



# Film bigwigs in the frame

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Last year box office hit *Tomorrow, When The War Began* opened the convention and AIMC spokeswoman Amanda Cox said there was another film just as exciting this year.

"It's a very special film which I can't tell you about yet but it will be fantastic," she said.

"The film hasn't been screened in Australia and the premiere will be well before time with the cast and crew."

Ms Cox said there will be a record number of delegates at the convention this year, which has become one of the most important and exciting events on the international movie convention calendar.

"It's an extremely important event," she said.

"AIMC is seen as part of the international movie convention circuit along with Cinema Con and Cinema Expo International.

"It's the only time we get to have the



industry in one place at one time, with everyone from major studios to small cinema owners.

"They get to be updated on everything that's happening in the industry and get a feel for products that are coming in the next 12 months.

"We also get a lot of filmmakers, producers and stars attending."

Last year's star-studded convention included the Australian premiere of *The Other Guys*, attended by Mark Wahlberg and Will Ferrell, and guest appearances by *Flight Of The Conchords'* Rhys Darby and PJ Morgan, who's making his new film, *Mental*, with Toni Collette on the Gold Coast.

The AIMC has been held on the Gold Coast for the past nine years with 12 films to be screened.



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## dvd letterbox



### Michael Bodey

I EXPECTED so much more from the New Zealand romantic comedy *Love Birds*. It stars Rhys Darby and Sally Hawkins, both of whom are wonderful comic actors.

But, as I commiserated with an actor after sitting next to him during a premiere the other night, an actor's lot is a frustratingly powerless one. No matter what they do, their work is reliant on a film's many parts — direction, screenwriting and editing, most particularly — to come together coherently.

Darby is a terrific comedian best known as the manager of the New Zealand duo Flight of the Conchords on the US comedy series.

He promoted *Love Birds* particularly well at last year's Australian International Movie Convention on the Gold Coast, winning over the film industry audience with his love for the Queensland holiday destination because he is "a fan of Venice, Disneyland and *The Jetsons*".

Back then, last August, *Love Birds* (PG, Icon, 98min, \$32.99) looked enticing. Darby was hot and Hawkins was hotter, having picked up most acting awards going, except an Academy Award nomination, for her performance as the dippy Poppy in Mike Leigh's *Happy-Go-Lucky*.

She plays Holly, a shy zookeeper at Auckland Zoo whose path crosses that of

Darby's Doug, a recently jilted man in the possession of an injured duck, or shelduck to be precise.

Paul (*Second-Hand Wedding*) Murphy's film plays as a romantic comedy trying to be cute. Manufacturing cute is difficult. And I should know; I try it each day and fail each day.

The script isn't jam-packed enough with wit, instead leaving the actors, scenario or the duck to provide something intangible, or that elusive cuteness.

And the shelduck goes close. It's nice to have an animal in a contemporary movie that is a) real, and b) not inserted as a cheap plot device to help make Jason Lee/Jim Carrey/James Marsden grow up while also entertaining the kiddies.

The film has a rich palette in its favour. For such a small film, Auckland looks incredibly rich and beautiful. And Darby and Hawkins remain likable, if under-utilised.

*Love Birds* is all rather, well, nice, without being memorable. Hence it bypassed cinemas.

#### **This week**

##### **The Millennium Trilogy (MA15+)**

Roadshow (544min, \$69.99)

##### **Martin Scorsese's Short Films (M)**

Madman (129min, \$34.99)

##### **An Idiot Abroad (MA15+)**

Roadshow (383min, \$34.99)

##### **The Warrior's Way (MA15+)**

Sony (96min, \$32.99)



# Coast Confidential

WITH NICK SMART



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## Lincoln at home as a serial performer

LINCOLN Lewis is at it again.

The former Home and Away star has been nominated for the inaugural Male Australian Star of Tomorrow Award to be presented at the Australian International Movie Convention next month.

This award has been voted on by the industry, the distributors and exhibitors.

And keep your eyes peeled because Lewis also has a guest appearance on TV in Underbelly later this year.



# Coast Confidential

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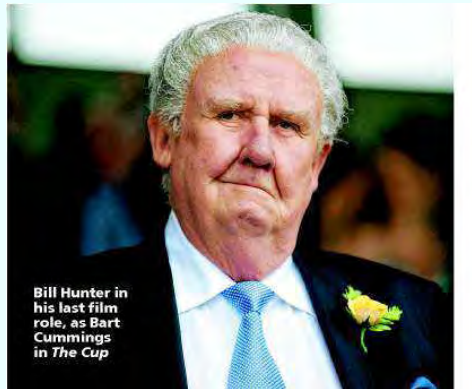
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# Cup win for Coast

The annual Australian International Movie Convention rolls out the red carpet at Jupiters Hotel & Casino from Sunday, writes **Maria Lewis**



*Friends with Benefits opens today.*

**T**HE Australian International Movie Convention (AIMC) opens on Sunday with a star-studded screening of Australian legend Bill Hunter's final film, *The Cup*.

The film is based on events at the 2002 Melbourne Cup, where jockey Damien Oliver rode to victory on Media Puzzle just two days after his brother – also a jockey – died following a race fall.

*The Cup* stars the late, great Bill Hunter, who died in May, as Bart Cummings, alongside Aussie stars including Stephen Curry, Tom Burlinson, Daniel MacPherson and Jodi Gordon.

Burlinson, who plays a trainer, says he's grateful he was able to work alongside Hunter, who gives a "tremendous" performance in his cameo as Cummings.

"It (the part) needed someone with that sort of presence that Bill Hunter had to even play Bart Cummings for a few scenes," he says.

The film's writer, director and producer, Simon Wincer, will walk the red carpet with *The Cup*'s stars at Jupiters Hotel & Casino on Sunday night before introducing the film's

special screening for delegates.

AIMC spokesman Ian Sutherland says the annual event has traditionally opened with an Australian film screening and is "incredibly fortunate" to have secured *The Cup*.

*The Cup*, which won't be released nationally until October 13, is just one of nearly a dozen advance screenings being held this year at AIMC.

Primarily an industry and distributors' event, big studios have taken to showing some of their more exciting theatrical releases at the AIMC to generate hype.

Other films featuring this year include Australian Tasmanian Tiger drama *The Hunter*; Woody Allen's latest, *Midnight In Paris*; Stephan Elliott's *A Few Best Men*; and blockbuster 3D remake *The Three Musketeers*.

However, Sutherland says the highlight of the conference will be a keynote address by John Fithian, president and CEO of the National Association of Theatre Owners, USA.

"I think that's the coup," he says.

"He's an incredible speaker and with a great reputation within the exhibition community here and in the US.

"He's one guy who can touch on all

the hot topics, such as ratings, movie theft, release windows, video on demand and more."

Fithian will address delegates in the Pavilion Ballroom on Tuesday at 2.55pm before joining an industry panel.

While last year's studio presentations had the added star power of appearances by stars such as Mark Wahlberg and Will Ferrell, Sutherland says secret "A-List guests" will be involved in "first-class presentations" at AIMC this year.

"I know for a fact some of the presentations are going to be phenomenal," he says.

Sutherland says the increased popularity of social media sites such as Twitter means big studios will tighten security to make sure delegates remain tight-lipped about the content of presentations.

**The Australian International Movie Convention plays Jupiters Hotel & Casino from Sunday to next Thursday. Registration passes and the full program are available from [www.movieconvention.com.au](http://www.movieconvention.com.au)**



# All the glitz of The Cup

**MARIA LEWIS**

[lewismm@goldcoast.com.au](mailto:lewismm@goldcoast.com.au)

THE 66th Australian International Movie Convention galloped into Jupiters Hotel and Casino last night with a glitzy industry screening of *The Cup*.

The Cup's director Simon Wincer walked the blue carpet for the screening and said it was thrilling to show the film to the audience of more than 1000.

"It's the moment of truth for a director," he said.

"But I'm very confident about the film because it's a great Australian story."

The Australian film is based on the 2002 Melbourne Cup, in which jockey Damien Oliver rode to victory on Media Puzzle just days after his brother Jason – also a jockey – died following a race fall.

Wincer said he was driven to the story because it was one that touched everyone's hearts.

"Damien had just lost his brother in a race fall a few days earlier and many years before that his father had died the same way," he said.

"He (Damien) came out on this Irish horse that had been out of racing for months with a

broken pelvis.

"It was just a magic moment when he won the cup."

The Cup is also the last film featuring Bill Hunter, who is best known for starring roles in flicks such as *Muriel's Wedding* and *The Adventures of Priscilla Queen of the Desert*.

Wincer said Hunter had a cameo as Bart Cummings.

"He just wanted to be in it," he said. "I told him I had him in mind for Bart Cummings."

"We had worked together for many years in television and he's lovely in it."

Managing director of Road-

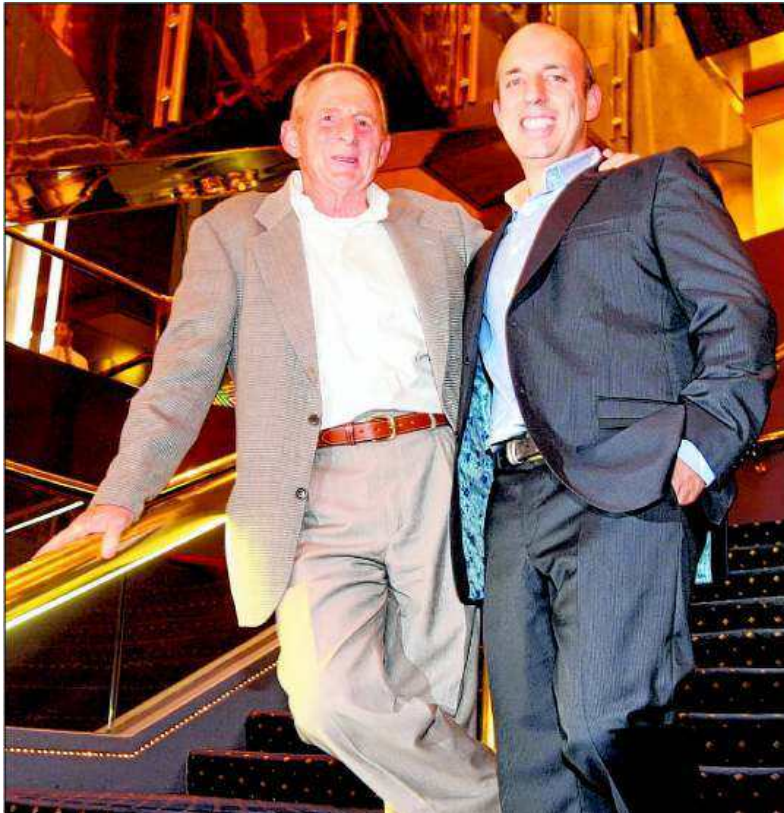
show Films, Joel Pearlman, said the company specifically brought *The Cup* to screen before AIMC delegates.

"We're very excited," he said.

"One of the reasons we bought it up here was to show the film to the decision-makers within the industry."

More than 1500 people are attending the convention, which wraps up on Thursday night with the AIMC Celebration.

