

September 2004

Feature: Intimacy with Strangers, By Kay Pavlou

With its practical focus on working with actors, Screenrights was delighted to sponsor the recent successful Australian Screen Directors' Conference in Sydney. Off the air asked director Kay Pavlou to expand on this topic. She talks about her experience in making observational documentaries with non-actors, and how she gets her subjects to work with her so that she can deliver a story while still respecting personal boundaries.

02

What's being copied and how much is it earning?

Screenrights is often asked which genre of program is copied most frequently by educational institutions.

04

Election for Screenrights directors

Screenrights members will have recently received voting papers in the mail for the upcoming Board election.

05

AGM

Screenrights Annual General Meeting will be held in Sydney on the 28 October. All members are invited to attend.

06

NZ film and tv industry conference in 3D

NZ's premier film and TV industry event, Small Country Big Picture, will be held in Auckland from 18-20 November.

07

Membership growth

Screenrights membership has had another healthy period of growth, with an increase of 11% in the 2003/04 financial year.

08

September 2004

Feature: Intimacy with Strangers, By Kay Pavlou

With its practical focus on working with actors, Screenrights was delighted to sponsor the recent successful Australian Screen Directors' Conference in Sydney. Off the air asked director Kay Pavlou to expand on this topic. She talks about her experience in making observational documentaries with non-actors, and how she gets her subjects to work with her so that she can deliver a story while still respecting personal boundaries.

As a film and TV director, I regularly move between drama and documentary because both provide their own unique form of narrative pleasure. In documentary, I witness the real life drama I spend years trying to recreate in fiction. It's a privileged opportunity. But how does one earn such a privilege?

How do you convince people to allow a film crew inside their house day and night? How do you get people to drop their guard and ignore the camera? And ultimately, how do you create intimacy with complete strangers?.

Over a year ago, I directed *Under One Roof*, an observational series about families, and more recently, *Desperately Seeking Sheila*, in which rural men meet up with city women and try to find love. For both series, finding willing subjects was the first challenge. We placed advertisements in media that would reach people who were likely to be interested. Participants were given the chance to volunteer. Nobody was coerced.

Our initial short list focused on selecting people who would cope best with a film crew in their face on a daily basis. Outgoing personalities, people who are social by nature are generally more at ease in such a scenario. Having said that, I avoid exhibitionists because they tend to 'perform' to the camera and remain self-conscious.

A selection process then took place according to our criteria. Who would embody the dilemmas of the storyline we were wanting? For *Under One Roof*, which family was committed to the idea of 'family'? For *Desperately Seeking Sheila*, which bachelor was seriously looking for a love match? People who volunteer always have an agenda of their own, and this can be as blatant as simply wanting to promote a business. But sometimes the subject's agenda actually coincides with the filmmaker's. For example, Helen Kapsalides, who featured in *Under One Roof*, is a single mother who wanted to prove that a sole woman, working in a pub, could bring up two gorgeous girls. This fitted perfectly with the stories we were trying to tell.

There is no doubt that a form of seduction takes place during the initial meetings. This is not a superficial 'convincing' process. I am looking to establish potentially a profound relationship; I am hoping to witness people's vulnerabilities as well as their strengths – otherwise the story remains shallow. And so I try to create a connection that will endure the vicissitudes of the filming that lies ahead. How? First impressions are paramount.

Our premise in *Under One Roof* was to engage directly with contemporary Australian family life. Given that I am of Greek descent, I knew it was important to impress upon the Chakos family (also Greek) that I came from a 'good family'. I revealed this matter to the researcher, Chris Pip, as we stopped to buy fresh flowers on the way to their home.

It didn't take long at our first meeting before we were all loudly and emphatically re-enacting stories – Greek style. It was as if I had known this family all my life. They reminded me of the people I had grown up with. Then, as Despina, the grandmother, was putting the flowers in water, Chris said, "Kay brought the flowers so that you would know that she came from a 'good' family." I cringed. Despina replied, "We can tell that she comes from a good family. That is obvious." (Later I discovered that Despina runs a flower stall on Sundays.)



Desperately Seeking Sheila

From left; Phil Bull (Cinematographer), Mike Ramirez, Alison Kingsley (both subjects) and Kay Pavlou (Director)

After making a selection, we always allow for a 'cooling off' period. This lets people change their mind. If they have any niggling doubts, they may pull out of the project later. Better they do this before they pledge their involvement. Once we begin filming, I have to put my own life aside. I need to enter the space of the documentary without any of my own needs. I will reveal to my subjects enough of myself so that they can understand who I am, but I try to exclude my own life concerns. My attention is totally focused on them. This has two outcomes. Firstly, I can actively listen and be completely tuned into the story as it unfolds. Secondly, my attentiveness is received as a compliment. I am there exclusively for my subjects and I am interested wholly in their life. Ideally, I become a confidante, a secular confessor.



