

*“...the Australian outback's natural landscape unfolds  
like a painted dream below her single engine, self-piloted airplane...”*  
-- Austin Chronicle

# Flyabout

SOME THINGS YOU CAN ONLY SEE FROM ABOVE

*“A courageously honest self-portrait.  
Cool adventure. Awesome footage.”*  
-- Robert Rodriguez, Director

*“A masterpiece! Aviation is richer  
for her accomplishment.”*  
-- Max Trescott, 2008 National CFI of the Year

*“A gem of a film!”*  
-- Aviation for Women magazine



*“So thoughtful...The film is wonderful.”*  
-- William Hurt, actor

*“You don't need to be a pilot  
to love this one.”*  
-- Rinker Buck, author

[www.flyaboutmovie.com](http://www.flyaboutmovie.com)

A documentary film by Monika Petrillo

## PUBLICITY PACKAGE

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**FLYABOUT**  
a documentary film by Monika Petrillo

**SYNOPSIS:**

*Flyabout* is the heartfelt, personal story of a young woman who gets a pilot's license, inspires her father to do the same and, together with him, follows her dream to fly a plane around the continent of Australia. Her introduction to the Aboriginal Walkabout brings on the realization that piloting the plane won't be the hardest part of the trip.

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## FLYABOUT

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### **SYNOPSIS:**

Monika Petrillo has never been a person to postpone her dreams. So at 24 she decided to get a pilot's license. A year later, her father surprised her by learning to fly as well. As the movie begins, they take off together to circumnavigate the continent of Australia.

The only woman pilot in a group of eleven people, Monika experiences the true freedom of flight above one of the most untouched places on earth. As she becomes exposed to Australian culture, she learns about the Walkabout, a spiritual journey the Aborigines have valued for tens of thousands of years. That inspires her to use this trip to take stock of her own spiritual household. The first step toward that end is to relax. But that proves much more difficult than she thought: a tight schedule, careful and constant maintenance of the aircraft, pot-holed dirt runways, mechanical failures, sudden loss of visibility and unpredictable crosswinds keep her both too busy and too uptight. But what impacts her most is the conflict that arises between her father and herself.

They had both underestimated the consequences of her father's limited experience as a pilot, and that quickly takes its toll—not only on the collaboration in the cockpit, but also on their relationship. Monika struggles with feelings of responsibility on the one hand versus doubts about contradicting her father, who has always been her role model, on the other.

As their plane continues its path across the outback, the young woman slowly comes to realize that personal and spiritual growth can't be forced. Instead of searching so hard, she starts to look out the window. And that simple action is the first step towards learning the real lesson.

*Flyabout* is an intimate, personal story about a pilot's journey around Australia. It is the story of a young woman growing into an adult and coming to grips with how generational roles change over time.

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**BIOGRAPHY:**

**Monika Petrillo** - Writer/Director/Producer

Born in Munich, Germany, *Monika Petrillo* moved to the United States in 1991 and has established herself as a highly respected and acclaimed script supervisor in the industry. Working as writer, director, DP, editor and producer, *Flyabout* marks her directorial debut.

**FLYABOUT**  
a documentary film by Monika Petrillo

**CAST AND CREW:**

**The Flying Group**



Freddie and Pat Cuthbert  
Jerry and Melba Kooyman  
Elliott and Maxine Schiffman  
Uwe and Jacqueline von Manteuffel  
Wolf von Manteuffel  
Mal Shipton

Writer/Director

Monika Petrillo

Editor

Monika Petrillo

Producer

Monika Petrillo

Addl. Camera

Wolf von Manteuffel

Uwe von Manteuffel

Jacqueline von Manteuffel

Graphics and titles

James Okumura

Color Correction

Post Logic Studios

Colorist

Kris Santa Cruz

Post Production Audio

Widget Post Productions

Sound Supervisor

Anne Slack

Re-recording Mixer

Brian Slack

Sound Editor

Dennis Twitty

Technical Assistance

Blake White

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## FLYABOUT

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### **DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT:**

The other day, as I was finally cleaning out the box in my garage that's labeled "FLYABOUT," I came across a piece of scrap paper. "Every day is a journey, and the journey itself is home – Jerry Kooyman," it said. I thought back to the moment when my pilot buddy had made that comment. We had just run for cover under the wings of our airplanes, and slashing down rain was about to seriously change our plans of circumnavigating the continent of Australia. I remember that his comment sounded intriguing to me, but I didn't quite understand what he meant by it.