**Follow Maria Lewis's reports from the convention in the Bulletin this week**



Director of the new film *The Cup*, Simon Wincer, and managing director of Roadshow Films Joel Pearlman at last night's screening of *The Cup* at Jupiters  
Photo: RICHARD GOSLING



## Twihard tears sure to follow Lautner no-show

**MARIA LEWIS**

[lewismm@goldcoast.com.au](mailto:lewismm@goldcoast.com.au)

LOCAL Twihards will be crying hard today with the news Taylor Lautner is not coming to the Gold Coast this week.

Rumours had been circulating the often-shirtless Twilight star would appear at the Australian International Movie Convention at Jupiters Hotel and Casino.

Although Lautner is in Melbourne promoting his latest film, *Abduction*, the 19-year-old said he would not be hitting our famous beaches any time soon. "I barely have time to eat dinner while I'm here," he said.

"I'll make sure I get there eventually, but after I fly to Sydney for two days then it's back to the States."

Lautner attended the Australian premiere of *Abduction* in

Melbourne on Sunday night.

*Abduction* is directed by action movie legend John Singleton (*Boyz n the Hood*, *Four Brothers*) and follows a high school student (Lautner) who learns he was abducted as child and is wanted by the CIA and rogue Russian forces.

Lautner, who is famous for playing werewolf Jacob Black in *The Twilight Saga*, said it was "very exciting" to be in Australia promoting a film other than the fantasy series.

"I'm extremely thankful for the Twilight universe and everything it's given me but the great thing about *Abduction* is it was a new way to challenge myself," he said.

"So this is something new

for them (the fans). I really think *Abduction* is a movie for everyone."

Lautner was last in Australia promoting *The Twilight Saga: Eclipse* with co-star Kristen Stewart.





**Australian**  
**24/08/2011**  
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**Frequency: MTWTF**

## REEL TIME TIM DOUGLAS

THE nation's film and television industry contributed \$6 billion to the domestic economy in 2009-10, according to a report released yesterday at the Australian International Movie Convention on the Gold Coast. In the report, commissioned by the Australian Federation Against Copyright Theft, Access Economics estimates the sector was also responsible for the creation of 49,000 full-time equivalent positions. It says the total value added by the sector grew 5.1 per cent between 2006-07 and 2009-10 while employment fell by 2.55 per cent in the same period.



MX Brisbane  
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Type: Capital City Daily  
Size: 129.00 sq.cms  
Frequency: MTWTF--

• NEW DIMENSION

# 3D a winning vision

Alexander Fynes-Clinton

Australian filmmakers will be left behind unless they embrace 3D cinema.

Movies using the much-hyped technology were the big winners at the Australian International Movie Convention Box Office awards announced on the Gold Coast today.

*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2* scooped the award for the highest grossing film in Australia and New Zealand.

AIMC consultant Ian

Sutherland said 3D movies could help to attract larger Aussie audiences.

"Certainly movies made with 3D today allow for a much better screening for the audience," he said.

"It's also about what kind of film should use 3D. In the case of (action movie) *Tomorrow, When the War Began*, would it gain anything by being in 3D? Possibly.

"A drama doesn't need to be in 3D and it's up to the

individual filmmaker to make that decision."

Sutherland said the expense of shooting in the format was currently a barrier, but expected the cost to decrease as it became more popular with filmmakers.

"(Local animation studio) Animal Logic's film from last year, *Legend of the Guardians: The Owls of Ga'Hoole*, was one of the best films shot in 3D that you will ever see," he said.

"We don't have the Hollywood

bottom line, so we're not going to have as many films being shot in 3D."

**Other big winners:**

**Highest Grossing Foreign Language Film:** *The Girl Who Played with Fire* (\$3.1m);

**Highest Grossing Aust. Film:** *Tomorrow When the War Began* (\$13.5m);

**Highest Grossing NZ Film:** *My Wedding and Other Secrets* (\$668,253).

# Broadcast NewsAlert

Freya Tienan - National Association of Cinema Operators-Australasia

▶ **ABC Gold and Tweed Coasts (Gold Coast)**  
**06:30 News - 25/08/2011 - 06:32 AM**  
**Newsreader**  
**Station Ph: 07 5595 2917**

A **Gold Coast** conference has discussed concerns about the costs of DVD and **movie** piracy. The issue has been under the spotlight at the **Australian International Movie Convention**. Neil Gain, **Australian Federation Against Copyright Theft** says it's important young people are aware of the costs of illegal internet downloads.  
 © Media Monitors 2011

**Interviewees:** Neil Gain, **Australian Federation Against Copyright Theft**  
**Duration:** 0:42  
**Summary ID:** W00045167432

**Audience**

Male 16+: 4,400  
 Female 16+: 3,300  
 All People: 7,700

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▶ **ABC Gold and Tweed Coasts (Gold Coast)**  
**Drive - 24/08/2011 - 04:28 PM**  
**Bernadette Young**  
**Station Ph: 07 5595 2917**

Young continues her discussion with John L Simpson, from the distributor Titan View about the **Australian Movie Convention** taking place on the **Gold Coast**. Simpson talks about Red Dog, which he compares to great **Australian films** such as The Castle and Kenny. Simpson says the director of Red Dog Pauline Chan has done a 'brilliant' job. Simpson says Lincoln Lewis is a co star in the **film**.  
 © Media Monitors 2011

**Interviewees:** John L Simpson, Spokesman, Titan View  
**Duration:** 3:03  
**Summary ID:** W00045161355

**Audience**

Male 16+: 2,100  
 Female 16+: 900  
 All People: 3,100

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▶ **ABC Gold and Tweed Coasts (Gold Coast)**  
**Drive - 24/08/2011 - 04:21 PM**  
**Bernadette Young**  
**Station Ph: 07 5595 2917**

Young talks with John L Simpson, from the distributor Titan View about the **Australian Movie Convention** taking place on the **Gold Coast**. Young mentions figures released today revealing that **movies**

**Audience**

Male 16+: 2,100  
 Female 16+: 900  
 All People: 3,100

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are worth \$16.1billion to the **Australian** economy. Simpson says anything which is in service with the **movie** industry is involved in the **convention**. Simpson talks about seven day week, intensive hours people work in the industry. Young asks Simpson if there is secrecy surrounding what is shown at the **convention**. Simpson says 'absolutely' due to advanced showing of **films**, some of which are not yet finished. Young asks about the distribution Simpson is trying to gain for 33 Postcards, with Guy Pearce as lead actor beside Zhu Lin. Simpson discusses the wide release 33 Postcards will have when it is released into China in September. Simpson talks about Red Dog, directed by Chris Sanders. [cont]  
© Media Monitors 2011

**Interviewees:** John L Simpson, Spokesman, Titan View  
**Duration:** 5:57  
**Summary ID:** W00045161257



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▶ **ABC Gold and Tweed Coasts (Gold Coast)**  
**Drive - 24/08/2011 - 04:17 PM**  
**Bernadette Young**  
**Station Ph: 07 5595 2917**

Young says coming up will be a discussion about the **Australian Movie Convention**.  
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**Duration:** 0:28  
**Summary ID:** W00045161250

**Audience**

Male 16+:	2,100
Female 16+:	900
All People:	3,100

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▶ **ABC Gold and Tweed Coasts (Gold Coast)**  
**Drive - 24/08/2011 - 04:05 PM**  
**Bernadette Young**  
**Station Ph: 07 5595 2917**

Program preview  
- Weather update  
- Federal political update  
- A discussion about the **Australian Movie Convention** which is taking place on the **Gold Coast**.  
- An update on the Hendra virus situation in the Currumbin Valley.  
© Media Monitors 2011

**Duration:** 0:45  
**Summary ID:** W00045160994

**Audience**

Male 16+:	2,100
Female 16+:	900
All People:	3,100

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# Broadcast NewsAlert

Freya Tienan - National Association of Cinema Operators-Australasia

▶ **ABC Gold and Tweed Coasts (Gold Coast)**  
**13:00 News - 24/08/2011 - 01:07 PM**  
**Newsreader**  
**Station Ph: 07 5595 2917**

A new report shows the **film** and television industry injected more than \$6b into the **Australian** economy in the 2009/10 financial year. The Access Economics report has been released during the **Australian International Movie Convention** on the **Gold Coast**. **Australian** actor Roy Billing says the benefits flow throughout the economy.  
 © Media Monitors 2011

**Interviewees:** Roy Billing, **Australian** Actor  
**Duration:** 0:40  
**Summary ID:** W00045158282

Audience	
Male 16+:	1,800
Female 16+:	1,600
All People:	3,400

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▶ **ABC Sunshine and Cooloola Coasts (Sunshine Coast)**  
**13:00 News - 24/08/2011 - 01:07 PM**  
**Newsreader**  
**News Editor Ms Jo Skinner 07 5475 5030**

A new report shows the **film** and television industry injected over \$6b into the **Australian** economy in the 2009-2010 financial year. The Access Economics Report has been released during the **Australian International Movie Convention** on the **Gold Coast**. Roy Billings, **Australian** Actor, says the benefits flow throughout the economy.  
 © Media Monitors 2011

Audience	
Male 16+:	1,500
Female 16+:	1,600
All People:	3,100

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**Interviewees:** Roy Billings, **Australian** Actor

**Duration:** 0:40

**Summary ID:** W00045158685



An audio Mediastream® clip is available for this item

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### **ABC Gold and Tweed Coasts (Gold Coast)**

**07:30 News - 24/08/2011 - 07:27 AM**

**Newsreader**

**Station Ph: 07 5595 2917**

An **Australian** actor Roy Billing has welcomed new findings highlighting the value of the **film** and television industry to the economy. The Access Economics report has been released during the **Australian Movie Industry Convention** on the **Gold Coast**. Billing says the report considered the economic contribution of the **film** and television industry across the board.

© Media Monitors 2011

**Interviewees:** Roy Billing, Actor, **Australia**

**Duration:** 0:37

**Summary ID:** W00045151320

#### **Audience**

Male 16+:	4,500
Female 16+:	2,500
All People:	7,000

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# SCREENHUB

## AIMC 2011: Aussie films up on stage big time in movie convention, at least early on

by: [Sandy George](#)

Screen Hub

Wednesday 24 August, 2011

*In all the hubbub, Sandy George keeps her eye firmly fixed on what we all really want to know - what is happening as the most recent local films make their pitch to the exhibitors?*

"We think we have assembled the most exciting local slate we have ever had," Joel Pearlman, managing director of Roadshow Films, told delegates at the Australian International Movie Convention (AIMC) on Monday. This line-up was given as one for the reasons Roadshow was expecting to do very big business in 2012, up there next to the release of films such as *The Dark Knight Rises* and *The Hunger Games* -- and the fact that "all our suppliers are firing on all cylinders".

Distributors at this annual event have been known to get caught up in its hype, and Pearlman is flushed with the runaway success of *Red Dog* (and deservedly so), but later asked about his bold statement about his Aussie slate, he didn't back off. In fact, quite the contrary.

