

# THE NIGHT WE CALLED IT A DAY

## Media Information Kit

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## **SYNOPSIS**

*In the winter of 1974, Frank Sinatra made a little mistake. He spent a few days in Australia.*

Rod Blue (JOEL EDGERTON) is in strife. The full house at Manly Town Hall is smashing up the chairs and the band won't go on stage till they get their cash and he's still \$100 shy. He's saved by the bell. Audrey (ROSE BYRNE) shows up looking for a job, and she's got \$100 in her handbag. Close shave.

Rod is a battling rock promoter going out of business, doing his best to escape the shadow thrown by his father - a legendary front page gangster onto his third wife. But Rod's ... accident prone. Audrey's the girl next door he hasn't seen since she had bands on her teeth and who's been in love with him since she was four-and-a-half.

He has one last chance and he grabs it. He shows up in LA to convince Sinatra's people he's the one to promote Old Blue Eyes' comeback tour in Australia. Rod is young and he's green but he can think on his feet and he can pitch. Mickey Rudin (DAVID HEMMINGS) is skeptical. But Sinatra (DENNIS HOPPER) likes Rod's style.

Rod's up to here in debt, they're repossessing everything, but Audrey went to law school and she keeps plugging the leaks. The girl next door becomes his right hand man. She charms the loans and outwits the opposition. If he wasn't in such a hurry, he'd see he has the best girl in the world on the other side of his desk, but he's fallen for Hilary Hunter (PORTIA DE ROSSI), the blonde bombshell gossip columnist.

Hilary is trouble. When Sinatra, his girlfriend Barbara Marx (MELANIE GRIFFITH) and their entourage arrive, she pounces, asking all the wrong questions and causing Sinatra and Co. to walk out. The lines are drawn. The TV news is worse. Sinatra steps off the plane, and he's taking hits. He's mad. Will he go on?

It's a close call, but Rod pulls it off. Sinatra takes the stage for his first concert. But when he takes his tea break, he does the one and only thing Rod begged him not to do: he decides to 'comment' on the Australian press, he calls Hilary Hunter a two dollar whore.

The mouse roars. The Unions strike back and Union boss Bob Hawke (DAVID FIELD) is on the warpath. 114 Unions go on strike overnight. Sinatra and his entourage wake up hostages: no water, no phones, no food, no fuel for the plane until he apologizes. But there are two things Sinatra never does; he never yawns in the presence of the woman he loves, and he never says he's sorry...

## **PRODUCTION INFORMATION**

THE NIGHT WE CALLED IT A DAY is a comedy about a battling young Australian promoter, Rod Blue who pulls off the biggest coup of his life in bringing Frank Sinatra to tour in Australia, and then has to deal with the ensuing chaos as everything falls apart. The press hounds Sinatra and he retaliates, calling the press 'two dollar hookers'. As a result the Australian Unions hold him hostage in his hotel room – no water or room service and no fuel for his jet – until he apologises.

The screenplay is written by Peter Clifton and Michael Thomas. Thomas' impressive list of credits include *The Hunger*; *Scandal* and *Backbeat*. Clifton is best known for his Led Zeppelin film *The Song Remains the Same*. He has also directed and produced documentaries, television commercials and international music videos.

"I wanted to make a film that would show how Americans perceive Australians - Crocodile Dundee with a larrikin attitude, almost like old fashioned America," explains Clifton, who originated the idea for the film. "I think the circumstances surrounding Sinatra's tour in 1974 really explore the Australian character and who we were at that time and the power that the unions held."

"The research process had great synergy. It began at the State Library newspaper archives, which were fascinating - each newspaper and media outlet showed a different Australian perspective. And each story led me to someone and one door would open another. A lot of true life characters came of the woodwork and some of the key players involved have gone on to become very important figures in Australia."

After completing his first draft Clifton sent the script to his writing partner Michael Thomas. "We'd collaborated on a number of projects, so I knew what a funny bloke he was. He was also very good at reminding me that we weren't making a documentary.

Even though the film is based upon true events, we've taken creative license with our characters."

Clifton took the project to Australia's Ocean Pictures, a production and distribution company headed by Emile Sherman and Jonathan Shteinman, which was set up to acquire and fund Australasian distribution and international sales rights for Australian films. Recent production credits include *The Honourable Wally Norman*, starring Kevin Harrington (*The Dish*), Shaun Micallef and Greg Pickhaver (aka HG Nelson) as well as the comedy *Ned*, both set for theatrical release in 2003. Ocean's first film for which it acquired Australasian rights was Phillip Noyce's acclaimed feature *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, which grossed over \$7 million in Australia and won Best Film at the 2002 Australian Film Institute awards. Emile & Jonathan were both co-executive producers.

