



real2reel

A tribute to the late Lee Robinson

Lee Robinson was a Second World War correspondent who, in 1946, began work as a director at the Commonwealth Film Unit (later to become Film Australia). For four years, he spent every winter in the Northern Territory making films about the outback. In the early 1950s, he formed a production company, Southern International, with actors Chips Rafferty and John McCallum.

His credits as a director include *Namatjira the Painter* (1947), *Crocodile Hunters* (1949), *Outback Patrol* (1952), *Bush Policeman* (1953), *Phantom Stockman* (1953), *Walk into Paradise* (1956), *Dust in the Sun* (1958) and *Bring out a Briton* (1957). His credits as producer include *Skippy* (1966) and *Bailey's Bird* (1977) TV series, and as executive producer, the *Boney* (1972) TV series and *Attack Force Z* (1982). In 2002 he was interviewed for *Film Australia's Outback* DVD about his filmmaking experiences and was a guest of honour at its launch.

Lee Robinson died on 22 September 2003 at the age of 80.

"Lee was a real character of the film industry, with a pioneering and adventurous spirit that defined his film work, and a great love of the country and his countryman" says Denise Haslem, producer/director of *Film Australia's Outback*.

Lee Robinson (right) with Albert Namatjira in the 1940s



Film Australia looks ahead

Film Australia has reported a productive and successful year in 2002–2003, delivering 21 quality documentary programs and significantly enhancing its library, distribution and facilities services.

During the year, the company completed a five-year National Interest Program agreement with the Australian Government, developing, producing, marketing and distributing 100 programs between 1998–1999 and 2002–2003.

The company also committed substantial resources to the development and production of future projects in anticipation of a new National Interest Program agreement. CEO Sharon Connolly has confirmed that Film Australia has now signed a new agreement with the Australian Government, securing funding for the next five years. Around \$7 million will be available in each of the next five years for the creation and distribution of new programs, with the Government also committing to supporting Film Australia's library, distribution and facilities services until 2008.

Sharon Connolly has also announced that Film Australia has signed a renewed output deal with ABC Television, to produce up to ten hours of documentary programming a year for five years.

"These developments ensure stability for Film Australia for the next five years and underpin the company's ability to continue producing quality documentary programs which explore Australian life and concerns."

The year 2002–2003 was the first in which Film Australia received community services funding from Government to support its library, distribution and facilities services.

The Library intensified its efforts to preserve its unique collection and make it more accessible. Film Australia's newly developed database went live, enabling researchers to search online for archival materials and stock shots. And an ambitious transfer program copied many titles which previously only existed in deteriorating or obsolete formats.

A newly established Educational Production Initiative will increase use of Library materials whilst addressing educational needs for Australian content.

Importantly, the initiative also provides opportunities for program makers to gain more experience in producing for a multi-platform environment, helping to develop greater sustainability in the documentary sector, a part of the Australian film and television industry historically disadvantaged by the lack of effective regulation for local television content.

In addition, community services funding has been used to substantially upgrade Film Australia's site and facilities.

"Film Australia's facilities provide important infrastructure support to the low-budget sector of the audio-visual production industry. An increasingly diverse array of production companies and facilities providers are basing their operations at the site. The success of the Film Australia cluster is also helping the company to make the most of National Interest Program production resources," Ms Connolly said.

Among numerous program highlights this year, Ms Connolly noted *Ted's Evolution's* win of the 2003 Rockie Award for Popular Science and Natural History at the Banff Television Festival in Canada, the vote for *Wildness* as Most Popular Documentary at the Sydney Film Festival and the ratings success of the series *Plumpton High Babies* which screened on ABC TV.

During the year, other National Interest Program productions have dealt with subjects as diverse as those of family life, the degradation of the Great Barrier Reef, the devastating problem of alcohol abuse in some Aboriginal communities, the history of West Papua and its people, and the possible effects of nuclear testing on the health of generations of Australians.

A redeveloped Film Australia website, the publication of indigenous studies and educational catalogues, and the development of teachers' notes to support classroom use of many more Film Australia titles have all contributed to successful distribution of Film Australia's catalogue of National Interest Programs and independent documentaries during the year. Strong results were achieved in both overseas television and Australian educational markets.

