

real2reel

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Top honours at the AFIs and Hawaii

Film Australia documentaries have taken out top awards at the recent Australian Film Institute Awards and at the 2000 Hawaii International Film Festival.

The Diplomat, directed by Tom Zubrycki and produced by Sally Browning and Wilson da Silva, won AFI awards for best documentary and best direction in a documentary.

Andrea Lang received the award for best editing in a documentary for her work on **Thomson of Arnhem Land**, a program about anthropologist Donald Thomson, directed by John Moore and produced by Moore and Michael McMahon.

At the Hawaii International Film Festival, **The Diplomat** was again recognised, winning the prestigious Golden Maille Award for Best Documentary. It has also been well received at the London and Vancouver film festivals, among others, and will screen at the Berlin and San Francisco film festivals next year. At the recent Austcare Media Awards in Sydney, the program won both the television category and the overall prize.

Buried Country, directed by Andy Nehl and produced by Liz Watts, was voted Best Documentary by the Hawaiian audience. Singer Jimmy Little travelled to the festival to perform at the screening of the film, which tells the largely unknown story of Aboriginal country music.

The Diplomat has been seen widely since its launch at the Sydney Film Festival in June this year, with a theatrical release in



THE DIPLOMAT: José Ramos Horta faces the media in Dili's Santa Cruz cemetery.

Photo: Anastasia Vrachnos.

cities across Australia.

The film follows East Timorese freedom fighter and Nobel Peace Prize winner José Ramos Horta in the final tumultuous year of his campaign to secure independence for his country.

It screened at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on 12 October as part of a special one-day event "East Timor: One Year After". The screening was attended by the Secretary-General Kofi Annan, José Ramos Horta and 200 other international representatives. Producer Sally Browning was in New York to introduce the film.

The Diplomat is a Film Australia National Interest Program, produced in association with Emerald Films and SBS Independent. It screened nationally on SBS-TV on 26 November, the anniversary of José Ramos Horta's return to East Timor in 1999 after 24 years in exile.

Cunnamulla on the big screen

Cunnamulla is a portrait of an isolated town in outback Queensland. This new film by Dennis O'Rourke was produced by Film Australia in association with Camerawork Limited, with the assistance of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

To make the film, O'Rourke lived in a room above the pub in Cunnamulla, 800 kilometres west of Brisbane, in the months leading up to a scorching bush Christmas. It's a town where Aboriginal and white Australians live together but apart, where creativity struggles against indifference, eccentricity against conformity.

Cunnamulla was selected to screen in competition at the International Documentary Festival in Amsterdam in November.

It opens at the Valhalla Cinema in Sydney on 14 December for a theatrical season, with other cities to follow in early 2001.



City of Dreams

When the brilliant and fiery Marion Mahony married Walter Burley Griffin, it was the beginning of one of the 20th century's most outstanding artistic collaborations. Marion was the first registered woman architect in the world and the longest serving designer in Frank Lloyd Wright's practice. In 1912, she and Walter won a controversial international competition to

design the new Australian capital in Canberra. Although the city of their dreams was never built, this visionary American couple chose to stay in Australia.

A fascinating new documentary explores their collaboration, their struggle with unyielding bureaucracy, their unconventional approach to life and work, and their passionate commitment to an architecture that expressed a balance between society and the environment and an affinity between the human spirit and the natural world. It also examines their lasting impact on Australian culture and the largely unrecognised contribution of Marion Mahony.

City of Dreams was officially launched on 2 November by the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, Senator Richard Alston, at ScreenSound in Canberra. The Minister commended Film Australia's contribution to Australia's national heritage through both its documentary film program and its footage library.

Produced by Gaby Mason and directed by Belinda Mason, **City of Dreams** screened at the Melbourne Film Festival earlier this year and had its Sydney premiere on 4 November at WOW 2000, a celebration of international women's cinema.

A Film Australia National Interest Program produced in association with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, **City of Dreams** will screen on ABC-TV in 2001.

AT THE LAUNCH: (l to r) Senator Richard Alston with *City of Dreams* producer Gaby Mason and executive producer Mark Hamlyn.



In brief

Mabo—The Native Title Revolution was launched on 4 December after years in the making. This multi-media project, consisting of two CD-ROMs and a website with online database, explores the landmark Mabo case as well as related issues from colonisation and indigenous culture to land rights and native title. It is an extremely valuable resource for a wide range of users, from educational institutions and libraries to indigenous and legal organisations, mining companies and farmers. The CD-ROM is distributed in Australia by Dataworks. For a preview, log in to www.MaboNativeTitle.com

The Fifth Set attracted more than three-quarter of a million viewers when it screened on ABC-TV on 6 December. The program explores the history of Australia's relationship with the Davis Cup.