"We were attracted by the quality of the writing and by the concept of this story," says Sherman. "This is one of the very few truly trans-Pacific stories told in Australia in that it has a strong US element that's not contrived - this is genuinely about a clash of cultures between Australia and America. I felt it was unique moment in Australia's history - it's something that couldn't have happened anywhere else, but it made headlines around the world. People couldn't believe that Sinatra was held hostage in Australia by the Unions. It's a crazy story. It's one of those situations where the truth is crazier than fiction."

After spending over a year developing the script with Michael & Peter the producers then explored a possible Australian/UK co-production deal. "We felt we had a strong UK creative element, so it was a nice fit as a co-production and that would open it up to a larger budget because we could access a range of funding from both countries," Sherman explains.

Michael Thomas, who'd worked with Powell on *Scandal*, *Backbeat* and *B Monkey*, introduced Ocean to Nik Powell at Scala Productions. After setting up Virgin Records

with Richard Branson in the early '70's, Powell formed Scala with Stephen Wolley in 1982. Since then he has produced or executive produced nearly 40 films including *The Crying Game*; *Little Voice*; *Scandal* and *Backbeat*; *Fever Pitch*; *Twenty Four Seven* and Fred Schepisi's *Last Orders*. He is also Chairman of the European Film Academy.

Powell says of Michael Thomas. "I love Michael as a writer, I think he's great. He's fast, furious, funny and acerbic," says Powell. "He's written three films I've been involved with, two of which, *Backbeat* and *Scandal*, were both based around real-life events. I thought this one was a lovely mixture of fact and fiction and I loved the underlying story of a nation upset about the insulting behavior of a major icon like Sinatra."

"Working with Emile and Jonathan at Ocean Pictures was fantastic," Powell continues, "They're a great company because they're lively and doing new things in Australia. I think they're pushing the boundaries and getting out there and doing things that other people wouldn't do."

Powell also secured international sales agent Winchester Films. "They had done *Last Orders* and three other films with me and I have a close relationship with the team there. It was great because they just loved the project, helped put it all together and got us great distributors around the world as well". The film will be released in Australia and New Zealand through Icon Film Distribution and Ocean Pictures, in Scandinavia through Smile Entertainment, Vertigo in Spain and in the UK Winchester plus a range of other territories internationally.

"Nik understood exactly what to do because aside from being such an experienced producer he'd just completed another Australian/UK co-production" says Sherman. "After much manouvering the money fell into place, Paul Goldman came on board as director and we had a movie!"

Paul Goldman's directorial debut, *Australian Rules* was selected for screening at the Sundance Film Festival in 2002. He was also co-director of photography on the critically acclaimed Australian feature film *Ghosts of the Civil Dead*. He first gained international recognition as a music video director for artists such as Elvis Costello; INXS; Kylie Minogue and Nick Cave and won the US MTV music video award for Best Video Of The Year in 1995. Goldman has also directed a number of documentaries and commercials including a series of award-winning Qantas commercials for the 2000 Sydney Olympics.

"Paul has an amazing background. He's very visual and one of the top commercial and music video directors in this country, as well as being trained at NIDA as a drama director," explains Sherman. *Australian Rules* really demonstrated his ability to bring out performances and truthfulness. We felt Paul would add a visual element to a great comic script while making sure that the performances had a truthfulness to them."

Comments Goldman: "I heard background chatter about the project for a couple of years because Mark Lazarus, my producer on *Australian Rules*, worked at Ocean Pictures at the time. Before we went to Sundance, Emile and Jonathan approached me and asked if I'd be interested in reading the script. I could see it was a very well-written screenplay and I was attracted for a number of reasons: It had the potential to make a really entertaining film, but also one that had good depth. I think it's an interesting comment on that period. I see certain resonances about Australian values in '74 that I think have relevance today."

"Emile Sherman recommended Paul as director and when I saw *Australian Rules* I thought it was fabulous," says Powell. "When I met Paul I knew he was a person who had a real desire to make this film and had the skills, the sensibilities and all the qualities that our director needed."

THE NIGHT WE CALLED IT A DAY stars Australian actor JOEL EDGERTON, as young Australian promoter Rod Blue; ROSE BYRNE as Audrey Appleby, the girl who works with Rod and has secretly been in love with him since she was four and a half, DENNIS HOPPER as Frank Sinatra; MELANIE GRIFFITH as his girlfriend Barbara Marx; PORTIA DE ROSSI as the journalist Hilary Hunter; DAVID HEMMINGS as Sinatra's lawyer, Micky Rudin, with DAVID FIELD taking a cameo role as Bob Hawke, the then president of Australia's Council of Trade Unions.