"I have no doubt about it and could not have chosen those words more deliberately," he said. "*The Cup, Any Questions for Ben?, Goddess, Kath & Kim* and *Wolf Creek 2* make this our most formidable line-up ever. I am super psyched."

The company also has two big US-financed Australian films guaranteed to kick arse, *The Great Gatsby* and the boxing day release, *Happy Feet Two*. The Warner Bros Pictures/Roadshow Films presentation (Roadshow distributes Warners' product in a sub-distribution deal), the first of the convention, didn't mention Baz's film, presumably because its release is still such a long way off, but it did feature director Dr George Miller, up on the big screen taking delegates through footage of Mumbles and his son in the sequel, with the caveat that they were seeing "a lot of rough stuff", "preliminary" and "prototype" footage.

At its heart, the AIMC, held annually on the Gold Coast, is a series of presentations in which distributors hard sell upcoming films to exhibitors through live hoopla, trailers and clips from films and pre-recorded to-camera greetings from and interviews with filmmakers and cast. Some films are also show in their entirety.

Footloose screened at the end of the Roadshow/Warner Bros presentation but Roadshow's home-grown drama *The Cup* was shown in the bowels of AIMC venue Jupiters on the previous night, Sunday, the opening night of the AIMC. Madman also got to show local picture *The Hunter* on Tuesday night. Both appear to have gone down very well with exhibitors. *The Cup* releases October 13 and *The Hunter* one week earlier.

Aussie films also got a good run in Monday's second presentation, which was from Paramount Pictures, with directors Jonathan Teplitzky and Kimble Rendell taking delegates through footage from *Burning Man* and *Bait* respectively. Fleeting mentions were also given to upcoming films *Dead Europe*, from Tony Krawitz, and the German/Australian co-production *Lore* from Cate Shortland.

While it would be utterly and completely misleading to give the impression that local fare outdid the onslaught of Hollywood product, there is no doubt that it was firmly on the agenda on the first full business day of the convention – Sunday is more-or-less a golf tournament. Its presence says much about how the local industry is moving into the mainstream given that mainstream rules at the movie convention, but it is also the result of serendipity, in that Roadshow and Paramount just happened to share the stage on the first day.

Paramount is still flushed with the popularity of last year's *Tomorrow, When the War Began* and also this year's *The King's Speech*, a film whose national origins is destined to confuse people for many years to come, and can now depend on Transmission to be its local eyes and ears. And Roadshow is arguably

the most consistent long-time supporter of independent Australian films and the production community and the government agencies are lucky to have a locally-owned partner that yearns for big hits and is so cashed up it can pull out all stops to a level that matches a US studio marketing when required. Its biggest hits, ordered by gross box office, are *The Dish* in 2000, *Priscilla* and *Muriel's* in 1994, *Mao's Last Dancer* in conjunction with Hopscotch in 2009, and *The Castle* in 1997 -- though *Red Dog* could exceed them all.

Admittedly, by noon on Wednesday some of the gloss had come off the Aussie battlers because it failed to get a mention in Twentieth Century Fox's or Sony's presentations. (It's not possible to mention what Universal did in theirs as journalists had to sign an agreement stopping them from writing anything at all but suffice to say that they would have been mad not to have taken advantage of the fact that PJ Hogan's *Mental* is currently filming on the Gold Coast, especially given that many of the exhibitors in the room would have fond memories of Hogan's break-out hit *Muriel's Wedding*.)

But what was said and felt on Monday about some of these independent Australian films that were being flogged up on the Gold Coast?

The most visceral reaction came from a moment in one of the clips from *Bait*. A group of mainly young people, trapped on the tops of cars and what seemed to be an air conditioning unit, is in a flooded underground carpark. Hysteria is high because several people are in the water and being stalked by a giant shark. One of them is under attack but manages to get himself half out of the water. As a young woman grabs his arm and holds on tight, his head floats away from her, bobbing off towards the camera.

Rendell described *Bait* as "a popcorn movie" and "teen horror" film, made with one eye firmly fixed on international potential, and specifically for kids who want to have an excuse to go to the movies and grab each other. His dry, unexcited chat between clips contrasted to what people were seeing on screen. "Sharks love a good tsunami," he said at one stage: he learned through the research that sharks take full advantage of the food that a tsunami flushes out.

He made exhibitors feel like part of the scene with a few stories about what it was like to be behind-the-scenes of a production, about getting the consistency of the blood right, for example, and watching an actress, laden down with prosthetics and an axe stuck in her head, trying to eat her lunch through a straw.

Teplitzky described *Burning Man* as "visceral and emotional" but the footage illustrated that he clearly did not mean this in the same way as *Bait*! "Fundamentally it is a love story and a very universal story that I hope audiences will embrace," he said. The film gets its world premiere in Toronto next month and is releasing in Australia on October 27.

But back to Roadshow. A thrill of excited anticipation went around the room when Pearlman reminded the audience that very soon a brand they knew very well would be on their cinema screens. He was, of course, talking about the ladies from Fountain Gate, Kath & Kim. A thrill of nervous anticipation went around the room when he told the audience that Mick Taylor would be coming back to scare them in *Wolf Creek 2*. But it was on *Goddess* and *Any Questions for Ben?* that he focussed.

Production recently wrapped on *Goddess* which, like Roadshow's 2010 hit *Bran Nue Dae*, is a musical. The audience got to see several clips of the song-and-dance numbers that make Elspeth Dickens (UK singer Laura Michelle Kelly) an internet sensation in the film. Her husband (Irish singer Ronan Keating) is away when she's having all this to-camera fun between looking after the kids and doing the washing up. (Pearlman later told ScreenHub that Dickens performed some of the songs live to him in a Sydney lounge room as part of director Mark Lamprell's pitch to him before the film was financed).

In a pre-recorded clip, Keating promised delegates that this was one of those great films that seemingly comes out of nowhere -- and that the audience would get to see some of his body parts they'd never seen before in the film. Like all good romcoms there is high stakes too: Dickens ultimately must choose between fame and family.

There was not a frame to be seen of *Any Questions for Ben?* but the audience instead got a comedy routine from Rob Sitch and Tom Gleisner from Working Dog, which Pearlman described as "the only Australian production company that has a flawless track record". (*The Dish* and *The Castle*, both mentioned above, both came out of that stable). Sitch directed the script which he wrote with Gleisner and Santo Cilauro.

The film was written with Australian actor Josh Lawson in mind but it was in response to the large number of comedians that flow through the Working Dog offices who all seem to be having mid-life crises at the age of 27, despite seemingly having everything. The film was previously known simply as 25.

“They never think about the future and we started to wonder what would happen if they did start thinking about the future,” said Sitch. He also posed a question that explained the title: most people who have achieved something are invited back to their old school’s careers night and go back feeling a bit chuffed, but if you went back and no-one asked you any questions, would you start asking questions about yourself?

The film was shot in November/December 2010 in the heart of Melbourne’s CBD, Queenstown in New Zealand, and Yemen (seriously).

As exhibitors will see when the film arrives in a little black box ready for Australia Day 2012, *Any Questions for Ben?* also features Daniel Henshall, Christian Clark, Felicity Ward – and Rachael Taylor. “You know you’ve cast well when you only ever see them in lingerie commercials”, Sitch joked.

Another example of how Australian films are alive and well at the AIMC, came from former Queensland Premier Peter Beattie, who formally declared the conference open on Monday morning. The chair of the National Association of Cinema Operators, which runs the AIMC, said it was NACO’s intention to always open with an Australian film: this year it was *The Cup*, last year it was *Tomorrow When The War Began* and the year before it was *Charlie & Boots*.

As managing director of Paramount in Australia, Mike Selwyn, said as the final key message of his presentation on Monday afternoon: there is clearly an appetite for mainstream Australian movies.

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# Coast Confidential

WITH DANIEL MEERS

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American actor Kevin James takes a wary look at a koala during a visit to Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary yesterday. James is in the country to promote his new film Zookeeper, where he plays, believe it or not, a zookeeper who can talk to animals. The former star of the TV sitcom King of Queens said he was loving his first visit to Australia. James made a surprise appearance earlier in the day at the Australian International Movie Convention at Jupiters Hotel & Casino to talk about Zookeeper during the Sony Pictures presentation. Photo: GLENN HAMPSON



## Priscilla struts to our No.1 as Elliott hits town with new best men

**MARIA LEWIS**  
lewismm@goldcoast.com.au

NEARLY 20 years ago, he took us on an adventure through the Australian desert.

Now director Stephan Elliott's iconic film, *The Adventures Of Priscilla, Queen Of The Desert*, has been named the No.1 film in the Bulletin's Oz 100: The Greatest Australian Films.

The colourful comedy strutted to the top position on our lift-out, available in today's Bulletin as a special reverse edition of Play maga-

zine, and Elliott said he was unbelievably flattered.

"What I'm surprised about is for years I've called it the ol' ball and chain because it just doesn't go away," he said.

"It amazes me that all these years later it still means so much to people.

"It's coming up to 20 years now since the film and it's still finding new life."

Elliott is on the Gold Coast today for the final day of the Australian International Movie Convention at Jupiters Hotel and Casino.

The Australian filmmaker, whose other major films include *Easy Virtue* and *Eye Of The Beholder*, is introducing his new film, *A Few Best Men*, during Icon Films' presentation.

Tipped as an Australian version of *The Hangover*, Elliott will watch the film for the first time with delegates and said he was excited, fascinated and terrified all at the same time.

"The day you lose those butterflies is the day you get out of the business," he said.

*A Few Best Men* was written by Dean Craig (*Death At A Funeral*) and stars Twilight actor Xavier Samuel as a groom who travels to Australia with his three best men for the wedding.

Also starring Olivia Newton-John, Kris Marshall and Rebel Wilson, Elliott said the film was *Die Hard* at a wedding. "We've pushed the boundaries of bad behaviour on this," he said.

*A Few Best Men* hits cinemas in January.



Priscilla director Stephan Elliott is in town to introduce his newest film, *A Few Best Men*

Photo: DAVID CLARK



Courier Mail

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# CONFIDENTIAL



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## Elliott on bridal path

**STEPHAN Elliott**, director of *The Adventures of Priscilla Queen of the Desert*, is getting back into the wedding game.

Elliott today will unveil his next film, *A Few Best Men* starring **Xavier Samuel** (pictured) and **Olivia Newton-John**, at the Australian International Movie Convention on the Gold Coast.



The film, which opens on Australia Day next year, covers the wedding of an English lad who comes to Australia with three best men to marry his bride.

Elliott says he was “probably the world’s first video wedding pioneer” and shot up to 4000 weddings, turning into a prima donna director.

“This deranged sense of power started coming out when I realised what I could do,” he says.



# Stars align for Coast film convention finale

**MARIA LEWIS**

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THE credits rolled on the 66th Australian International Movie Convention at Jupiters Hotel and Casino yesterday.

The five-day event went out on a high, with Stephan Elliott's new film, *A Few Best Men*, bringing down the house at the Icon Pictures presentation.

The raunchy wedding comedy, from the writer of *Death At A Funeral*, was a huge hit with delegates and introduced by the director himself.