Under One Roof

From Left: Tony Wilson (DOP), Kay Pavlou (Director), Alex and Chris, Christina, baby Aris, Aris and Leo Sullivan (Sound), out the front of the Chakos house. Photo by Mark Rogers
© Film Australia 2003.

For *Under One Roof*, we spent almost every day of two months with the Chakos family - four generations living under one roof. The first week, everyone was keen to look his or her best. The women wore makeup; the kids introduced us to their friends. They were self-conscious, wanting to perform so that we wouldn't think they were boring. Gradually they began to ignore us. One morning we arrived at 7am, whilst they were still asleep. Christina, the daughter, opened the back door and saw us in the garden with the camera already rolling. She didn't flinch; she was looking for the dog that'd pulled the washing off the line. Everyone showered, combed their hair, ate their toast, yelled at the dog. Nobody looked sideways for at least an hour. We had become almost invisible. The young boys referred to us as "The Others" - ghosts that were visible but not to be spoken to. It became a dance: they'd move, we'd move. They'd be aware of us, then they'd forget.

Once the crew is included in the social fabric of a situation, the ethical question arises of how much to become involved on a personal level. How do you remain compassionate and caring without becoming enmeshed in a way that would be inappropriate? An understanding exists - we are allowed into the sanctuary of private lives, and in return we must behave respectfully. This can be at odds with the harsh reality that a story has to be delivered. And yet we would betray everyone if we didn't film their lives as best we could. For example, when Theo Chakos and his father argued, we quietly filmed everybody's grievances at a polite distance, but without losing sight of the fact that we needed close up shots during such a major familial tension. We achieved this with utmost discretion.

Overall the Chakos family became very comfortable with our presence. Although I'm sure they didn't reveal themselves completely (nobody would), the intimacy we were able to capture on the screen is palpable. But it was harder for the Kapsalides family. Helen Kapsalides is a single parent who has embraced the challenge of her situation with vigor and passionate dedication. As a sole parent family, Helen and her daughters are a tight threesome. They were less comfortable with our ongoing presence. It took virtually to the end of the shoot to win their trust.

In *Desperately Seeking Sheila*, several crews followed 'bush bachelors' from remote regions in Western Australia while they met city women from the UK and Perth. After the social chaos of their first dates, my subject, Mike, chose Alison to take home to the Pilbara to see if their initial attraction would lead to an ongoing relationship. In the quiet of the desert, Alison revealed to me that she was very nervous about the camera observing her private life. Whilst I felt enormous sympathy, I had to encourage her to relax and trust that we would represent her fairly. Two weeks later she was still withdrawn. With only a week of filming left, I became adamant with Alison about honoring her commitment to the series. Luckily this talk coincided with the moment that Mike and Alison made a commitment to each other, and she was willing to reveal her feelings on camera. Incidentally, their relationship is still going strong. They found love and we were there to record it.



Under One Roof

From left: Kay Pavlou (Director), Leo Sullivan (Sound), and Tony Wilson (DOP) filming Julie, Helen and Simone. Photo by George Byrne
© Film Australia 2003.

For me the observational documentary offers the unique gratification of being allowed into the hallowed ground of someone's private life. There, I am privy to a reality that is often stranger than fiction. I invite people onto a journey that will give everyone involved, as well as the audience, some insight into the nature of human interaction. In order to achieve this, I have to offer a firm handshake and make sure that the promises I make are promises I can keep.

September 2004

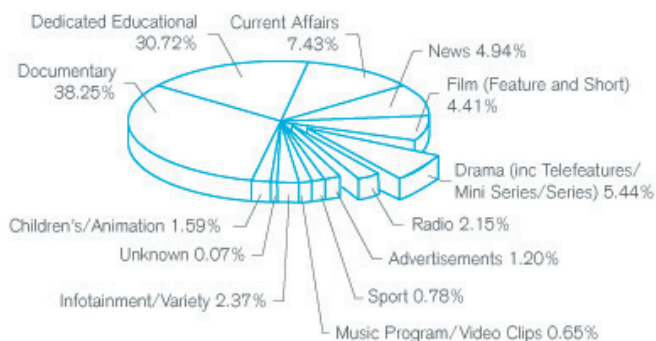
What's being copied and how much is it earning?

Screenrights is often asked which genre of program is copied most frequently by educational institutions.

For 2003/04, our analysis of copying records from schools, TAFEs and universities across the Australia, shows that documentaries were the most copied genre.