The company's 2002–2003 Annual Report was published in October. It is available online www.filmaust.com.au/about/publications.asp or for a printed copy, call 02 9413 8723 or email web@filmaust.com.au

Award news

A Film Australia National Interest Program production, *The Trouble With Merle*, has won the NSW Premier's History Award in the Audio/Visual category.

Two other Film Australia productions have been nominated for Australian Film Institute Awards, to be announced on 21 November. *Silent Storm* and *Wildness* have been nominated for Best Documentary and Best Achievement in Direction in a Documentary. *Silent Storm* has also received nominations for Best Achievement in Sound in a Non-Feature Film and Best Achievement in Cinematography in a Non-Feature Film.

Wildness was a finalist for Best Australian Documentary in the Film Critics Circle of Australia Awards. It has been invited to screen at this year's Vancouver and Hawaii International Film Festivals and at the 12th Environmental Film Festival at the Australian Embassy in Washington DC in 2004.

Also in the US, *Plumpton High Babies* received a Bronze Plaque in the Education and Information category at the Columbus International Film and Video Festival (also known as the Chris Awards). The series is a finalist in the United Nations Media Peace Awards along with *Muddy Waters—Life and Death on the Great Barrier Reef*.

Muddy Waters recently won Best Environment and Conservation Documentary at the Japan Wildlife Festival. The film has been selected for competition in France's Festival International du Film Nature & Environnement, held in November.

New distribution titles

Film Australia has recently acquired two independently produced one-hour documentaries for distribution.

Written, directed and produced by Helen Barrow, **Hired Assassins** looks at the art of political cartooning in Australia through the eyes of five editorial cartoonists. Bill Leak (*The Australian*), Warren Brown (*Daily Telegraph*), Geoff Pryor (*Canberra Times*), David Rowe (*Australian Financial Review*) and Rod Emmerson (*Rockhampton's Morning Bulletin*) take us into the world of daily newspapers, revealing the processes behind their work and the struggle to be funny on a deadline.

The Indian Cowboy follows a talented country music artist from India as he fulfils a dream and travels to the Tamworth Country Music Festival. Calling himself Bobby Cash (*below*), he's a charismatic character who stands out from the crowd. The film was written and directed by Colin Bromley, who produced with Gerry O'Leary and John Doyle.



In production

Australian Biography Online

Producer Ron Saunders and website director Thomas Ashford are completing the third and final stage of the *Australian Biography Online* project. The website, to be hosted by the National Library of Australia, will provide video and transcripts from 29 episodes of the *Australian Biography* series along with comprehensive study notes.

Executive Producer: Mark Hamlyn

The Capitalist Drive

Writer/director/producer Barbara Chobocky and editor/writer/DOP Jeff Bruer are currently editing this one-hour program for ABC-TV. The film provides a very personal account of life in Australia and the Czech Republic after World War Two by following stories of Barbara's family over three generations. Damien Parer is co-producer.

Executive Producers: Anna Grieve and Penny Robins

Colour of War—The Anzacs

This unique series is in the final stages of production. Using only original colour footage, the three one-hour episodes paint a vividly detailed picture of Australia and New Zealand at war, from the build up to World War Two to the end of the Vietnam conflict. Produced in association with TWI, the Nine Network, Television New Zealand, NZ On Air, the New Zealand Department of Defence and ScreenSound Australia, the series will screen nationally on Channel Nine in 2004.

Executive Producer: Mark Hamlyn

Dhakiyarr vs the King

Directors Tom Murray and Allan Collins and editor James Bradley are currently editing this one-hour documentary for ABC-TV at Film Australia Studios. Produced by Graeme Isaac, the film follows the families of an Aboriginal leader and a white policeman 70 years after a controversial murder trial, as they join the Northern Territory government in a bold act of reconciliation.