Elliott, best known for hits *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* and *Easy Virtue*, said he

moved back to Australia from the UK to make the film.

"I had a few ideas for a comedy and this script landed on my desk," he said. "Richard Curtis (*Love Actually*) said if you get three laugh-out-loud moments during a script you're on to something and by the time I got to my third I knew it was . . . my next film."

Despite not being as star-studded as last year's convention when Mark Wahlberg, Will Ferrell, Rhys Darby and the cast of *Tomorrow, When The War Began* were in town, the industry event still had plenty to offer.

Australian film industry legend Natalie Miller OAM said the convention was "a credit to organisers" and suggested an exciting year of films ahead.

"It's amazing in this economic climate to get record numbers attending and to have all the distributors putting their best foot forward," she said.

Miller said her personal highlights of the convention were Woody Allen's new film *Midnight In Paris*, Australian thriller *The Hunter* with Willem Dafoe, and *A Few Best Men*.



**Sophie Lowe, Anthony LaPaglia and Rebecca Gibney at the convention at Jupiters**

**Photo: MIKE BATTERHAM**

## Hopscotch plans features from Stuart Beattie, Robert Luketic

26 August, 2011 | By [Sandy George](#)

At a packed AIMC, Troy Lum says Hopscotch's new production arm could have four films shooting within the next year.

Hopscotch Features is to seek production funding from government agency Screen Australia for *I, Frankenstein*, to be directed by Stuart Beattie (*Tomorrow*, *When The War Began*), and the romcom/heist movie *Brilliant*, from Robert Luketic (*Legally Blonde*).

Hopscotch managing director Troy Lum mentioned the project at the Australian International Movie Convention (AIMC), held last week at Jupiters Hotel and Casino on Queensland's Gold Coast.

The production arm of the Australian distributor, a joint venture formed with producer Andrew Mason and writer John Collee in 2008, is clearly ready to go into production. Indeed, Lum told ScreenDaily that he hopes filming will start on four films within the next year and another eight are in active development. (Entertainment One bought a slice of distribution entity Hopscotch this year but not Hopscotch Features).

Lum was one of 10 distributors who presented their upcoming movie slates to a record 960 delegates, 650 of whom attended for the entire five days of AIMC.

Universal and Sony chose not to screen a film in its entirety in their three-hour presentations — and Hopscotch didn't have time in its mini-presentation — but Roadshow/Warner Bros (*Crazy Stupid Love*), Paramount (*Footloose*), 20th Century Fox (*What's Your Number*), Walt Disney (*Real Steel*), Icon (the home-grown *A Few Best Men*) and Hoyts (*The Three Musketeers*) did. Smaller distributors got five minutes each only during one of the dinners under the Australian Independent Distributors Association banner.

The event opened with local production *The Cup* from Roadshow, and Madman and Hopscotch scored evening slots for *The Hunter*, another home-grown film, and *Midnight in Paris*, respectively. Arguably the anticipation around the commercial potential of other Australian films too is unprecedented — they include *Any Questions for Ben?*, *Goddess*, *Mental*, *Kath & Kim*, *Bait*, *Wolf Creek 2* and the studio-funded *Happy Feet 2*.

The AIMC is hosted by the National Association of Theatre Owners — Australasia, formed this year, and Ian Sutherland has had a big hand in revitalising the event over the past three years. During his time it moved from the Royal Pines Resort into Jupiters, where a 1,000 seat cinema enables all events to happen on-site. Works is about to begin expanding the theatre to 2,000 seats.

Sutherland is stepping down as a key consultant to take up a new job at Event Cinemas as general manager of digital content at Event Cinemas (owned by the AHL Group). He is leaving confident that the AIMC is a world class event in top shape, he said. The convention costs more than \$1 million to stage and the presentations and organization all appeared to go flawlessly.

"I think some mediocrity had crept into some presentations," said Sutherland. "I said to the distributors 'You are competitors that try to blow each other out of the water throughout the year and you have to do that here too'."

"The delegate numbers are skewed towards exhibitors and those guys are not always part of the glitz and glamour ... part of our job is to give them some razzamadazzle," he said, the morning after a closing night that featured lobster on the menu and dancing girls on stage.

Many visiting executives from the US studios were on hand and chief executive of the National Association of Theatre Owners, John Fithian, was one of the keynote speakers.

A new award for outstanding industry achievement was introduced to honour the Australian producer of *The King's Speech*, Emile Sherman, business partner of UK-based Iain Canning.

Maeve Dermody (*Griff the Invisible, Black Water*) was crowned star of the year and Sophie Lowe (*Beautiful Kate, Blame*) and Lincoln Lewis (*Tomorrow, Where The War Began*) rising stars.

Paramount's *Tomorrow* won the award for the highest grossing Australian film, and Sony's *My Wedding and Other Secrets* the highest grossing New Zealand film in New Zealand. Roadshow's *Harry Potter & the Deathly Hallows Part 2* was the highest grossing film in Australia, in New Zealand and in 3D, while Rialto's *The Girl Who Played with Fire*, was the highest grossing foreign-language film in Australia.

The most prestigious of the AIDA awards, for independent spirit, went to veteran Bob Parr, head of programming at Wallis Cinemas in South Australia.

The convention prize celebrating marketing went to Suzanne Stretton-Brown, from Universal, for her campaign for *Bridesmaids*.

At her studio, she said, the overseas bosses let Australia run with their own ideas and creative. In this case her all-female team based the campaign on *Bridesmaids* being "the second most anticipated wedding of the year": Kate Middleton and Prince William's was held eight weeks prior to the film's release. From the outset, the campaign was aimed squarely at women and more than 20,000 people saw the film for free in order to spread good word of mouth.

# SCREENHUB

## AIMC 2011: doesn't every sales team need a chipmunk suit?

by: [Sandy George](#)

Screen Hub

Friday 26 August, 2011

*On Monday, Sandy George will analyse the serious issues arising from the Movie Convention. For today, she has been temporarily overwhelmed by hokum, glitz and a kissable koala at the Movie Convention, and surrenders to her fine sense of humour.*

Yesterday at around lunchtime, I rushed out of the massive theatre in the bowels of Jupiters Hotel and Casino and up to my room on the ninth floor to do something or other. It was the last day of the annual Australian International Movie Convention and there was about 15 minutes to spare between the end of Hopscotch's presentation and the beginning of Hoyts'. Neither of the plastic credit card keys would open the door.

The light should have been green but it was red. Again. Red. Again. Red. Again. Back into the lift and down again. The young man in reception looked a little sweaty and had eyes of a quite unusual blue. Suddenly it occurred to me that perhaps he was an alien and I shouldn't go back to my room because unspeakable things were behind the door. I realised I hadn't left Jupiters since arriving for the convention -- four days -- and what I was doing indoors was starting to have an uncomfortable impact.

Going to the convention is like going to a multiplex and being trapped inside for the rest of your life. There is nothing comforting about it: it's a full frontal assault of hard sell and film at a decibel level that makes the seats shudder. (Except it's not actually film any more, of course, but digital, but for clarity's sake, let's keep calling it film.) The film part means it is an assault on the senses: a violent uppercut one minute, then the attacker plays with your psychology with a beguiling laugh or a sexy scene.

The hard sell part means that after a while there is no trusting what anyone says. How could all those distributors in all those presentations be promising exhibitors the biggest and best year ahead with straight faces?

Even when former Premiere Peter Beattie officially opened the convention on a wet Monday morning it was a sales pitch: "Welcome to sunny Queensland. If you put your head out the window, that's just special effects." Even the cute moments are about promoting a film: managing director Stephen Basil-Jones touching noses with a koala from the Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary during the Sony Pictures presentation when visiting *Zookeeper* star Kevin James wouldn't and -- bless him -- 20th Century Fox sales director Russell Anderson coming on stage dressed in a chipmunk suit to draw attention to the "must-see" *Alvin & the Chipmunks 3: Chipwrecked* from 20th Century Fox.

Filmmakers call themselves the Australian film industry but this annual convention, held annually on the Gold Coast, epitomises the showbusiness end of exhibition and distribution: the final "Carnivale of Colours" closing night dinner was hosted by Dancing with the Stars judge Todd McKenney and had dancing girls and lobster. This convention is also all about making money -- remember that tickets sales in Australia alone were worth an extraordinary \$1.128 billion in 2010 principally thanks to Hollywood fare. (That said, there was an inordinate amount of excitement around upcoming Australian films this year which was fabulous to see. *The Cup*, *The Hunter* and *A Few Best Men* were all screened and the director of the latter, Stephan Elliott was one of the darlings of the week because he told raunchy jokes and turned up with a film that delegates saw and judged to be commercial and exercised belly muscles growing with hotel food.)

The convention's focus on money is why local distribution executives used the stage to constantly talked about how much they made on last year's films and how much they are going to from this, as did the many US studio bosses in town for the presentations. It's why the focus regularly turned to which junk food partner had signed on to add grunt to a marketing campaign. It's why the film awards are judged on one thing -- money -- and why every film that grosses more than \$10 million since the last convention won a prize. It's why if a film is based on a book that's sold millions of copies it's mentioned up front. It's why every distributor argued that at least one of their films was going to be the start of "the next big franchise".

This focus on money is also why exhibitors grumbled about those distributors (Universal and Sony) who chose not to run whole films in their three-hour presentation because they want to judge what is going to make them money themselves. It's why the independent exhibitors privately grumble between themselves about what sliding percentage they have to pay distributors (terms) and how often they have to show their films (policy, and it is a sliding scale too) each day – let's face it, just one or two guys in head office decides what all the major cinemas pay. And it's why distributors continually thank the exhibitors big and small for the success of last year's films because it is the exhibitors who take the money on their behalf and get to keep some for their trouble.

After a day or two of watching presentations, certain phrases seem to echo through the mind. This one is "like nothing you've ever seen before" (*The Odd Life of Timothy Green* from Walt Disney). "This film is going to take you by surprise" (*The Women on the Sixth Floor* from Palace, to name just one). This one is "high concept" (*Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* from Fox) or "tough and uncompromising" (*The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo*, the remake, from Sony). This film has "kick-arse action" (*X* from Potential) or "Oscar potential" (*Bel Ami* from Hopscotch) or will be "critically driven" (*We Need to Talk About Kevin*, also from Hopscotch).

Steven Spielberg films got their own phrases: they are "epic motion picture events" and "important films of our time" and there always seems such a lot of them. There was also so many 3D films that some of the older delegates got the equivalent of tennis elbow from taking their 3D glasses on and off for the 3D clips and trailers. And many of the films were 3D dramas rather than big action pictures. On *Life of Pi*, Fox says it was used to "exaggerate not enhance". Icon says it has the first martial arts film in 3D in *Flying Swords of Dragon Gate*.

Some of the distributors got their presentations so right and some did not. Usually the problem was around not enough show and too much tell from both real people on stage and from US studio executives, filmmakers and stars addressing delegates via pre-recorded interviews from across the pacific (one was even instructed to throw in "fair dinkum"). Or too much footage was shown of certain films. More than once someone sitting nearby in the dark said "OK, we get the picture". Sometimes the jokes hit the target, sometimes they fell off and down into the boys' club.

