He's working again with David Wenham who plays Eddie a man in his late 30's who works in a government office responsible for assessing land earmarked for development. One day he loses his job and is escorted from the building. He recalls that every 9½ years he has crossed paths with Amanda, once the little girl next door he used to play with.

Three Dollars is an adaptation by director Robert Connolly and author Elliot Perlman of Perlman's successful novel and it's a character-driven piece made with intelligence and wit. Eddie is an unfailingly decent and kind man, but often a rather ineffectual and indecisive one; the women in his life, Tanya, Amanda, even his daughter, Abby, have it all over him; and yet you really like Eddie, thanks to David Wenham's typically fine performance.

The film is about the small things in life which add up to become big things - like The Beatles said,

... *Three Dollars* is sometimes funny, something scary, sometimes sad, sometimes hopeful ...

Eddie is married to the lovely and brilliant Tanya, Frances O'Connor, and they have a delightful daughter, Abby, Johanna Hunt-Prokhovnic. Eddie remembers how he met Tanya and how, despite their love for one another, they've made compromises over the years.

Eddie also remembers the occasions he met Amanda, Sarah Wynter, whose father is the rich developer whose land he has been assessing.

At last, a quality Australian film to offset the recent drought!

Life's what happens when you're busy making other plans, and that's Eddie's problem. The film is a brutal reminder of how close to the financial edge many Australians are living in these unhealthy times, and how the resulting stress compromises youthful idealism.



This is a fine local production and the family scenes are especially good, thanks in no small part to a terrific performance from young Johanna Hunt-Prokhovnic, who is clearly a natural.

Like real life, *Three Dollars* is sometimes funny, something scary, sometimes sad, sometimes hopeful - and I hope the film finds the audience it deserves.

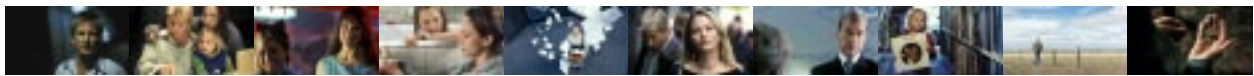
Robert Connolly in Interview & *Three Dollars* Review By Peter Thompson Sunday Channel 9, April 24, 2005

The continuing barney about what kind of films we should make in Australia is essentially the eternal conflict between commerce and art. The surprising thing is that so many of our box office hits cover both bases: *Breaker Morant*, *Strictly Ballroom*, *Shine*, *Lantana* and so on. What it boils down to for most Australian filmmakers is that if they're going to devote two or three years of their lives to a project and possibly starve in the process, then it had better be something they care passionately about. That's certainly the case with Robert Connolly's *Three Dollars*. Like his previous film *The Bank*, it's got plenty of charm and wit and it's highly entertaining. But, taking its cue from Elliot Perlman's

FROM ELLIOT PERLMAN'S BEST SELLING NOVEL AND THE DIRECTOR OF *THE BANK*

Three Dollars.

IT'S ABOUT CHANGE



provocative novel, it's also a searing portrait of John Howard's Australia.

Eddie Harnovey is a university graduate with a good job in the government bureaucracy. He's also the loving father of a bright little girl called Abby and his wife is the tantalizingly beautiful, temperamental Tanya, the girl he fell in love with as a student and has loved ever since.

about a guy that's trying to stay true to what he believes and what he feels is right in a world that's kind of bombarding him with challenges."

The crunch comes when Eddie is asked to push through an environmental assessment on a dodgy residential development. He begins sticking his nose in where it's not wanted, finding evidence of dangerous chemical contamination.

RC "I really wanted to, to make a film that brought people to tears, you know, that actually took people on an, a complex emotional journey that could break your heart, you know, that would have the ups and down of life and kind of leave you with optimism, a complex optimism about life rather than necessarily the kind of, you know people in *The Bank* were cheering when the bank was destroyed."

Robert Connolly "I feel very strongly that we are supposedly coming out the end of 10 years of great economic growth, yet why are people feeling so economically uncertain? Uncertain enough to vote at the last election over the fear of interest rates going up, you know. Why is it that people feel that they are, a fear that they won't be able to educate their children or that the hospital system will let them down?"