Thomson of Arnhem Land will screen at the prestigious Royal Anthropological Institute's film festival in the UK. It was also included in the New Zealand Film Festival and the Shanghai Television Festival with Uncle Chatzkel.

Uncle Chatzkel continued its global success at the Columbus International Film & Video Festival where it received an honourable mention in the Chris Awards. It has also screened recently at the Taiwan International Documentary Film Festival, Durban and Fort Lauderdale International Film Festivals, Atlantic City Film Festival and the International Jewish Film Festival and Conference in LA (chaired by ex-Academy chairman Arthur Hiller).

Sadness received a finalist award at the New York Expo of Short Film and Video, which attracted over 600 entrants. It was also chosen to screen at the Margaret Mead and Marseille International Documentary Festivals.





SMALL ISLAND BIG FIGHT: Azzie Noah and Esiah Salee perform the traditional Shark Dance on Mer.

SMALL ISLAND **BIG FIGHT**

Murray Island, or Mer, is a tiny dot in the Torres Strait between Australia and Papua New Guinea, so small it does not appear on most maps. But from here one of Australia's biggest court cases was fought when Eddie Mabo waged a ten-year legal battle for title to his land.

Few know Eddie had also been fighting for the reefs, seabeds and surrounding seas which, he said, had belonged to him and his family for generations. Sea rights formed part of his original claim, but for political and strategic reasons he and his co-plaintiffs dropped their sea claims against the Commonwealth, vowing to revive them after they had won title to their land. Tragically, Eddie died before the historic "Mabo" judgement was delivered, which recognised his native title claim. The will to carry on the legal fight for sea rights has now been taken up by others.

In **Small Island Big Fight** writer/director Aven Noah charts the growing tensions between his people and outside fishing interests over the sea and its resources, which the Meriam people believe belong to them. He explores their economic and spiritual relationship to the sea, expressed in song and dance. And he traces their unbroken links to the surrounding waters from ancient stone-walled fish traps to modern island-based fishing businesses that offer a real alternative to welfare, on which three-quarters of the island's population now depend.

This is the first film from Aven Noah, a Komet clansman and general manager of the Torres Strait Islanders Media

Association. Although he had covered the simmering sea rights story extensively for radio, the idea for the documentary was first put to him by a TSIMA colleague, Debbie Pruden, in 1997.

In 1998, they successfully submitted the project to the National Indigenous Documentary Fund, a joint incentive for indigenous filmmakers established by the National Indigenous Media Association of Australia and ABC-TV.

Then in 1999, Sydney-based filmmaker Rosemary Hesp took over the producer's role from Debbie Pruden (who left to have a child), and Trevor Graham, director of Mabo—Life of an Island Man and Land Bilong Islanders, came on board as co-producer. They approached Film Australia, which agreed to commit to the film under its National Interest Program.

Filming began on Murray Island in May 2000 with the same crew that shot the two earlier Mabo films, director of photography John Whitterton (who also acted as mentor to Aven) and sound recordist Bronwyn Murphy. They were joined by two Torres Strait Islanders: Murray Lui, as assistant DOP, and Annie Lui, as producer's attachment.

"This program begins where the Mabo case left off and it's just as significant an issue," says co-producer Trevor Graham. "Sea rights claims have been lodged around Australia. What happens in the Torres Strait has implications for everyone — just like the Mabo case did."

Small Island Big Fight screens on ABC-TV on 21 December at 8.00 pm.

PRODUCTION REPORT

IN POST-PRODUCTION

Australian Biography 8 The latest in the on-going series that charts the lives of some of the most extraordinary Australians of our time. *Director/Producer:* Robin Hughes

Bush Mechanics An off-beat series following the exploits of a band of Aboriginal characters as they journey through central Australia in a clapped-out car. *Writer/Director:* David Batty *Co-Director:* Francis Kelly *Producer:* Jeni McMahan

The Music School A documentary look at Sydney University Music Department's struggle to survive. *Writers/Directors/Producers:* Bob Connolly, Robin Anderson

Tour Wars Looks behind the gloss of the tourist industry to reveal how Australia is sold overseas. *Writer/Director:* Julia Redwood *Producer:* Ed Punchard

IN PRODUCTION

Welcome to the Waks Family Meet the largest natural family in Australia: mum, dad and 17 children, raised within an ultra-orthodox Jewish community. *Writer:* Jeff Bruer *Writer/Director/Producer:* Barbara Chobocky *Co-Producer:* Rod Freedman

