

MOVIE CONVENTION

OPENING NIGHT SPEECH BY KIM DALTON

13 August 2002

Good evening, welcome and thank you for attending this evening's celebration of Australian film – Australia On Show.

I am thrilled that the Australian Film Commission is co-sponsor along with the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Sun Herald* of the opening night of the Australian International Movie Convention. The AFC is known as the Australian Government's chief agency for film development, so we are more often associated with scripts than with delivery of the end product. Nevertheless the AFC develops film people and projects, and we are keenly interested in the development of Australian audiences with a healthy appetite for homegrown film produce.

One of the exciting features of this evening is the number of filmmakers and actors present who are directly responsible for the 2002/3 Australian feature slate. These impressive forthcoming productions are set out in the program booklet on your tables.

Back in 1997 the AFC co-hosted a forum for Australian producers and distributors called *A Marriage Made in Heaven*. In the forum publication, a prominent producer described the relationship between distributors and exhibitors as 'some kind of secret society'. Equally distributors and exhibitors may sometimes be inclined to regard filmmakers as isolated artists in their subsidised garrets. The AFC has helped create tonight because we'd like to think all parties can share a few secrets and break down some of the barriers in the chain of making and exhibiting films.

The Movie Convention offers an ideal opportunity for us to bring real live filmmakers and actors among the exhibitors and distributors who we know after all are human. Please meet with and talk to the filmmakers and actors who are keen to learn more about the mysteries of that crucial last link in the delivery of their films. They are quite friendly and rarely bite. (Although I can't promise that of HG who stars in one of the films.)

There is a rich range of experience represented by the filmmakers here. Quite appropriately we have an eclectic array of the established and the new. I am not inclined to single out names, but

it is good to see those making their feature film debut as directors or producers, such as Evan Clarry, Anthony Mirr and Mark Lazarus, together with the old hands like Andrew Mason, Rolf de Heer and the Bennetts.

The AFC's role at the forefront of industry analysis is fundamental to our core business of developing Australian film. Each year we publish a commentary on the performance of Australian films at the box office. Something that can only happen I should add with the co-operation and assistance of the MPDAA. We hope this will continue.

In the past two years, domestic box office share has been eight per cent - a healthy result given that our industry, as in most countries, is dominated by big budget US studio films with equally big marketing campaigns. The total production value of the 27 Australian titles released in 2001 was \$166 million, estimated at just one per cent of the production value of the 165 US titles released here last year. This year will be no different. It's a challenge our filmmakers are prepared for and one that you as distributors and exhibitors have met in the past, and will do so again.

The AFC, in association with the Sydney Morning Herald, the Sun Herald and the Movie Convention organisers, has set out to ensure this evening is a true celebration of Australian films. So to showcase the new films tonight, the AFC commissioned a series of four montages – depicting scenes from each film as a teaser of what is to come.

The 24 films represented (either through footage and/or inclusion in the booklet) are at different stages. Some are scheduled for release this week; others are in the middle of their sound mix/post-production while still others are shooting and have sent a message from the set. They all wanted to be part of this evening. The AFC is very grateful to the Australian distributors for providing the initial footage (at some considerable expense) and for supporting this initiative.

Each montage is themed by a key word. They represent four grand concepts – LIFE, CHALLENGE, COURAGE, and BEYOND.

These themes are a reflection of the difficult journey of making a film.

First you need to bring an idea to LIFE by developing, researching and writing the screenplay.

Next there is the monstrous CHALLENGE of financing your project. It is always been hard to find the money to make a film but unfortunately the cliché is true, that it has never been harder than now.

Once financed, filmmakers need COURAGE to overcome all the inevitable obstacles put in the way of telling their story.

And finally once emerged from post-production, a film has to be released out there, into the great BEYOND, where you as distributors and exhibitors take over the reins.

So once again, thank you for being here, and thank you in advance for the support I know you will be showing to Australian films and Australian filmmakers over the next twelve months.

It gives me great pleasure now to introduce the first of the montages under the theme of LIFE.