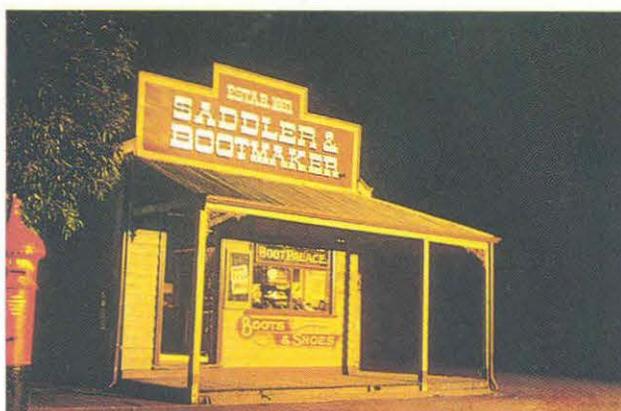


honesty: every coffee-break rigidly excluded from the calculation.) Audiences super-friendly, enthusiastic and participating: so all much enjoyed by a Tabman who would now like to record a formal vote of thanks to all those who organised the continuous lubrication of his vocal cords.

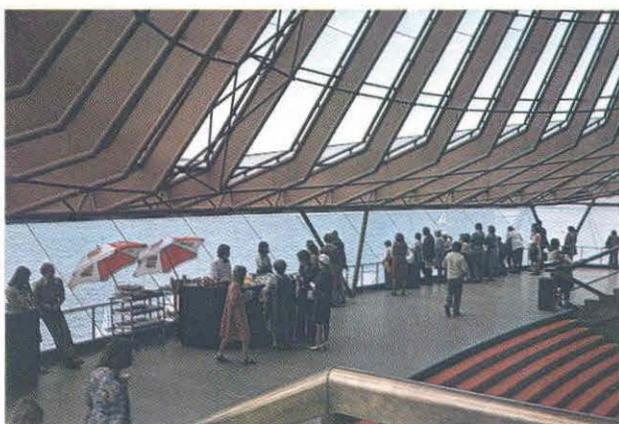
Sail-shells mobile

Sydney Opera House is a delight to look at and look from. It is a maritime theatre—no, *she* is a maritime theatre for Sydney Opera House is a ship and her sail-shells can only be fully enjoyed from the floating mobility of a harbour ferry. And from the foyers, bars, restaurants and circulation areas (including the Green Room) the harbour—its water, its sky and its shipping—are omnipresent.



placed inside a gauze box-set on a thrust stage without impairing audience contact. Which must be quite a tribute to the architect. And to the actors.

or the encouraging air of quiet elegance in their site offices that promotes confidence in the Victorian Arts Centre. It is certainly nothing to do with the three theatre auditoria being substantially underground, topped by a 140 m spire. I just cannot put a logical finger on it, but my gut-feeling is that this project has everything going for it. Perhaps it is that they have got the proportions right without obvious compromise. Anyroad, I have started collecting pennies in a redundant demijohn to raise the fare for a look-see on completion in 1987.



Gauzed thrust

Only Bellini or Donizetti could have done anything for the Duchess of Malfi and they did not. Nimrod set the play inside and outside a gauzed box with sliding sides. I cannot say whether this catalysed the Duchess because I arrived late (an impromptu theatre conference in a house of public refreshment) and departed early (Oh, Australia, your steaks, your sea-foods your vintages!). But I sat long enough—in a side-back rather than my allotted centre-front—to be convinced that actors can be

Designing NIDA

Encouraging student design exhibition at Sydney's National Institute of Dramatic Art. Evidence of ability not just to control texture and paint but to design practical sets that handle, mask and light. It was Mark Wager's *Epitome of Romantic Realism* that really set my gels a-tingling. Come back paints and prosceniums, all is forgiven.

Arts underground

It is not just the answers of the building team

Sound light settling

A short 300-mile drive up country from Melbourne is the pioneer settlement of *Swan Hill* on the Murray River. It takes more than the promise of a Sound and Light Show, even in such a romantic spot, to raise a gleam in a Tabman's oculars . . . but just try an offer of dining aboard the Paddle Steamer *Gem* on Wichetty Grub Soup and Squatter's Special (now, whereas all TABS readers will know what a wichetty grub is, perhaps I should explain that Squatter's Special is Eye fillet stuffed with Yabbie Tail, served on damper with a creamed Oyster Sauce). Suitably wine'd, but before tackling the Plum Pudding, I was led ashore, seated on a sort of motorised cart and driven gently off into the night. And suddenly there was pure theatrical magic. Speech to describe, sounds to evoke and light to reveal the early settlement life. Each building cross-fading