A Compassionate Rage Moira Kelly has a passion "to give kids with stuff-all chance in life a fair go"—and she is prepared to go to extraordinary lengths to do it. *Writer/Director:* Alan Lindsay *Producer:* Helen Clucas

What If...? A look at youth suicide from a very personal perspective, set in the rural community of Geraldton, Western Australia. *Writer/Director:* Jessica Douglas-Henry *Producer:* Mary-Ellen Mullane

IN PRE-PRODUCTION

Unsung Heroes Profiles six indigenous Australians, highly regarded in their communities but largely unknown to the mainstream. *Writers:* Beck Cole, Liz Hughes, Donna Ives, Darlene Johnson, Mitch Torres *Directors:* Beck Cole, Liz Hughes, Donna Ives, Catriona McKenzie *Episode Producers:* Rod Freedman, Priscilla Collins *Series Producer:* Rod Freedman

Film Australia reports operating profit

Film Australia has recorded a year of significant achievement, with the release of some of the most distinguished programs in the company's history and a financial result above expectations with an operating profit before abnormals.

Film Australia's financial performance has again exceeded projections detailed in the company's corporate plan. This year's operating profit before abnormals is the result of a high level of cost-consciousness throughout the company and of efforts to gradually increase revenue streams, especially those flowing from distribution of National Interest Program documentaries and from rentals of offices and facilities at the company's Lindfield site.

The Federal Government provided assistance of \$1 million for the urgent replacement of air-conditioning plant and equipment to upgrade the site, essential to Film Australia's ability to support the independent documentary and low-budget

production sectors.

In 1999-2000 Film Australia announced an initiative to improve access to the company's extensive library of completed programs and stock-shots spanning most of the nation's life. The work is on-going.

"Film Australia has enjoyed a year distinguished by high-profile documentary releases and by significant improvements in its capacity to deliver distribution, facilities and audiovisual library services to the filmmaking community," said Sharon Connolly, Chief Executive Officer.

"Though the future promises challenges in resourcing continuing improvements in an era of rapid technological change, at the close of 1999-2000 the company is in a stronger position to meet them."

Film Australia's 1999-2000 Annual Report is available at www.filmaust.com.au

For printed copies, contact Kirsten Tilgals, phone (02) 9413 8723 or email ktilgals@filmaust.com.au

Life in STEEL CITY will never be the same

The October preview screening of *Steel City* at the Newcastle Workers' Club was an emotional evening for the large audience of former steelworkers who one year earlier left the site of BHP's Newcastle steelworks for the last time.

The film was shot in the final months before the closure of the 85-year-old steelworks, the biggest industrial shutdown in Australian history.

Mr Alan Morris, MHR for Newcastle, who launched the film, said that *Steel City* would help other Australians understand the magnitude of the closure and its impact on steelworkers (many of them third and fourth generation workers), their families and the city of Newcastle. He said that as well as bearing witness for the people directly involved, the film would be a valuable record of an important moment in Australian working life.

Steel City is a Film Australia National Interest Program produced with the assistance of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, directed by Catherine Marciniak, produced by Denise Haslem and Gina Twyble and executive produced by Stefan Moore.

The program draws on Film Australia's archive of films and photographs collected over the last century. "We were thrilled with the Library's extraordinary footage of the Newcastle steelworks over the decades, including a 35mm film of the royal visit in 1921," remarked Catherine Marciniak. "New footage shot for *Steel City* will be added to Film Australia's extensive collection of images of Australian life, work and enterprise."

Steel City was broadcast nationally on ABC-TV on 26 October.

New Director of Sales

Augustus Dulgaro joined Film Australia on 14 November as the new Director of Sales.

Augustus has spent the last five years at Total Film and Television as Manager of Distribution and Marketing. He was also associate producer of *Aria & Pasta*, recently seen on SBS-TV. Previously he worked with Hayden Film Distribution, ABC Films and Footprint Films.

"Augustus will bring enormous energy to his role at Film Australia, helping to ensure that the company's renowned catalogue of quality Australian documentary is seen throughout the world," said Film Australia CEO, Sharon Connolly. "I am delighted that he has accepted the position."

Augustus replaces Philip Nelson, who has left Film Australia after six years (and 22 international sales trips) to pursue private business interests.

In other new appointments, Anthony Dockrill has come on board as Business Affairs Manager, Sales, and Dianne Bonner takes the position of Executive Assistant to CEO, Sharon Connolly.



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