"There are a lot of very fine Australian actors, so the role of Rod Blue was very hotly contested," says Goldman. "I chose Joel because he seemed to have a head that fitted the period! I'd been looking at a lot of Australian photographic books from the period and it struck me that Joel would have felt very at home in the company of the Australian cricket team. I wanted someone who looked like they were of that time and could just wear those clothes, that hair and that moustache. But really, I chose him because he's a very fine actor who has a very, very strong screen presence. He seemed to be very hungry for the role and fought very hard for it. He also embodied a lot of the Rod Blue character traits. He's a very smart guy who's ambitious but has a substantial talent behind that. Plus, he's very attractive on screen. He's got that absolutely charming, engaging smile that Rod needed."

Edgerton was recently named one of Variety's top ten actors to watch. He starred in *The Hard Word* with Guy Pearce and Rachel Griffith (acquired for the US by Lions Gate) and appears as Owen Lars in *Star Wars: Episode II – Attack of the Clones*. He has also gained recognition both internationally and at home as Will in the television series *The Secret Life of Us*. Edgerton recently completed filming *Ned Kelly*, for Gregor Jordan alongside Heath Ledger, Geoffrey Rush and Naomi Watts.

Edgerton knew little about Sinatra's infamous tour to Australia. "I was born in 1974 so I wasn't reading many newspapers at the time!" he laughs.

“And while this film is based in fact, my character is fictional. I was dragged along by my ear to see Sinatra in 1985 and became a pretty big fan, but I felt that wouldn’t be right for Rod because he’s from the world of rock ‘n’ roll. It’s more about what bringing Frank to Australia represents in terms of ego and success for Rod than anything else.”

He continues: “Although Rod comes across as being a bit shonky, it’s not that he’s trying to be deceptive, more that he’s so optimistic things will work out that he’s willing to tell the odd white lie in order to get to the next stage. I see him as someone who can really find his way into convincing people of anything – until he meets Frank. His tricks don’t work with him. He takes a while to work Frank out.”

“It’s a difficult role to play in many respects, particularly because Joel’s character is constantly stuck between a rock and a hard place,” says producer Emile Sherman. “Rod has to go through so many problematic situations but he still has to drive the film, and be engaging & likeable. One thing I noticed about Joel Edgerton in our screen test was that you wanted to get closer and closer to him. The more close ups the better, Joel is incredibly engaging. We couldn’t be happier with Joel’s performance.”

“This film was quite a new experience for me - I’ve never done a job before where I’m on set literally every day and in nearly every scene,” Edgerton admits. “I learned a lot about stamina as an actor and applying myself every day. On previous jobs I’ve always had a favorite scene or one I’m looking forward to doing, so I’d put all this pressure on myself to make it right. Working on a film for the duration means that you can’t do that, so you tend to take a lot of the importance and reverence off every scene and spread around it a little more evenly.”

Rod's love interest, Audrey (a character inspired by Audrey Hepburn) is played by Rose Byrne, who shot to fame in Australia in Gregor Jordan's *Two Hands*, starring Bryan Brown and Heath Ledger. More recently she has appeared as Dormé in *Star Wars: Episode Two – Attack of the Clones* and won the Best Actress Award at the Venice Film Festival for her role in *Goddess of 1967*. She has just completed *The Rage in Lake Placid* with Miranda Richardson and Ben Lee; *I Captured The Castle* in the UK and *Beneath the Banyon Trees*, directed by and starring Matt Dillon, with Gerard Depardieu and James Caan. (((Obsessed and Troy)))

“Audrey's very dignified. She's intelligent, she's sharp and if someone's giving her a raw deal or spinning her a yarn, which a lot of people do, she'll call them on it,” says Byrne. “She's very honest and can't help but tell the truth which is a lovely quality I really liked about her. So that, coupled with the fact that it was a really unusual script made me very keen to be involved.”

“Rose has a kind of stillness and innocence about her which I really liked,” says Goldman. “There's an intensity that underlies her work. She's got unmistakable screen presence, is enormously watchable and the camera absolutely loves her. While she's got a charming, very down-to-earth smile, there's also a troubled quality behind her which we wanted for the role. Audrey's been in love with Rod since she was four and a half and she comes back to pursue him even though in the back of her mind she has an inkling he's a bit of a hustler and it isn't the right thing to do.”

“I don’t think you really have a choice who you fall in love with,” says Byrne. “Rod’s a charmer and he’s exciting and he’s different. I think there are a million reasons why she would fall for him. But I think mostly she can see he’s got a really good heart. Paul gave me this great image for Audrey of Alice falling down the rabbit-hole and ending up in Rod Blue’s crazy world! That’s how I’ve visualized her experience throughout filming. Audrey’s essentially following her heart and that’s what I really loved when I read the script.”

Says Producer Emile Sherman: “Rod Blue is definitely the lead in this film and there’s no doubt he’s the character with whom the audiences’ sympathies lie. We all felt however, that the actor playing Frank Sinatra would establish the tone of the film: “There were many ways we could have gone with the casting, but the choice of Sinatra was always going to have a huge hand in the way the film would be perceived. The first question anyone asked was ‘who’s playing Sinatra?’”