They were followed by dedicated educational programming, current affairs, drama (including telefeatures, mini series and series) and news.

The chart below provides further details.



Screenrights Chief Executive Simon Lake said educational copying royalties could potentially form a substantial part of a copyright owner's income.

For example, each copied documentary now earns an average of \$4,500 in Screenrights royalties, each copied film earned on average \$6,400, infotainment programs earned on average \$4,360 for each copy, and children's programs \$1,867 per copy.

"This makes promoting your program to the education sector more important than ever," Lake said.

"Schools, TAFEs and universities take advantage of their Screenrights' licence to copy material to use in teaching and to keep as an ongoing resource," Lake said. "The money they are paying for this use helps copyright owners continue to make the programs educators value."

"The key for copyright owners is getting their programs to the attention of educators," Lake said. "Screenrights can help you do this, with its online resource hub www.enhancetv.com.au. The site helps and encourages educators to use audio-visual material with free resources such as an online educational television guide, study guides and regularly changing features."

Since the start of the year the number of enhanceTV This Week subscribers has almost doubled.

"This rise in email recipients has meant that the number of study guides, articles and features being downloaded from the site is huge," Lake said. "For the first three weeks of September 2004 alone there have been more than 7,000 file downloads."

Filmmakers who are interested in contributing content to the site should email info@enhancetv.com.au

September 2004

Election for Screenrights director

Screenrights members will have recently received voting papers in the mail for the upcoming Board election.

The Board is comprised of 12 elected directors, with each director's position up for re-election every three years. This creates four vacancies on the Board each year.

This year the following directors' positions are up for re-election: David Baldock, Bridget Godwin, Nick Hampton and Alison Weston.

All four have nominated for re-election, along with six other candidates who have also nominated for the four vacancies.

The complete list of nominations in alphabetical order is:

- David Baldock
- Tom Blacket
- Mark Fitz-Gerald
- Bridget Godwin
- Nick Hampton
- Gail Hart
- Victoria Spackman
- Alison Weston
- David Whealy
- Mark Williams

Voting closes on the 21st of October

September 2004

AGM

Screenrights Annual General Meeting will be held in Sydney on the 28 October. All members are invited to attend.

The meeting will be held in the Screenrights offices at: Level 3, 156 Military Road, Neutral Bay NSW, and will commence at 5pm.

September 2004

NZ film and tv industry conference in 3D

NZ's premier film and TV industry event, Small Country Big Picture, will be held in Auckland from 18-20 November.

This year the conference theme is "seeing it in 3-D", with sessions looking at the three main types of production in the NZ industry – domestic production, international production and large scale domestically generated projects.

Confirmed speakers include John Voss, founding partner of InDigEnt, a company inspired by Dogme 95 and John Cassevetes with a strong commitment to exploratory digital filmmaking. The group's credits include Richard Linklater's Tape and Peter Hedges' Pieces of April.

Other confirmed speakers include producers Kathryn Tucker and May Jane Skalski, whose low budget feature The Station Agent was a surprise favourite of 2003, and Brian Rosen, Chief Executive of the Australian Film Finance Corporation.

Screen Producers and Directors Association Chief Executive Penelope Borland believes the conference will be of interest to both New Zealand and Australian filmmakers.

"We're looking at the interdependencies and relationships between the domestic and international industries," she said. "The issues for both countries are very similar."

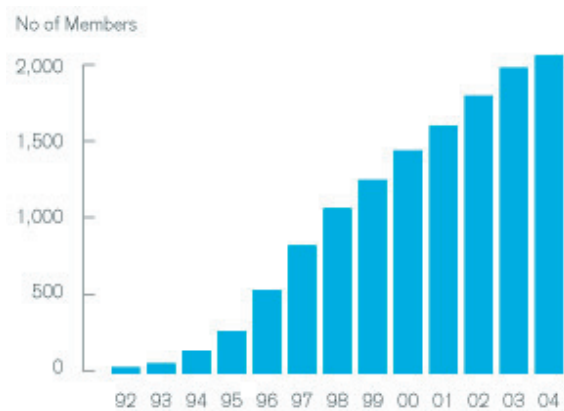
Screenrights is delighted to sponsor the conference and is inviting members to contact us if they would like to arrange a meeting with a Screenrights representative. Email maha@screen.org to organise a suitable time during the conference.

More information about Small Country Big Picture can be found at www.spada.co.nz

September 2004

Membership growth

Screenrights membership has had another healthy period of growth, with an increase of 11% in the 2003/04 financial year.



Membership is now 1,979, with members coming from 47 countries.



Countries in which Screenrights has members.