

Reunion of the three wild men

ROD TAYLOR is back in Australia for his first movie role here in 20 years. "It's so good to be back," he roars. "I really bloody well mean it."

Taylor is starring in "The Picture Show Man." I spoke to him on location in Tamworth, north-west New South Wales, during the first week of filming.

The rain was teeming down and obviously the weather had been getting to Taylor. He arrived on the set booming forth in a twangy American accent.

After being away for so long his Australian accent seems well and truly lost, which is fortunate in this case because he's playing an American.

His old buddy John Meillon put Taylor's temper down to cooling his heels in a hotel room because of the weather. "That gets you down, you know."

But his spirits soon soared when we started talking about the movie. And one of the reasons is this film is a reunion for three Australian "wild men" – Meillon, Taylor and John Ewart.

According to Taylor, "Big Johnny Meillon, Johnny Ewart and me were three wild men in the good old days some 20 years ago. Er... I was 11."

"In those days we were in everything together – in theatre, in radio, in trouble."

Now they are all in "The Picture Show Man," with Meillon and Taylor playing as rival picture show men.

Ewart plays a piano man. He was cast, says producer Joan Long, on the strength of his giant-sized performance in "Sunday Too Far Away."

The other piano man is played by Garry McDonald (Norman Gunston).

"You know," Taylor confides, "I'm genuinely proud to be part of this movie and to think I might be helping the Australian movie industry along."

"I'm so glad the Government has finally decided to do something to help the industry."



Rod Taylor: Back with a new accent

He adds, "This movie is based on fact, you know. The fact is that the movies actually got going in this country in the '20s."

"It would be nice if a movie with a theme like this could be the one to really put the clincher on the fact that Aussie movies are up and at 'em again."

And, says Taylor, he'd like to be in a couple more movies with the two other Australian "wild men."

"Did you see that chemistry between us out there?" he booms after one scene. "Well, that's what it's all about."

– SUSIE EISENHUTH