All of them tried for humour. Paramount, for example, put managing director Mike Selwyn and his cohorts on one side of the stage on a white lounge in front of a photo of the studio while Richard Payten and Andrew Mackie, the poor cousins from Transmission, were at the other side on a threadbare brown sofa in a grungy.

Australian producers, writers and directors who are serious about staying in the business for the duration are mad if they don't go at least once to the Australian International Movie Convention to witness all this first hand, to meet and hear the people who are much more able to judge what the general public will respond to on the big screen, and to see what homegrown fare is up against in terms of competition.

To go to just one would make filmmakers understand why blaming the distributor is a mug's game. To the distributors, and even more so exhibitors, it's all product. If a film fails in its first weekend there's a long queue waiting to take its place. There might be regret that the effort and money that went into the campaign was lost, there might be sadness if a certain film has pulled the heart strings, but there is no time for too much weeping. There's plenty more films coming through the pipeline that require just as much emotional investment.

The event can also be useful for tracking what films give exhibitors an audible electric charge the minute the trailer for them appears on screen because that is about the only real sound that can be heard at the movie convention. An example is the upcoming big screen version of the TV show *The Inbetweeners* from Roadshow.

It's also a good place to see what subjects shouldn't be developed because there's enough films like that already on the market. Examples include sharks (*Bait* from Paramount, *Shark Night* from Icon), tsunamis (*Bait* from Paramount, *The Impossible* from Hoyts), nasty diseases (*Contagion* from Roadshow, *The Bay* from Icon) and anything that looks 300 or Lord of the Ringsesque.

It may also be too late to make films on the subject of how time poor everyone is: Fox has *In Time*, and has promised that actors Justin Timberlake and Amanda Seyfried are touring to Australia, and Roadshow has *I Don't Know How She Does It*, in which Sarah Jessica Parker plays a working mother overwhelmed

by her busy life. It sounds perfect for busy women but I'm not sure if they will have time to go.

All in all, the convention is a wonderful learning experience on many levels. It is also superbly well organised: Amanda Cox and Ian Sutherland and others too deserve much applause for that although one wonders what they've said to Jupiters about the 960 delegates (650 go for the whole time) given that it is the only hotel I have ever encountered that requires payment in advance.

And, of course, there will be enduring images from what's been seen on screen for me: Meryl Streep playing Maggie Thatcher in *The Iron Lady* (Icon); Olivia Newton John swinging from a chandelier after her character has had a couple of lines of coke (and I'm not talking about the product of one of the convention's major sponsors here) and quite a few glasses of champers in *A Few Best Men* (Icon); Adam Sandler playing opposite Adam Sandler in drag, as the brother and the sister in *Jack And Jill* (Sony); and, from the poster rather than the footage, Sean Penn as an aging rock star in *This Must Be The Place* (Hopscotch).

And thank the lord that more women get smutty lines and get to carry the big guns compared to last time I went to the convention a couple of years back.

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# SCREENHUB

## AIMC Awards

by: [Sandy George](#)

Stars of Tomorrow: Lincoln Lewis (*Tomorrow, When The War Began*), Sophie Lowe (*Blame, Beautiful Kate*).

Star of the Year: Maeve Dermody (*Griff The Invisible, Blackwater*).

Murray Forrest Award: Yoram Gross.

Inaugural Outstanding Industry Achievement Award: Emile Sherman.

Highest Grossing Foreign Language Film: *The Girl Who Played with Fire* (Rialto), \$3,122,065.

Highest Grossing Film in New Zealand: *Harry Potter & the Deathly Hallows Part 2* (Roadshow), \$7,570,533.

Highest Grossing Film and Highest Grossing 3D Film in Australia: *Harry Potter & the Deathly Hallows Part 2* (Roadshow), \$50 million and still screening.

The Award for Highest Grossing New Zealand Film: *My Wedding and Other Secrets* (Sony), \$668,253.

Highest Grossing Australian Film: *Tomorrow When the War Began* (Paramount), \$13,508,899.

Movie Marketer of the Year: Suzanne Streeton-Brown and her team for *Bridesmaids* (Universal).

A total of 38 films were also celebrated because they grossed more than \$10 million each since the last Convention.

Australian Independent Distributor's Association (AIDA) Awards

Best Independent Regional Cinema: Avoca Beach Picture Theatre, NSW

Best Multiplex: Rivoli Cinemas, Vic

Best Independent Urban Cinema: Nova Carlton, Vic

Best New Zealand Cinema: Lido Cinema, Auckland

Independent Spirit Award: Bob Parr, Wallis Cinemas, SA.

### Sandy George

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Gossip time

 coastconfidential.com.au



# Coast Confidential

WITH REGINA KING AND PETER FLOWERS

## Glitz gala for the Carnivale

TALK about hamming it up!

It was all glitz and glam at Jupiters Pavilion Ballroom on Thursday night when the 2011 Australian International Movie Convention held its "Carnivale of Colours" gala celebration award dinner.

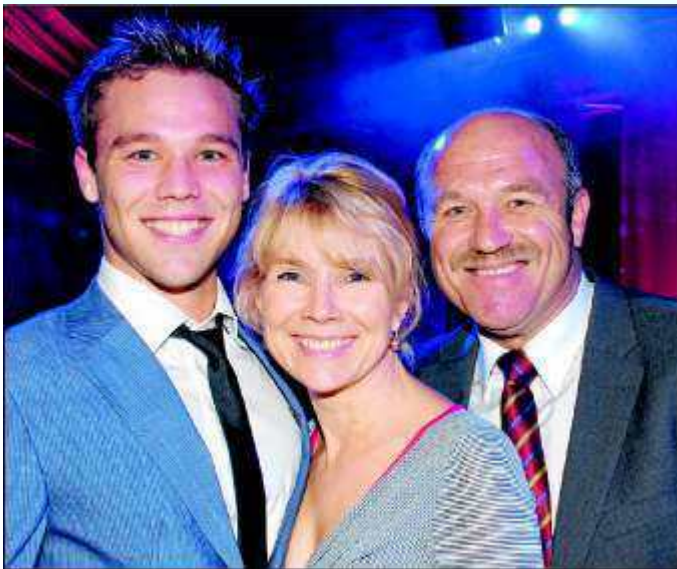
The night was hosted by

Todd McKenney, who said he was looking forward to reprising his role as Peter Allen in a revival of "The Boy from Oz".

Two of our bright young stars, Lincoln Lewis and Sophie Lowe, took out the Male and Female Star of Tomorrow award, with

Lincoln's parents, Jacqui and former Broncos star Wally, rushing to give him a congratulatory hug.

After the presentations that groovy show band "Kick" provided the rest of the evening's entertainment.



**Lincoln, Jacqui and Wally Lewis**



**Madonna  
Williams and  
Sonia Deakin**

**RIGHT:  
Pauline  
Kelly,  
Matthew  
Prea and  
Maeve  
Dermody**



**El Erdmane and Rebekka Schafferius**



**Clare Katavich and Kerri Anders**



# Coast Confidential

WITH REGINA KING AND PETER FLOWERS

## Seen & heard

**ALL** heads turned and stared when actor, Anthony LaPaglia, was seen dining at Shuck. He was also seen buying children's clothes at Seed, Marina Mirage, where the sales-girls said he was ultra-charming.

SPIED window shopping in Surfers over the weekend were Sir Llew Edwards and his wife, affectionately called Lady Jane, who were also noticed enjoying the Broadbeach Jazz Festival.

**GENERAL** Manager of Sofitel Gold Coast Marcus Hanna's wife Kelly has just given birth to a bouncing baby boy, Daniel Morris Hanna. All are well and happy.

**GREAT** to see Peter Beattie and wife Heather kicking-up their heels and joining in the fun at the Australian International Movie Convention Gala Celebration Awards on Thursday evening.

**CHANNEL 7** glamour girl Sharyn Ghidella looked a vision in pale pink and orange silk chiffon as she strolled through RACV Royal Pines Resort on Thursday night.

**COMEDIAN** Anh Do was heard announcing at the Australian Meat Industry Council convention that he's signed a deal with Russell Crowe to turn his book, The Happiest Refugee, into a film.

**THE** iconic vocalist Melissa Tkautz gave a special performance of her new single, Something about You, at Escape last night. Melissa first shot to fame on TV's E-Street and then went on to release the highest-selling single of the 90s Read My Lips. She is excited about returning to TV for season two of Swift and Shift Couriers.

**DOWN** from Shanghai, where she is working on the opening of the new Langham Hotel, is communications corporate Donna Campbell. She was in Brisbane for two days to see one of her best friends, solicitor Tracey Harrip, awarded for services to France on Monday night.



# War on film piracy ignites



VETERAN actor Roy Billing was a surprise guest at the Australian International Movie Convention (AIMC) this week. But he wasn't here to promote a new film.

The Underbelly star spoke out against film piracy during the Australian Federation Against Copyright Theft's (AFACT) presentation.

Billing, who is one of Australia's most recognisable faces for his work in TV and film, said copyright theft was one of the industry's most important fights.

"Although it's extremely damaging, it can be stopped," he said.

"Preventing cam-cording is one of the most important strategies our industry has.

"It's a job that requires constant vigilance. All it takes is one illegal copy of a movie, which triggers an avalanche of illegal copies."

Billing said the key to the prevention of film piracy was "preventing at the source – in our cinemas".

He also announced the results of an Access Economics report that found the Australian film and TV industry contributed \$6.1 billion to the economy in the 2009-10 financial year.

Billing said the industry needed to continue working hard to protect its content and the full-time jobs of 50,000 people nationally.

A familiar face on the Gold Coast, Billing filmed his last two features here; fantasy blockbuster *The Chronicles Of Narnia: The Voyage Of The Dawn Treader* and marching band musical *A Heartbeat Away*.

Despite concerns about piracy and with the global economy struggling, the Australian box office is sprinting ahead.

That was the message from day three of the convention on Tuesday.

Last year was the highest grossing box office year in Australian film history – a record \$1.128 billion.

John Fithian, president and chief executive of the National Association of Theatre Owners USA, discussed this growth in his keynote address.

"In America we're kind of biased, we think we're the home of Hollywood and home to this business," he said.

"But we need to be more humble because you're doing more with less.

"You have about 11 per cent (of the size) of our box office.

"We have about 40,000 (cinema) screens in America and there are roughly 2000 in Australia."

But this didn't stop a 4 per cent increase at the Australian box office last year, marking a third consecutive year of record-breaking growth.

In his opening address, former Queensland premier Peter Beattie said 2011 would be another "incredible year" at the box office.

"In 2011, a record total of 38 films have earned in excess of \$10 million," he said.



**Roy Billing (above) says piracy of movies can be prevented**

# SCREENHUB

## AIMC 2011: rushing to digital without smashing the windows

by: [Sandy George](#)

Monday 29 August, 2011

*Sandy George asked Australian and US powerbrokers to identify the key trends and issues, and discovered colliding strands and added urgency.*

The 66th Australian International Movie Convention (AIMC) reminded John Fithian, chief executive of the US-based National Association of Theatre Owners (NATO), that the biggest issues facing exhibitors are the same the world over and they are movie theft (he prefers this term over piracy), maintaining the theatrical window and ensuring a smooth transition to digital.