Executive Producer: Anna Grieve

Film Australia's Immigration DVD

When Australia embarked on its mass immigration program after World War Two, it was with a movie camera in hand. Film Australia, as the Government's film unit, made films to attract new migrants and to change Australian attitudes to new arrivals. More recently, it made films about how the migrants themselves were changed by coming here. A selection of these films has been included in this DVD along with contemporary interviews with migrants, commentators and filmmakers. Penelope McDonald is producer, with Paul Byrnes as director and associate producer.

Executive Producer: Penny Robins

The Last Great Amateurs

Director Sue Thomson finished a year filming the Melbourne Phoenix with their win in the national netball grand final. Editing is soon to commence on a one-hour documentary which will provide an insight into this elite-level amateur sport. Produced by Richard Keddie and Andrew Wiseman and written by Keddie and Angela Buckingham, the program will screen on ABC-TV.

Executive Producers: Franco di Chiera and Anna Grieve

A Matter of Choice

Writer/director Sean Cousins will explore a wide range of perspectives on the complex and emotionally charged issue of genetic medicine in a one-hour documentary to be screened on SBS-TV. Stuart Menzies and Tony Wright of December Films are producing. The program was developed with the assistance of Film Victoria and the Australian Film Commission, and produced with the assistance of Film Victoria.

Executive Producer: Mark Hamlyn

The Safe House

When the lead characters from a real-life spy drama move in next door to a young girl, life is destined to never seem the same again. Award-winning animator Lee Whitmore is turning her childhood experience into a half-hour animation for SBS-TV, providing an unusual take on the infamous Petrov Affair of the 1950s. Denise Haslem is producer.

Executive Producer: Anna Grieve

Troubled Minds—The Story of Lithium

Editing is underway on this dramatised documentary which tells the remarkable personal story of John Cade, the Australian scientist who first discovered lithium as a treatment for bipolar disorder in the 1940s. Cade's work has been under renewed focus in recent weeks with scientific studies finding that lithium is still more effective than newer drugs in treating the condition. The one-hour program is being produced in association with Omar Khayam Films and SBS Independent, and was developed with the assistance of Film Victoria. John Lewis is producer; Dennis Smith is writer/director.

Executive Producers: Franco di Chiera and Penny Robins

Woomera

Writer/director/producer Steve Thomas and producer Kim Anning recently completed their first shoot in Woomera. Woomera has been famous for its rocket range, as a home to Americans from the Nurrungar base and, most recently, for its refugee detention centre. This one-hour documentary for ABC-TV will tell the story of ordinary people in a small town caught up in big events.

Executive Producer: Anna Grieve



Fearless launch

Film Australia launched the four-part series *Fearless—Stories from Asian Women* at the Film and Television Institute in Fremantle, Western Australia on Monday 25 August 2003. Attending the launch were (pictured above, left to right): ScreenWest CEO Tania Chambers, *Fearless* writer/director Mathew Kelley and producer Samantha Kelley and Film Australia CEO Sharon Connolly.

The series, co-produced and co-directed by Peter Du Cane, is a Film Australia National Interest Program in association with Mask Productions, produced and developed with the assistance of ScreenWest and the Lotteries Commission of Western Australia and produced in association with SBS Independent.

Three episodes from the series *Fearless—Stories from Asian Women* were finalists in the Documentary category of the Hollywood Discovery Awards, part of the Hollywood Film Festival held in October.

They are also among a group of Film Australia productions, including *Slow Food Revolution*, *Lonely Boy Richard* and *Everyday Brave—Media Nomads*, that will screen at the 21st Global Visions Film Festival in Canada in November.

Festival update

Slow Food Revolution screened recently at the 48th Cork Film Festival in Ireland.

Two episodes from the series *Human Contraptions—Law and Global*—have been invited to screen in competition at CINANIMA, the International Animated Film Festival, to be held in Portugal in November.

Welcome to the Waks Family has been invited to the UK Jewish Film Festival and the Hartford Jewish Film Festival and Tiburon International Film Festival in the US.

Sadness and *China Dolls* will screen as part of the Pride International Film Festival in Manila in November.

