



December 2004

## Feature: What makes a good producer?

Successful producing demands a variety of skills, both financial and creative. To find out more about what makes a good producer, Screenrights Member Services Officer Emma Rogers talked to some of Australia's leading educators in the field; Marian Macgowan, Head of Producing at the Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS) in Sydney; Jocelyn Quioc, Producing Course Coordinator at the Film and Television Institute (FTI) in Fremantle; and Ros Walker, Producer's Course Coordinator at the Victorian College of Arts (VCA) in Melbourne.

02

## New universities deal benefits film industry and educators

Both the film industry and educators will benefit from a new agreement for television and radio copying signed by Screenrights and the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee (AVCC).

04

## Bridget Godwin re-elected as Chairman

The Screenrights Board has re-elected Bridget Godwin as Chairman.

05

## Distribution commences for 2004 payments

Screenrights Distribution Team has commenced distributing royalties collected in 2004 and is expecting to pay out over \$4 million from this pool by Christmas.

06



December 2004

### Feature: What makes a good producer?

Successful producing demands a variety of skills, both financial and creative. To find out more about what makes a good producer, Screenrights Member Services Officer Emma Rogers talked to some of Australia's leading educators in the field; Marian Macgowan, Head of Producing at the Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS) in Sydney; Jocelyn Quioc, Producing Course Coordinator at the Film and Television Institute (FTI) in Fremantle; and Ros Walker, Producer's Course Coordinator at the Victorian College of Arts (VCA) in Melbourne.



Courtesy of AFTRS

Macgowan is the producer of *Two Hands* and *The Rage in Placid Lake*. Quioc has worked on a variety of productions, including the features *The Red Planet* and *Rabbit-Proof Fence*. Walker is a former manager of Film Victoria and independent producer of the AFI award-winning short film *Mr Electric*.

According to all three, the first common misconception about producing is that it is a financially lucrative career. Macgowan points out that producing is not a well-paid job and Walker agrees that there is a perception that "producers earn fabulous sums of money and play all the time – if only that were true!"

Quioc notes that during the development stages of a project "a lot of time and effort is expended with no financial backing". The reality is that many producers take up day jobs in order to survive.

Another misconception is that a producer is purely a business person who raises the finances for a project. Many are not aware that the "job is actually very creative and involves multiple skill bases," says Walker.

The producer is usually involved with a project from the "conceptual stage – the crucial development period where scripts are reworked and rewritten many, many times," says Quioc.

The consensus among all three is that producing is both a creative and commercial endeavour requiring a broad skills base. It is a "creative management job that requires its adherents to understand and manage the writers', directors', and cinematographers' jobs as well as the distributor, the broadcaster and the financier," says Macgowan.

Macgowan likens the producer's ability to balance the needs of the creative and the commercial parties in a production with the ability to "speak a broad range of languages". She also highlights the importance of "strong story instincts, strong people skills, business instincts or at least good numeracy and a sense of the bigger picture".



Courtesy of AFTRS



Courtesy of AFTRS

Walker emphasises that a producer must have an understanding of development processes and keen script analysis skills to ensure good project selection. The nature of the industry also demands strong finance and business skills, an understanding of legal obligations, as well as leadership and management skills. In addition to this, Walker notes that a producer must have a practical understanding of how a production works, including post-production, in order to schedule and budget. In addition to this, he or she must understand distribution, marketing and exhibition in order to deliver the finished product to its audience.

"Filmmaking is a mix of commerce and art," says Quioc and producers need to be aware that "every project is a business that needs to be run like a business enterprise, not just a creative endeavour."



### December 2004

Of students who study producing, most want "to know how to earn a living making films," says Quioc. The age, experience and skill base of producing students vary, and Walker notes that the only common denominators are "a passion for film and television, leadership and an independent streak."

Most institutions now emphasise hands on training for students of producing, with students consolidating their skills through the production of short films.



*Courtesy of VCA Films*

The production of student films is supported and supplemented by a "mixture of theoretical lectures, inviting industry practitioners to teach from their experiences, visiting industry facilities, attending industry seminars and organising workplace attachments," says Walker.

Quioc comments that the importance of story and the craft of scriptwriting are taught through the analysis and assessment of completed screenplays.

In addition to the creative, practical and technical skills required to produce a project, Quioc notes that producers "also need to be aware of industry trends and the impact of government legislation on funding."

"Producers in the current environment need to be more flexible in the types of projects they take on and how they finance them, as traditional financing pathways are changing very quickly," says Walker.