RC "I do feel that more than ever we have economic pressures that are coming to bear in a way that asks us to turn a blind eye to worrying about things beyond ourself in order to protect ourself."

Eddie's boss, Gerard, isn't interested in his problems. Things are complicated by some personal history. Gerard was Tanya's lover briefly in their university days.

While *Three Dollars* concerns itself with the big picture, the world Eddie and his family live in, the story comes down to very specific, intimate moments.



Three Dollars is a deceptive film, a bit of a fist in a velvet glove. On the surface, it's got a witty, slightly absent-minded quality. Eddie is a man constantly surprised by the weird coincidences and improbability of everyday life. He loves it all but sometimes it gets to be a bit of a challenge. At the same time, he senses that the society around him is unraveling. People are getting increasingly insecure and benevolence is in short supply. It's a provocative portrait of contemporary Australia as well as being a highly entertaining movie and it should become part of many a lively debate.

"I really wanted to, to make a film that brought people to tears ..."

RC "I guess the ambition of the film was to tell the story of a family man and a good man (played by David Wenham) in tough times, you know, and lets make a story

The pressure mounts when Abby gets sick and there's the regular reappearance of Eddie's childhood sweetheart Amanda.

FROM ELLIOT PERLMAN'S BEST SELLING NOVEL AND THE DIRECTOR OF THE BANK

Three Dollars.

IT'S ABOUT CHANGE



Bob Ellis on Three Dollars

Few films have the abundance, depth and inner life of a novel or show us in a couple of hours a person's whole existence thus far. This film does it with Eddie Harnovey, a redundant public servant smashed in his life by global economics and the turning of the times, and exploring with existential diffidence the grimy netherworld the New Poverty has brought him to. With a thousand small vivid brush-strokes we see the life he is losing – mortgaged, husbanding, fathering, suburban, tenderly marital, quarrelling over Shakespeare and brands of cheese, an intricate glowing patchwork of shared jokes and sensuous night encounters and kindergarten silliness, the love of a couple who know each other well and made a child and love her too, love her more than they ever imagined – and the life of garbage-grubbing and alleyway fights and endless dirt that is to come.

He is innocent as charged, of course. He only sought to do his job well, to find, as a chemical engineer, a polluted rural meadow unsuitable for human dwellings

and therefore property development, and was, because of the turning of the times – more development, less chemical engineers, more defaulted loans, more innocents out on the street – hoist on his own integrity. But his punishment, as in Kafka, is remorseless, total, implacable and also eerily righteous. 'This is the real world, Eddie,' his wife Tanya tells him, 'and you can't save it.' And should he listen to this, and walk away from wrong? Or should he stay and suffer evil, while fighting for the right? 'Be elusive, but don't walk far,' is the motto he thinks he lives by, but he's not sure what it means.

No film I have ever seen has shown *happiness* more thoroughly. From Eddie's own childhood happiness in the cupboard with little Amanda, his returning good angel (be elusive, she tells him, but don't walk far) to the verbal mistakes that make his little daughter Abby carve Tamil Tigers out of cheese, we see the glances, face-pulls, hugs and chuckles, and the pursuit of a thought into its Lewis Carroll extremities that add up in sum to a marriage, and a family, that works. Marriage as conversation, marriage as

FROM ELLIOT PERLMAN'S BEST SELLING NOVEL AND THE DIRECTOR OF THE BANK

Three Dollars.

IT'S ABOUT CHANGE



a kind of oral Scrabble game, marriage as spiritual tickling, we see here in all its intimate relish and sweet remorse for almost the first time in cinema, at least in this abundance.

But outside of marriage, in the real world Eddie can't save, small kindnesses are looked on as bizarre, outrageous aberrations. Eddie picks up a woman who has fallen down in the street. He helps her to a table and gets her an aspirin. He makes himself late for a crucial appointment by doing this. And we, the audience, think him crazy for taking this risk, so moved and changed are we, even we, by the turning of the times. Nick, a tramp on the street, offers him boundless kindness, showing him how to scrounge food, and rescuing him when he is beaten up on a railway station, and we find this benevolence kind of spooky so far have we strayed from humanity ourselves; even we. In marriage we are permitted to be boundlessly generous, witty, sweet and caring; and, it seems, nowhere else. When asked by a government psychiatrist how he came to feel depressed, Eddie says, 'This is how healthy people feel in unhealthy times.'