“Five or 10 years ago the key challenges facing exhibitors were primarily local and were around government policies and negotiations between film suppliers and exhibitors, but now they are global,” he says.

When asked what issues were front of mind for him, Michael Hawkins, executive director of the National Association of Cinema Owners – Australasia (NACO), also mentions piracy and digital but says windows have not been challenged in Australia as they have in the US. And he added classification, especially issues around how some state governments apply the MA15+ classification. NACO hosts the AIMC and was born out of the Motion Picture Exhibitors Association of Queensland six months ago.

The transition to digital was a hot topic at the convention. Delegates learned that no 35mm prints will be in circulation in Hong Kong after January 2012, that more than 20,000 US screens, that is more than 50 per cent, have been converted to digital in the US, and that Australia has 811 digital screens, or about 40% of the total.

Digital cinema saves a lot of costs for distributors and exhibitors too, including added programming flexibility, quality that does not deteriorate, the option to run 3D sessions, access to alternative content and lower staffing and freight costs. But installation is costly.

“The last remaining challenge is to make sure smaller operators survive and thrive,” says Fithian, one of several who publicly urged exhibition delegates to move quickly if they hadn’t already. Time is running out to negotiate virtual print fee (VPF) deals, which have the effect of passing some of the installation costs to distributors.

While not speaking specifically about Australia, Fithian’s comment carries weight in this territory where the major exhibition circuits, working together as a single consortium, have done a VPF deal but not the independents. Members of the Independent Cinemas Association of Australia (ICAA) and Omnilab, however, are working to correct this situation in Australia and New Zealand.

“What people should realise is that if independent cinemas do not get access to a competitive VPF through ICAA, not the short-term one being bandied about by other companies (a reference to AHL-owned Edge Digital Technology), they will be disadvantaged for 20 years and many small screens may close,” says ICAA chief executive Mark Sarfaty. The deal being negotiated with the major US and independent distributors is open to any independent exhibitor, not just ICAA members, he adds.

“A competitive VPF deal means one comparable with the major circuits, that provides a 10-year warranty, ensures systems are stable and up to date and is delivered by independent companies to independent companies.”

Sarfaty says independents deliver 28 per cent of the annual Australian gross box office and ICAA members, which include Palace, Dendy, Wallis, Ace, Grand and Cineplex, represent about 90% of this 28 per cent. He wishes the local production industry would throw its weight behind ICAA’s endeavours because independent cinema supports a bigger range of Australian films than the majors. He referenced Palace figures to prove his point: the chain represents four per cent of the national gross box office but supplied 44 per cent of *Beautiful Kate*’s revenue, 42 per cent of *Samson & Delilah*’s and about one-third of *Balibo* and *Bright Star*’s.

"The court case is distracting attention away from the main game of ensuring independent operators, many of which are based in regional communities, make the move to digital in an orderly, timely and cost efficient way." (Sarfaty is referring to the court case, now on appeal, in which Digital Cinema Network accused its now former chair, Michael Smith, of breaching his fiduciary duties to DCN by handing documents he shouldn't have to Omnilab. Screen Hub has described the competing arguments [here](#)).

"I don't want to be a rude American and interject myself in the politics of local associations but ICAA has a digital cinema buying group for its members, which is really important," says Fithian. "What happened in every market around the world was that the biggest companies were able to negotiate their own deals -- in the US we have about three companies that control about 60 per cent of our market and here in Australia two companies control about 70 per cent of the market -- but the dozens and dozens of small exhibitors in both territories could not possibly negotiate on their own. We put together a buying group in the US about four years ago to negotiate the transition for hundreds of our members and it's working. ICAA is serving that purpose in Australia."

For different reasons, Fithian also values the recent arrival of NACO, which seeks to represent exhibitors big and small. (For the record, some in ICCA resent NACO's ambitions.)

"I am very pleased that Australian exhibitors have come together this past March to form NACO as Australia has not been unified on a national basis before and this will make it easier to work cooperatively on our shared issues."

NACO's membership, which includes some Australian major exhibitors, is spread through 50 countries. The organisation generally does not get involved in local issues, although it does work with many like associations.

"We're the largest and because our home turf is Hollywood, we feel responsible for bringing the industry together around the world," says Fithian.

Hawkins says NACO represents 250 independent screens but would not deal with any issues that just concern its major exhibition members or just its independent members. It would be a conflict for NACO to negotiate a VPFs for only some of its members.

"VPFs are very important for all exhibitors and the sooner they are done the better" says Hawkins.

Pressed on whether there were challenges unique to Australia in the cinema business, Fithian said it was important to nurture local films: "Hollywood product can be mediocre some years and those countries with strong local product can ride that out easier. Obviously Australia can make good movies: *Red Dog* was just brilliant. The more *Red Dogs* they have the more leverage cinemas have with Hollywood."

The vast land mass and sparse population could mean that service companies might not be able to get to some cinemas quickly when there are problems with new digital equipment in its early years, Fithian says. Getting efficient and economic satellite delivery in place could also be challenging. He predicts that in a year's time 75-85 per cent of US cinemas will be getting films by satellite.

"In Australia there are already companies setting up and buying time on the birds," he says.

Digital technology has always been touted for its ability to permit different kinds of content to light up screens but the American says it remains the most speculative part of the business. Getting licences to screen live sport has proved difficult but some arts programming is working.

"Who would have thought that people in Nebraska would be watching opera on a Saturday afternoon," he laughed. "No-one saw that coming .... I hope we will get into 10-20 per cent range someday but there are a lot of hurdles."

Coincidentally, Ian Sutherland is stepping down from his three-year role as a consultant to the AIMC and taking up a new job as general manager of digital content at Amalgamated Holdings Limited (AHL), which owns Event Cinemas. He joins the company in early September and will work closely with AHL managing director David Seargeant, and existing executives Jane Hastings and Peter Cody.

"I have an idea of how things could be done differently and it is about the cinema being a destination point, an entertainment hub," says Sutherland. "A lot of people are feeling their way; it reminds me of

when the internet started.”

Time will tell how he eventually leverages off what Fithian describes as a very vibrant market and one of the most important in the world for Hollywood.

“Thirty-nine per cent growth (in gross box office revenue) in five years is quite remarkable for a mature market like Australia,” says Fithian. “You are slightly beating the global average of 38 per cent but that includes places like China and Russia where growth is exploding.

“The US is up only 20 per cent in five years. You had 11 per cent of our box office last year and did that on five per cent of our screens. Plus Australia also has only seven per cent of our population.”

He noticed something else about Australians this visit too: “They are the most pleasant people in the world and the most patient. A distributor presents a three-hour programme and no-one leaves! There are two-and-a-half hours of panels back to back and Australians stick to it. It is a country of stamina. It is a great convention, and I’ve been to every one in the world. It is very accessible and well run and very educational. But we move faster.”

By next year the 1,000-seat cinema at Jupiters will be expanded to 2,000 seats.



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## REEL TIME MICHAEL BODEY

CASHED-UP local producer Hopscotch Features announced two high-profile films at last week's Australian International Movie Convention. Australian filmmakers **Stuart Beattie** and **Robert Luketic** are returning home within the next six months to film new projects – and for Luketic, incredibly, it will be for his first Australian feature. *Tomorrow, When the War Began* director and *Collateral* screenwriter Beattie will shoot *I, Frankenstein*, a film based on a DarkStorm Studios graphic novel by **Kevin Greivoux**. It features characters Frankenstein's monster, the Invisible Man and Dracula and will be directed by *The Matrix*'s **Andrew Mason**. Luketic, best known for leaping to Hollywood and following his Victorian College of the Arts short *Titsiana Booberini* with *Legally Blonde*, will direct *Brilliant*, his first Australian feature. It is described as a cross between James Bond and *My Fair Lady*, which reminds *Reel Time* of **P. J. Hogan**'s description of his comedy *Mental* – now filming on the Gold Coast with **Toni Collette** and **Liev Schreiber** – as “*The Sound of Music* on acid”.

# SCREENHUB

## ICAA: clarification from CEO Mark Sarfaty

Screen Hub

Wednesday 31 August, 2011

*Mark Sarfaty, the CEO of the Independent Cinemas Association of Australia wishes to clearly describe the relationship between ICAA and NACO, the National Association of Cinema Operators-Australasia.*

[NACO](#) is the new national organisation that grew from the Motion Picture Exhibitors Association of Queensland to take over the running of the Australian International Movie Convention.

Last Monday, [Sandy George`s article](#) on the Movie Convention referred to both organisations, and prompted this letter from Mark:

Dear ScreenHub

I read with interest the article by Sandy George - AIMC 2011: rushing to digital without smashing the windows.

The article states that "some in ICAA resent NACO's ambitions (to represent exhibitors 'big and small')".

For the record, ICAA does not resent NACO.

To the contrary, ICAA has always supported a national exhibitors association and continues to do so. It is ICAA policy to work cooperatively with NACO on areas of common interest just as ICAA worked with NACO's predecessor, the Australian Cinema Exhibitors Coalition.

NACO Executive Director, Mike Hawkins (and former ICAA member) has previously noted that NACO is not a full service organisation while ICAA is. ICAA provides representation, advisory and business development services which are specific and unique to independent cinema operators and as Mr Hawkins notes in your article, some of the important positions taken by ICAA would represent a conflict for NACO.

All NACO members I have spoken to acknowledge and support the importance ICAA's continued work on behalf of independents such as the ICAA/Omnilab Virtual Print Fee scheme and business development platforms like the ICAA iPhone app - which has been developed uniquely for independent cinemas.

The role of ICAA in representing independent cinemas will remain an essential part of the theatrical sector but equally the role of NACO in supporting the sector with events such as Australian International Movie Convention and on issues such as VoD windows is vital.

ICAA congratulates NACO and the NACO board on its first year and a highly successful Movie Convention and we harbour no doubt that both NACO and ICAA will continue to co-exist as both organisations work positively to support a healthy and competitive cinema sector.

Regards

Mark Sarfaty| Chief Executive

Independent Cinemas Association of Australia

[www.independentcinemas.com.au](http://www.independentcinemas.com.au)



# Window on the war

*The sacrosanct theatrical distribution window has helped grow the global box office to more than \$US31 billion. But the situation is changing in North America thanks to premium video-on-demand. Brendan Swift takes a look at the local state of play.*

**A** REVOLUTION IS UNDERWAY. Consumers are demanding when and where they view their favoured screen content, sparking a fierce debate between the gatekeepers once in control – distributors and exhibitors.

Disney was the first to force exhibitors through the looking glass in early-2010 after closing *Alice in Wonderland's* theatrical release window from four to three months, prompting boycott threats from theatre owners.

Since then, Universal, Sony, Warner Bros and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox have gone further down the rabbit hole with a two-month release window on selected films, via DirecTV's premium video-on-demand (VOD) service, prompting scathing attacks from the US-based National Association of Theatre Owners (NATO).