The Australian High Commission in Kuala Lumpur selected several Film Australia titles to participate in the MVA (Malaysian Video Awards) in September, including two episodes from *Bush Mechanics—The Series*, *A Calcutta Christmas*, *China Dolls*, *The Diplomat*, *Fly Peewee Fly!*, *Human Contraptions*, *The Trouble with Merle* and *Cane Toads—An Unnatural History*.

Lonely Boy Richard (clockwise from top left): Dave Simmons, Yirrkala Community Night Patrol Officer; Nami Maymuru-White and grandson Little Leon; Richard Wanambi, waiting for sentencing; and a boy is painted up for traditional law ceremony at Yirrkala.

Lonely Boy Richard

In the Northern Territory, three-quarters of the people behind bars are Indigenous men. *Lonely Boy Richard* is an intimate account of one man's journey to jail, from director Trevor Graham and producer Denise Haslem, the award-winning team behind *Mabo—Life of an Island Man*.

Co-produced and written by Rose Hesp and made in close association with the community of Yirrkala, this confronting documentary tells the story of Richard Wanambi, who is about to go to prison for a long time. In Richard's home of Yirrkala, like elsewhere, alcohol abuse and violence are threatening family and community life.

Yirrkala, 650km east of Darwin, was established as a Methodist mission in 1935 and soon became a major settlement for the clans of northeast Arnhem Land. Thirty years ago, a huge bauxite mine was built on their land, against their wishes. With it came the purpose-built mining town of Nhulunbuy with 4000 people—almost all of them white—and a pub.

"The story is based on our extensive research into law and order problems in Aboriginal communities, which we carried out for two years prior to our arrival in Arnhem Land," explains Rose.

"We lived, filmed and edited on location in Yirrkala/Nhulunbuy for nine continuous months. During this time we followed many story strands but it was only during our final weeks that Richard's story began to clearly emerge as the centrepiece of our film."

Soon after arriving in May 2002, Trevor Graham began going out at nights with Yirrkala's night patrol team as they brought drinkers home from Nhulunbuy and worked to keep grog out of their "dry" community. Several times they picked up Richard.

As the crew filmed life in Yirrkala—football, school events, council meetings, ceremonies—Trevor gravitated increasingly to Richard and his family.

Nami, the woman Richard knows as mum, "came across as a heroic figure, a

mother and grandmother who was articulate and profound," recalls Trevor. "She'd lost her eldest son in a drunken fight. She was living in fear for her second son, whose drinking bouts had wreaked havoc on the family and landed him in trouble with the police. And she was looking after Richard (her deceased sister's son) who'd committed a terrible crime and was clearly addicted to alcohol."

Now 35, Richard has been drinking since he was 14—just like his dad. He's never had a relationship or a job, and has never received any professional help for his addiction. Eventually he told Trevor why he was awaiting trial in the Supreme Court. "I was completely shocked," says Trevor, who was taken by Richard's openness and honesty. "I sensed genuine remorse, but I also knew he was unable or unwilling to give up drinking. It had such a hold over him."

Richard also introduced Trevor to his drinking friends. Trust grew and Trevor was able to explore the nature of Richard's crime and his drinking problem. The crew was granted permission to film the court trial in Darwin and Trevor also visited Richard in prison (without a camera) and showed him the almost-finished film.

As the documentary reached its final stages, respected Aboriginal leader Mick Dodson broke the silence about the level of violence and alcohol abuse in communities. In the nation's media, he quoted staggering statistics: "90 per cent of Aboriginal families are affected by violence...Aboriginal women are 45 times more likely than other women to be victims of violence".

Lonely Boy Richard presents the human story behind the headlines. Made under the Film Australia National Interest Program with Mark Hamlyn as executive producer, the film was produced with the assistance of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

It was launched at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory in Darwin on 29 October by the Hon Syd Stirling, Member for Nhulunbuy, and screened on ABC-TV on 6 November.



The Puckeridge
FamilyThe Kapsalides
Family

Under One Roof

A new series from Film Australia opens the door on Australian family life. *Under One Roof* goes inside the homes of three very different families to look at the ties that bind people together and the pressures that may pull them apart. In three one-hour episodes, it shows how communication, respect and humour are the essence of successful family life.