And this is a film that shows us our unhealthy times. Like Kafka it shows that guilt has no just cause, or it need not have just cause. It lies in wait for us anyway, like migraine, or morning sickness, or bureaucracy.

Gerard, the dim unfeeling bureaucrat, moved by jealous dark tides – Eddie won Tanya at university and he did not – is one of the film's rare joys. The pretence of understanding kindness with which he urges Eddie to



put his life in cardboard boxes and leave the office in an orderly manner wonderfully portrays the cruel blandness that now, like the great Nothing in *The Neverending Story*, is sweeping across Howard's Australia, nullifying us all.

This is one of the best four or five Australian film thus far made. It gets in country childhood, campus romance, auditioning for Shakespeare, hospital queues, epilepsy, bureaucracy, economic rationalism, industrial pollution, corporate corruption, casual adultery, nervous breakdown, the joy of parenting, the language of love, the kindness of strangers and the funny things little kids say without seeming to rush or neglecting to give us long witty dialogues that show us love, and love's troublings, at work. As dialogue it has not been bettered. As direction, and the warmth it adds to the ordinary, it is Oscar standard, and, better than that, Louis Malle standard. As a screenplay it is a model that shows us just about everything there is to learn about the craft of screenwriting.

And here it is.



Arenafilm Filmography

Arenafilm has produced 7 feature films since its inception in 1987, earning a reputation in the area of high-end quality Australian cinema. Its expertise in development and production has seen films receive countless awards and selection in all major international film festivals.



The Navigator: A Medieval Odyssey (1988)

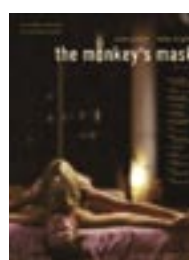
Director: Vincent Ward

"A simple, beautifully etched fable of faith and perseverance ... told with elegant conviction ... a great and charismatic adventure."

New York Post

"It is a rare feat of imagination that shames the usual run of predictable science fiction movies"

San Francisco Chronicle



The Monkey's Mask (2000)

Director: Samantha Lang

"... a shrewdly updated take on the Hammett / Chandler maverick private detective that never for a moment seems contrived or trendy"

Todd McCarthy, VARIETY

"Original and exploding with its unique flavours, *The Monkey's Mask* is a powerful and entertaining trip that ventures into territories beyond the comfort zone."

Urban Cinefile



Sweetie (1989)

Director: Jane Campion

"An often hilarious, often moving account of the emotional havoc wreaked by an unstable, volatile and demanding teenage girl ... the effect is often disturbing, often exhilarating, and always original."

Time Out, UK

"Spectacular. It's a movie quite unlike any other you're likely to see. *Sweetie* is an original."

New York Times



The Bank (2002)

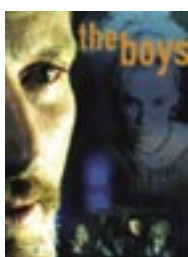
Director: Robert Connolly

"... a sparkling, tremendously entertaining white-collar crime drama likely to strike a chord in all sorts of places ..."

Peter Thompson, Sunday

"The most ambitious, literate and thought-provoking film to emerge from this country."

Australian Style



The Boys (1997)

Director: Rowan Woods

A powerful and disturbing portrait of three brothers and the women in their lives...

"... extraordinary performances, and an intensity that is at times almost unbearable ... a flawless ensemble."

David Stratton, The Movie Show



Three Dollars (2005)

Director: Robert Connolly

"At last a quality Australian film... sometimes funny, sometimes scary, sometimes sad, sometimes hopeful"

David Stratton, At The Movies

"As rich an experience as life itself, so full of subtext, themes and messages"

Drew Turney, FilmLink Magazine