NATO president John Fithian, who is a guest speaker at the Australian International Movie Convention, says the 60-day premium-VOD window is a radical departure from recent history.

"The current debate is not about the platforms of delivery, but the timing of the availability of movies in each of the platforms," he says via email. "It isn't a question of *if* but *when*. Also, to be blunt, if the movie industry gave consumers exactly what they wanted – movies for free everywhere at the same time – there would be no movie business and thus, no movies."

Australian cinema owners, who instigate a strict 120-day theatrical window, are just as adamant about protecting the status quo.

"If the public got used to a two or three month window, then the public is not going to go to the cinema," one cinema owner says.

The cinema business may generate more than \$1 billion annually at the local box office, but it is highly capital intensive. At the same time, cinema

owners are being forced to upgrade from 35mm to digital while the virtual print fees, which subsidise their installation, are yet to be finalised.

Nonetheless, declining DVD sales are forcing the major studio distributors to cut back their home entertainment divisions, whose sales underpin the mega-budgets required to create a summer blockbuster. (The Australian home entertainment market hasn't shown the same precipitous declines – at least not yet.)

Premium-VOD appears to be the favoured answer in North America although the newly-formed local National Association of Cinema Operators (NACO) says the issue remains an overseas one for now.

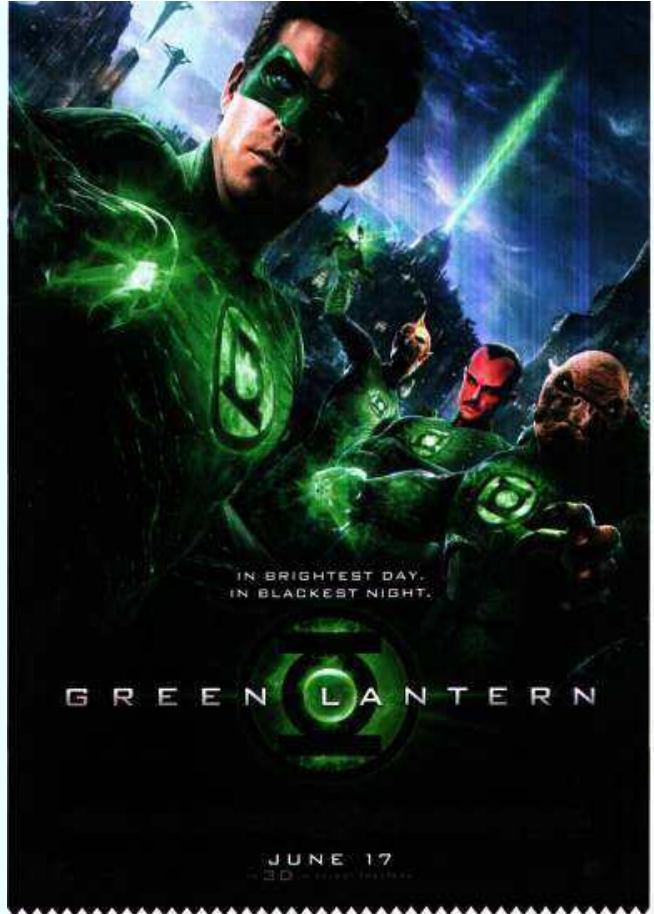
"Premium video-on-demand is not in Australia, there is no talk of it coming to Australia and, at present, we are just watching what is happening in the United States – obviously with some interest," NACO executive director Michael Hawkins says (see column on page 4).

The concentrated ownership of the local exhibition sector compared to the US makes it unlikely there will be a similar US-style exhibitor-distributor stoush here. But, if the changes being rolled out in the US take hold, it seems just as unlikely US studios will not expect some changes to flow through to their Australian off-shoots.

A level of frustration remains on the part of distributors, who have had unsuccessful discussions in the past with exhibitors about shortening windows for specific titles, usually for a holiday DVD release.

"The answer was no, a flat no, the 120-days is staying, we ain't giving you 90, because if we give it to one the floodgates will open," a distributor says.

Not everyone is convinced that such changes spell the end of the silver screens' lure.



**Green Lantern – yet another target of piracy.**

"I don't think it's going to affect the theatrical business at all," respected film and TV executive Greg Coote says. "I've been around long enough to remember that television was going to ruin it and... VCR was going to ruin the theatrical box office. It's fine – it's impervious to those things. Premium-VOD will have its place and it will be great and the industry needs it because the movies cost a lot of money to make, a lot of money to market."

Coote is a former joint managing director of Roadshow Distributors and former board member of Village Roadshow, which runs one of Australia's largest cinema chains.

He says the timing should be "like water in a glass – it'll find its own level. I think some movies will go early, some movies will go later."

Simultaneously underpinning the shift are consumers. Whether closing the 120-day theatrical-to-DVD window will help provide a legitimate alternative to rampant illegal downloading and replace the studio's declining DVD sales revenue, or simply eat into the theatrical returns of cinema owners, is still up for debate.

"It's the consumer now that makes the choice – the notion of us being just gatekeepers I think doesn't hold

up," Paul Wiegand, the co-founder of specialist distributor Madman, says.

But despite growing consumer demand, distributors have been slow to roll-out online distribution platforms while theatrical release dates still change with little warning.

Roadshow angered many local fans when it inexplicably delayed the release of Marvel blockbuster *Green Lantern* to mid-August, some seven weeks after other major territories saw the film from June 16.

The distributor provided no explanation to fans, which flooded its Facebook page looking for answers, and instead threatened to delete their posts. (Roadshow also ignored repeated requests from IF magazine.) Some fans openly admitted they would now seek out pirated versions of the film, which was shown across the Tasman on June 16, in line with the US.

An analysis by Adelaide-based analytics company Convergen found more than 1000 sites streaming copies of *Green Lantern* just three days after its June 16 release.

Four different *Green Lantern* versions, illegally recorded in cinemas, were also being made available through the Torrent network, with approximately 6700 copies actively 'seeded' to other users.



**IFC Films distributed Australian film X 'on demand' within one week of its theatrical release in the US.**

"You can't really differentiate how much of the activity is from Australia unless you go in and track the IPs of those downloading and seeding the torrents," according to Convergen managing director Anton Andreacchio. "That said, it can't be claimed that it is having no impact either."

Sony Pictures' last Australian release, *Red Hill*, also fell prey to piracy after the German distributor released the film on DVD before the Australian theatrical opening last November.

"From then on the piracy began to multiply at a rate even Sony's policing couldn't contain," producer Al Clark says. "By that stage VOD would have been irrelevant anyway. The horse had conclusively bolted."

At the smaller end of the spectrum where films like *Red Hill* typically play, the battle has already been decided, at least in North America.

Independent films are typically released via a strategy which mixes traditional distribution windows. Distributors such as IFC and Magnolia have built their business on tight distribution windows.

Several Australian films – such as sex-thriller *X* – have made their way into the US market via cinemas and

within a matter of days, through VOD.

*X* is scheduled to hit Australian cinemas in September. Like most, it's destined for a limited release followed by DVD some four months later in January, 2012. In the US however, IFC released the film in theatres on April 8 and, less than a week later, through VOD.

It raises an interesting question – why are so many local films, largely funded by taxpayers, available to widespread US audiences across multiple platforms, unlike Australia?

More than half of the 41 Australian films released in 2010 were shown on less than 19 screens, according to Screen Australia data. And Australians typically shun the majority of local films at the cinema, preferring to watch them on TV, according to the national agency's Beyond the Box Office report.

It is a state of affairs that Screen Australia is not keen to subvert, unlike its predecessor, the former Australian Film Commission.

It funded Peter Castaldi's distribution company, The Pack (which evolved into Pack Screen), under its innovative distribution program in 2010. Its strategy of small theatrical releases, followed by a DVD/VOD release, fell

from favour when Screen Australia revamped the program.

Its new \$450,000 innovative distribution fund has backed two distributors: Gil Scrine and Louise van Rooyen's BeamAfilm and John L Simpson's Titan View – neither encroach on the traditional theatrical window.

BeamAfilm plans to create a documentary portal for streaming video-on-demand documentaries while Titan View is playing low-budget features in non-traditional venues, such as RSL clubs, while simultaneously selling DVDs.

"We want to develop new platforms for inventive or niche content, to complement the cinema experience that exhibitors bring to audiences," Screen Australia's head of marketing Kathleen Drumm says. "Obviously this model is most suited to smaller films, with no theatrical distributor on board."

Titan View's first film distributed via its innovative strategy, *Codgers*, played to great success in late-June, attracting an audience of about 600 people to the Parramatta Riverside Theatre venue.

Tickets sold for about \$20 each and the company sold about 80 DVDs on the same night, priced from \$29.95 and above. Simpson says he is interested in tighter distribution windows but the debate will be led by the major distributors and exhibitors.

"We'd all love to do that but the last thing we want to do is threaten the livelihood of our independent exhibitors," he says.

"And this is really true – the best friends of Australian filmmakers are the independent cinemas because it's the independent more often than a multiplex who will take a risk on an Australian film."

Simpson is willing to take the idea a step further, suggesting a revenue-sharing model with exhibitors for those films released with a shorter theatrical window.

"It would be lovely to see them selling VOD vouchers for the films they're showing. Say, for example, I might go and see *The King's Speech* but my mum and dad might be too old to leave the house and I might buy a voucher, like I would with iTunes, and say, 'here I bought this at Hoyts today and you can see it at home.'"

Exhibitors argue that many Australian films – perhaps encouraged by the 40 per cent Producer Offset – should not be targeting widespread cinema screens at all. Larger-budgeted, commercially-oriented local fare, such as the upcoming thriller *Killer Elite*, do receive mainstream distribution and support.

However, even if these commercially-oriented films are the kind being encouraged by Screen Australia, it is unlikely to change the dominant art-house fare produced by a small country like Australia.

Umbrella Entertainment founder Jeff Harrison is taking a more aggressive distribution approach.

The specialty distributor (which is working with Castaldi) has been acquiring VOD rights across much of its catalogue in recent years and plans to have a fully-functional online VOD platform up and running within 12 months.

"The convergence that we are seeing between specialised and limited theatrical release, as well as VOD or subscription-VOD (in particular in the US market e.g. IFC Midnight and Magnolia) tells us that we will need to be ready to implement similar release strategies in the Australian domestic market in the future," Harrison writes via email.

He believes that wide releases still need a 120-day window to give cinema owners the best chance to generate a strong return. It's a different case at the smaller end of the spectrum.

"In fact, conversations with exhibitors at this year's ICAA [Independent

>> continued on page 34.

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**Sony Pictures' *Just Go With It* was released through DirecTV's Home Premiere premium VOD service. It grossed more than \$US100 million in North America.**



<< continued from page 8.

Cinemas Association of Australia] conference clearly indicated that the closing of windows, in particular for Australian and non-mainstream content would not affect them at this stage (i.e. smaller releases)," he writes.

Depending on the distribution model, online sales could provide distributors with up to double the profit margin as a typical theatrical strategy (exhibitors take up to 65 per cent of each ticket price but, with high overheads, book a much lower profit margin of about 8 per cent).