In *The Chakos Family*, we meet four generations of Greek-Australians with a love of life, celebration, ritual and food, while *The Puckeridge Family* introduces us to a young couple and their five very active children aged two to ten. By contrast, *The Kapsalides Family* features a Lebanese-Greek household consisting of a mother and her two daughters, now young adults.

Rosemary Blight is series producer, with Kay Pavlou directing two episodes and Ray Argall directing *The Puckeridge Family*.

The filmmakers spent two months with each family, creating a sense of openness and intimacy.

Kay recalls the start of shooting with the Chakos family: "For the first week, everyone

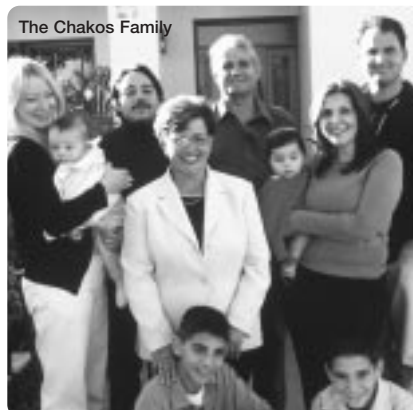
was keen to look their best. They were self-conscious, wanting to perform so that we wouldn't think they were boring. Gradually they began to ignore us. One morning we arrived at 7am, while they were still asleep. Christina, the daughter, opened the back door. She didn't look at us; she was looking for the dog who'd pulled the washing off the line. Everyone showered, combed hair, ate toast, yelled at the dog. Nobody looked sideways for at least an hour. We had become almost invisible. The young boys referred to us as 'The Others' —ghosts that were visible but not to be spoken to."

It was a different experience with the Kapsalides family, who found it harder to ignore the crew. "As a sole parent family, the women have spent much time as a tight threesome. It took longer to win their trust," Kay explains.

Under One Roof raises intriguing questions about how families manage the complexities of modern living.

"It is difficult to detach oneself from one's own experience as a father, son, brother, mother, daughter or sister," observes Ray Argall. "I think this series challenged all of us to reflect on our own roles. I hope the end result will provoke people to look closely at how they work as a family unit."

Produced in association with SBS Independent, with Anna Grieve as Film Australia Executive Producer, the series screened weekly on SBS-TV at 7.30pm from 21 October.



The Chakos Family

Sales update

In Australia, *An Imaginary Life*, *Artisans of Australia*, *Charles Blackman*, *Copyrites*, *The Fifth Façade*, *La Stupenda*, *Photographers of Australia*, *The Gadfly*, *Two Thirds Sky*, *Australian Eye Series* and *The Artist*, *The Peasant* have been licensed to Ovation for pay television. *Silent Storm*, *Muddy Waters*, *Plumpton High Babies*, *Under One Roof*, *Slow Food Revolution*, *Land of the Morning Star*, *The Mascot*, *Diverted to Delhi* and *In Limbo* have been licensed to ABC for their Asia Pacific Digital service.

Satellite broadcast rights have been licensed to Chronicle DTV for *The Diplomat*, *The Mascot* and *No Sex, No Violence*, *No News* in the USA and to TechTV for *Diverted to Delhi* in the USA, Canada, Asia and Asia Pacific. *Ted's Evolution* has been licensed to First Run Icarus and *Land of the Morning Star* to the Filmmakers Library for non-theatrical distribution in the USA.

In Europe, *Silent Storm* and *Lonely Boy Richard* were licensed to TG4 for free-to-air broadcast in Ireland, *Breaking Bows and Arrows* to NOS for terrestrial television in the Netherlands, and *A Compassionate Rage* to Phoenix/ZDF for pay television in Austria.

Under One Roof, *Slow Food Revolution*, *Muddy Waters*, *A Million Acres a Year*, *The Mascot* and *Diverted to Delhi* have been licensed to Open University Channel for pay television in Israel.

In brief

- Film Australia welcomes Liz Stevens and Martien Coucke as Production Affairs Managers, who will work closely with Film Australia's executive producers to help deliver NIP productions.

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