Like all professions, producing is constantly evolving and producers "need to be technically savvy as new formats and possibilities for production and distribution emerge," says Walker.

A current industry push is the development of long-term business sustainability. There is a greater focus on building businesses as opposed to "lurching from project to project," says Macgowan.

"It's important for producing courses to keep abreast of new technologies and keep a steady flow of industry practitioners lecturing the students so the students learn current industry knowledge," says Walker.

In Western Australia, the producing course at the Film and Television Institute aims to provide students with "the creative and business skills to run viable creative enterprises," says Quioc. Their long-term goal is to develop the local industry by giving the students the skills to run commercially viable businesses and remain in the state.



*Courtesy of VCA Films*

At the AFTRS the focus of its first year course has shifted almost entirely to content – story and drama, while the second year now focuses on new areas of growth in the industry and emerging opportunities for its graduates.

In the current climate, educators emphasise the importance of ensuring their producing graduates are not only well-informed, but also equipped with the skills to create and maintain sustainable and successful businesses to anchor their filmmaking careers.

As Walker says: "It's a changing landscape out there in film and TV land and emerging producers need to be better informed than ever before, with an international as well as local knowledge base. They need to run businesses rather than occasional enterprises, be flexible, ultra creative and, of course, completely passionate about their projects."



December 2004

## New universities deal benefits film industry and educators

Both the film industry and educators will benefit from a new agreement for television and radio copying signed by Screenrights and the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee (AVCC).

The agreement provides that all 38 AVCC universities can continue to copy from radio and television for the next five years, ensuring members' income from this sector.

The agreement also covers the communication of copied material, allowing universities to make copied titles available to staff and students by email or on an internal network, for example.

Screenrights Chief Executive Simon Lake said he was delighted with the conclusion of the new agreement.

"It demonstrates the excellent relationship developed over the years between Screenrights and the universities," Lake said. "This relationship ensures that the educators who want to use audio-visual material have ready access to this resource. It also benefits the people who make the material used by educators by providing payment for this use of their work."

"Screenrights and the AVCC are committed to a long-term relationship of mutual respect. We look forward to continuing to work with the universities in meeting both their audio-visual needs and in securing income for our members."

John Mullarvey, AVCC's Chief Executive Officer, said that the licence will take effect on 1 January 2005 after the existing agreement expires at the end of this year.

"This is a major benefit for the universities who will be able to concentrate on their teaching and learning activities in the knowledge that copyright is being observed and copyright owners are being compensated.

"We look forward to working closely with Screenrights over the next 5 years to ensure that the agreement maintains a balance between the interests of copyright owners and users."



December 2004

## **Bridget Godwin re-elected as Chairman**

The Screenrights Board has re-elected Bridget Godwin as Chairman.

Bridget is the Manager, Regulatory and Business Affairs, at the Seven Network. She has been a director since 1995 and was first elected Chairman in 1999.

At its first meeting for the 2004/05 financial year, the Board also re-elected Alison Weston as Deputy Chairman. Alison is Manager, Educational Programming, Education Television, ABC. She has been a director since 1995 and was first elected Deputy Chairman in 2000.



December 2004

## Distribution commences for 2004 payments

Screenrights Distribution Team has commenced distributing royalties collected in 2004 and is expecting to pay out over \$4 million from this pool by Christmas.

The money is part of a total pool of just under \$14 million collected from Australian educational institutions during the 2003/04 financial year. Following the collection of this money, the team researches the copied titles to determine who should be paid, with the first cheques going out at the beginning of December.

Screenrights Chief Executive Simon Lake said it was pleasing to see that many copied programs had also had study guides on Screenrights enhancetv website.

"This site goes directly to the educators who are doing the copying, providing them with information about what's on television and giving them free resources, such as study guides, to assist in using the programs in class," Lake said.

Producer Megan McMurchie made use of the site to promote the documentary series, Fine Line.

"Ellen Fanning [the director of the series] and I are delighted with the Screenrights results," she said. "It goes to show how effective it is to develop a good study guide and provide schools and tertiary institutions with advance notice of the broadcast dates for a documentary series that has great relevance to secondary and tertiary curricula."

Lake said that the site was proving to be important to members. "It helps them promote their programs to schools and universities," he said. "This encourages copying, and we are now seeing the result - money in the bank for filmmakers."

To find out more about how you can use enhancetv to promote your titles, email [jamie@enhancetv.com.au](mailto:jamie@enhancetv.com.au)