In contrast, NATO's Fithian believes a shorter theatrical window is a major threat against independent movies.

"With early home releases, cinema owners will have to dedicate even more screens to the big blockbusters to make as much money on them as quickly as possible. Many smaller pictures will be forced off of our screens.

"Also, with a consuming public accustomed to early home releases, independent movies will not have the necessary time to grow in the cinema run. Many Oscar contenders this past year (*Black Swan*, *The King's Speech*, *True Grit*, *The Fighter*) had very long runs in the cinema. That would be unlikely in a world of short windows."

Nonetheless, local production house, Instinct Entertainment, has chosen one of the most experimental distribution strategies for its latest feature, *Little Johnny the Movie*.

The radical change in approach was prompted after relatively strong box office and DVD sales generated by mainstream comedies *Strange Bedfellows* and *Charlie & Boots* failed to adequately flow through to private investors.

*Little Johnny the Movie* was released on one cinema screen during the Melbourne International Comedy Festival in April and has since been shown through video-on-demand and

in non-traditional venues such as RSL clubs and pubs, in an attempt to generate positive word-of-mouth.

"It's trying to find less crippling ways of marketing films," Instinct chief executive David Redman says.

The DVD was released on August 3, ahead of Father's Day. Redman says a key measure of the strategy's success will be whether sales pass the 5000 to 10,000 mark typically posted by straight-to-DVD films.

"In some ways, cinemas undervalue their product – it's not exclusivity that gives it its value, it's the quality of the experience and I think the affordability of it as an out-of-home entertainment experience," he says.

"And I don't think that'll change if people can see it in other ways as well. I think, arguably, particularly with independent films, the more people who see it, the more people will want to see it in cinemas." ①





# { STATE of the INDUSTRY }

*The National Association of Cinema Operators – Australasia (NACO) will present the 66th annual Australian International Movie Convention (AIMC) on the Gold Coast this year. NACO executive director Michael Hawkins outlines how the organisation plans to protect the substantial investment made by cinema owners.*



**FROM TIME TO TIME**, issues will present themselves that will affect or impact all exhibitors, irrespective of their size or structure.

Licensing fees, film classification and piracy are issues that require a whole-of-industry response.

The collapsing of windows between theatrical and video release is another issue NACO is monitoring closely in order to protect the investments exhibitors have made in this industry.

Premium video-on-demand, which has until recently been a hot topic in the US, has not been (and there has been no talk of it being) an issue in Australia or New Zealand but all NACO directors are keeping an eye out for any developments.

Piracy remains a major issue, although I do not like the term. To me it is movie theft – no more, no less. It has cost our industry billions of dollars, our economies billions of dollars, and too many people their jobs.

The industry is taking active steps to protect itself and NACO supports the activities of AFACT (Australian Federation Against Copyright Theft) and IPAF (Intellectual Property Awareness Foundation). Protection involves a twofold strategy: education and enforcement.

IPAF works tirelessly to raise public awareness about the need to respect content and businesses in the Australian film and TV industry. IPAF also manages a world-class educational resource, available free and online to secondary schools.

secondary schools.

In 2009, following the release of their annual consumer research, IPAF embarked on a unique campaign designed to target a specific segment of Australian consumers who regularly pirated screen content, called “Blind Actives”.

Some were pirates without knowing it – genuinely unaware or unsure of what was allowed – but most were deliberately avoiding the thought that what they were doing was actually theft.

These were the people that had sat through previous anti-piracy communications and nodded in agreement that it was a bad thing to do – they just didn’t think they were also the bad guys.

This was the strategic challenge for IPAF... how to engage these consumers with a message and a 30-second ad that asked them to stop and realise the real nature of what they were doing. The research provided some guidelines for the campaign.

First, these consumers had to be on-side from the beginning and to achieve that goal it was necessary to create the right tone. Humour could be a great ally. It hadn’t been used in this context before and a serious message could almost be delivered surreptitiously. Most importantly, the 30-second ad needed to get the Blind Actives to identify with an “it could be you” message so the ad needed to depict many different, yet iconic Australians.

From this strategic direction came the *Accidental Pirate* campaign which featured a major publicity push



in September, 2010. The campaign was embraced by cinemas nationwide. Well over 1000 major and independent cinemas ran the ad regularly in all sessions... many thanks to the partnership of Val Morgan.

The publicity campaign equaled \$3 million in media value and had the national support of both News Ltd and Radio National. In a first for a local anti-piracy campaign, the ad also had more than \$1 million worth of airplay on Foxtel, Austar and all Network Seven channels.

The results have been outstanding.

In two quarterly Nielsen surveys, the *Accidental Pirate* campaign scored the highest level of advertising recall recorded in this market over 14 quarters, and the highest level since the survey began. Almost half of those recalling the ad said it changed their view on film piracy and one-quarter specifically recalled the *Accidental Pirate* ad after only four months in the market.

I have a special affinity with the AFACT team, which enforce our movie theft laws.

Its success can be easily measured by the number of successful prosecutions against movie thieves.

In a recent joint industry submission to the convergence review, NACO advised the government that an estimated 23.7 per cent of global traffic was infringing copyright laws and movie piracy cost the Australian economy an estimated \$1.37 billion in the 12 months to July.

We needed the review committee to understand that the convergence of technology creates a number of regulatory challenges as content becomes accessible on

multiple platforms.

However, despite this development, the regulatory environment must continue to afford rightsholders existing intellectual property protections and assist Australia's development of a strong digital economy.

Our submission said community expectation that entertainment content, such as movies or TV shows, should be available on the web for free was not acceptable or appropriate if it involved the infringement of intellectual property rights.

I was delighted to be able to work with AFACT, the Motion Picture Distributors Association of Australia (MPDAA) and the Australian Home Entertainment Distributors Association (AHEDA) on this submission and intend to do so again in response to the government's current classification review.

I am reminded of what NACO's chairman, Peter Beattie, said at the March launch of our organisation: "Industry associations, such as this one, play a vital role in the system of government in this country, allowing governments to sound out initiatives and allowing an industry to have one voice in approaches to government".

This has certainly been borne out in our responses to governmental reviews of issues confronting our industry.

***NACO evolved from the former Motion Picture Exhibitors Association of Queensland. The board is comprised of major and independent cinema owners and more information can be found at the AIMC website at [www.movieconvention.com.au](http://www.movieconvention.com.au).***



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**ANDREW FENTON**  
**MOVIE NEWS**

# Perfect week for Asian film buffs

LOVERS of Asian cinema are in for a treat over the coming weeks with two mini film festivals being held at the Mercury Cinema as part of the OzAsia Festival (September 2 to 17). There are too many highlights to mention in the OzAsia On Screen program and in the Japanese Film Festival so head to [www.ozasiafestival.com.au](http://www.ozasiafestival.com.au). Tonight's opening-night film (at Wallis Piccadilly) is Norwood director Mario Andreacchio's *The Dragon Pearl* starring Sam Neill. The family film, which features special effects from Rising Sun Pictures, has already been a hit in China. It will be screened again on September 11 at the Mercury and is slated for a release later in the year.

**HONOUR FOR STALWART**  
**SOUTH Australian cinema**

SOUTH Australian cinema industry stalwart Bob Parr has been honoured with the Independent Spirit Award at the 66th Australian International Movie Convention. Parr is the program manager at Wallis Cinemas, responsible for selecting which films are screened across the state. He's

raised \$200,000 a year for charity thanks to film screenings at the Chelsea.

**OASIS UP THE CREEK**  
**DIRECTOR Greg McLean**

DIRECTOR Greg McLean will use Adelaide's Oasis Post Production for *Wolf Creek 2*. "We have a relationship with Oasis Post and they've posted both my films and are a creative bunch of guys so we basically have everything we need to do it here," he told *Encore*. The guys at Oasis are also working on Scott Hicks' *The Lucky One*, starring Zac Efron, to be released in the US on August 24, 2012.

**STORMY BOX OFFICE**  
**THE overall weekend box-**

office grosses in the US were some of the worst of the year. Studios blamed a hurricane, while critics blamed a poor crop of new releases. The acclaimed *The Help* was on top again with \$14 million, while *Columbiana* written by Luc Besson (*The Professional*) was second with \$10.3 million. *Don't Be Afraid of the Dark*, filmed in Melbourne, limped to \$8.3 million despite a wide release.



**Little gem:**  
**Sam Neill in**  
**Norwood**  
**director Mario**  
**Andreacchio's**  
**The Dragon**  
**Pearl.**



## FUTURE OF FILM ON SHOW

**VICKY ROACH and  
NEALA JOHNSON**

**T**HE movers and shakers who decide what films are on offer when we head to the cinema gathered on the Gold Coast last week for the Australian International Movie Convention.

Distributors previewed their releases for the coming year, with Sony Pictures pulling a surprise by calling Zookeeper star Kevin James on stage.

Hopscotch announced two big productions, which it claims will pour \$70 million into the local film industry. Based on a graphic novel, *I, Frankenstein* will be directed by Stuart Beattie (*Tomorrow When the War Began*). And Robert Legally Blonde Luketic will return home to direct *Brilliant*, about an epic diamond heist.

High-achieving movies and actors of the past year were also honoured at AIMC. Sydney actor Maeve Dermody was named News Ltd Austra-



**Star of the Year: Maeve Dermody accepts her award.**

lian Star of the Year for her work in *Griff the Invisible* and *Beautiful Kate*. The 26-year-old will soon head to LA to test the waters internationally.

Oscar-winning producer Emile Sherman (*The King's Speech*) was presented with the new AIMC Outstanding Industry Achievement Award.

Lincoln Lewis, of *Tomorrow When the War Began*, was named Male Star of Tomorrow.

The young actor was in awe of Aussie veteran Anthony LaPaglia, who presented the award.

Dermody's *Beautiful Kate* co-star Sophie Lowe was named Female Star of Tomorrow.

The Murray Frost Award for film craft went to veteran animator Yoram Gross, the Polish immigrant behind such Aussie classics as *Blinky Bill* and *Dot and the Kangaroo*.

Rialto picked up the gong for Highest Grossing Foreign Language film for *The Girl Who Played With Fire*, while *Tomorrow When the War Began* was crowned Highest Grossing Australian Film.

*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2* waltzed away with Highest Grossing Film in both Australia and NZ.

*Priscilla* director Stephan Elliot screened his comedy *A Few Best Men* in full for the first time at AIMC. A co-production with the writer and producers of UK hit *Death at a Funeral*, the premiere went down a treat with the convention crowd.



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### Female film pioneer

NATALIE Miller OAM is one of the legends of the Australian film industry and the recent Australian International Movie Convention wouldn't have been the same without her.

For decades she has been one of the driving female forces in the business, involved in everything from film production and national film festivals, to starting her own distribution company and being a board member for some of the industry's most integral organisations.

With more than 50 years' experience, Miller (pictured) said it had been great to watch the evolution of the Australian film industry, but there's still a "long way to go" for women in film.

"For the Australian Independent Distributors Association there's 11 of us on the board and I'm the only woman," she said.

— MARIA LEWIS