Seven and a half years later, I have finished *Flyabout*, a documentary film about that same trip. Part of me still can't believe that I am done. I worked on this movie so long that I ended up eventually having to change my head credits because they still showed my maiden name. And I now have two small children. When I went to Australia, I was practically still a child myself.

In 1998 I was a young, eager script supervisor who had worked in the film industry for a while, always knowing that one day I would direct a movie myself. But none of the fictional ideas I had come up with ever seemed good enough to me to be turned into that first film. In the meantime, completely unrelated, first I and then my dad had each gotten a pilot's license. And soon thereafter we finally fulfilled our dream to visit Australia.

"Now it makes sense to go there because we will be able to see the whole continent," my dad said. Most people who travel by car end up only seeing the East Coast between Sydney and Brisbane, maybe take a trip up to the Barrier Reef. But we wanted to explore the rest of Australia, the part without all the tourists, the outback. And co-piloting a small single-engine airplane allowed us to do exactly that.

I got to know Australia from the air. A lot of the images in my memory and in my movie are of the amazing shapes and colors the continent is blessed with. Sitting in a Cessna 172 feels a little bit like riding a bicycle through the air. It's very immediate. You feel like you can reach out and touch the puffy clouds outside your window, the flock of running sheep or the breeching whale beneath your wing. So, in addition to traveling to parts of the country even many Australians have never seen, I got to enjoy them from a unique perspective.

Later on, as I read more about Aboriginal culture, I learned about the so-called "song lines" that are spread out across the country as a result of the creator beings singing their songs of creation. I know they didn't have airplanes 40000 years ago; but nevertheless, the way they describe their country and how all living things are

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connected through lines, it seemed to me as if they were able to look at it from the same bird's eye perspective that I was.

The idea to capture this perspective on film first arose as I replaced the battery of my still camera in preparation for the trip down under. I stopped and said to myself: "Wait a minute. I want to make a film. Why search around for a narrative idea when I'm about to depart on this literally once-in-a-lifetime journey myself? The story I should tell is right in front of me." So, even though I had no experience making documentaries and I wasn't exactly sure what my story was going to be about, I went out and bought myself a small digital video camera.

In the weeks following, as I flew around the continent, I literally had my right hand on the wheel while holding the camera with my left. Inspired by Ross Mc Elwee's *Sherman's March*, I used the camera as an extension of my eyes. I just aimed it where I was curious to look, and I shared my thoughts and feelings with it as if it was a friend I was writing home to.

Weeks later, back home surfing through my modest 25 hours of footage, I felt like I hit a brick wall. Yes, I had returned with many images of people, animals, aerial views of landscapes and tons of planes taking off and landing. But the only definitive goal I had gone to Australia with, namely to find out more about the Walkabout, I hadn't achieved. And it wasn't like I had suddenly become a whole new person. Nobody even had a crying meltdown at the end. How could I ever turn this into a compelling documentary?

Nevertheless, I went ahead and taught myself how to edit on a friend's old Media 100 system that is so obsolete today I am still amazed I was able to coax my movie out of it seven years later. And I spent months and months cutting down, sorting and writing hypothetical treatments. And that's when a good friend of mine made a key comment: "Sometimes a story is about the fact that you DIDN'T find what you were looking for, but you found something else instead." And lo and behold, as I kept chiseling away at the bulk of images, searching for what I had REALLY learned from the experience, there was the story for my movie.

I'm so glad I didn't give up. My heart is filled with happiness and pride as I look at the finished film now and all the things I learned along the way. No film school could have done a better job of teaching me how to shoot, edit, make a movie on a shoestring budget of \$10,000 and, most importantly, how to tell a story.

So here I am, roughly 2708 days after Jerry and I were standing underneath that airplane wing in the rain, and I smile as I'm beginning to understand that what he meant was as true for our Australian journey as it has been of making this film: "Every day is a journey and the journey itself is home."

-- Monika Petrillo  
*writer/director/producer Flyabout*