Comments Goldman: “I was looking through a whole bunch of books one day and saw a photo of Dennis Hopper and was struck by how remarkably similar he looked to Sinatra. Dennis is also an American icon and we all agreed that it would be good to have an actor with some kind of weight in the role.”

Hopper’s career spans forty years. His credits include the ground-breaking films *Easy Rider* (which he also directed); *Apocalypse Now* and *Rebel Without a Cause* as well as *Blue Velvet*; *The Indian Runner* (directed by Sean Penn); *True Romance*; *Basquiat* and the hit series *24*.

“Dennis brought with him a wealth of history and he’s not unlike Sinatra himself in terms of the public mythology about him,” says Goldman. “There’s still an amazing hangover of stories about him from the ‘60s, ‘70s and ‘80s. He’s unpredictable, he’s mercurial on screen, but the abiding thing about Dennis is he’s just so watchable.”

“We were very lucky,” adds Sherman. “We didn’t even realise how similar Dennis looks to Frank Sinatra at 57 (the age he was when he came out here), although we weren’t going after a similar look, we were going after the essence of the man. We knew with Dennis we were going to get a performance that was charismatic and humorous, but also incredibly volatile and edgy, much like Sinatra himself.”

Emile approached Hopper through his US agents, who also represented Portia de Rossi, who had come on board early in the film’s history. Hopper read it over a weekend and loved it. Nik Powell had also collaborated with Hopper on *Leo* earlier in the year. “I was able to get to Dennis and his people relatively simply and quickly and fortunately he loved it,” he says. “Michael Thomas had already approached Melanie Griffith to play Barbara Marx and her involvement was also an attraction for him.”

“I’ve always wanted to work with Melanie Griffith - I think she’s a great actress and I’ve admired her for a long time,” says Hopper. “She’s such a creative person. I’ve never seen her do anything I didn’t believe her in and I think *Working Girl* was one of the great performances. My manager and my agents all wanted me to do this film and when I heard she was going to play Barbara Marx, I thought ‘yeah, I’ll do it’”.

“I have great memories of being in Australia years ago playing Mad Dog Morgan,” Hopper recalls. “I’ve had 20 years of sobriety now from hard narcotics and alcohol but in those days I was like a nightmare! But I love Sydney! Sydney Harbour is the most beautiful harbour in the world – there’s nothing else like it. And the people are wonderful. I love what’s happened to the wharfs with all the restaurants and shops and hotels – it’s just beautiful.”

Joel Edgerton found out he'd be starring alongside Hopper about a couple of month's prior to shooting. "I was pretty excited about that, it was a real honor to work with him, not only because he's such an experienced actor and for what he brought to the role, but also for the fact that he was such a good choice physically. I'm sure it was quite a delicate issue for him, playing someone who exists so fresh in everybody's minds. We all have a perception of what Sinatra looked like and sounded like so there must be a certain pressure attached to that."

"I knew Sinatra so it was very scary for me," Hopper admits. "If you look at a lot of his films, he was very stiff and unresponsive. But when you look at him performing a song, it's a whole different thing. I looked at tape after tape after tape and he had these great, huge orchestras and so on but never once did he tap his foot. He never kept beat with his foot: He would sway with his knees, he would occasionally give a snap of his fingers but beyond that he was very, very minimal in any kind of gestures that he made. Sometimes he would really just stand on stage and sing – there wouldn't be any motion at all. I remember sitting with my wife looking at a tape and saying 'not only can't I play this part, I can't even walk like Sinatra!'"

Melanie Griffith stars opposite Hopper as Barbara Marx, Sinatra's girlfriend (and later wife). Oscar nominated for Mike Nichol's *Working Girl*, Griffith has also starred in *Crazy in Alabama*, directed by her husband, Antonio Banderas; *Mulholland Falls*, directed by Lee Tamahori; Woody Allen's *Celebrity*; Adrian Lyne's *Lolita*; the Emmy award-winning *RKO 128* alongside James Cromwell and John Malkovich and most recently the voice of Margalo in *Stuart Little 2*.

It was Griffith's fifth visit to Australia, "I love it! I think it's beautiful," she says. "The sky here is amazing and the ocean and the colors and the people. Really the people make the place."

“Melanie plays a character whose lifestyle was really well-known to her in her environment in Hollywood, so she could bring things to the role that people not in that world would perhaps have had difficulty doing,” says Nik Powell. “Plus she’s a fantastic actress with an ability to move from one mood to another, seamlessly but powerfully. She’s also very funny of course, which was incredibly important for this film. It was fantastic having someone like her in the role.”

“The story was the first thing that attracted me, it was so cool” says Griffith. “The fact that it’s a very black comedy and that something similar to this actually happened, was really interesting. The only other time I’ve played an actual person was when I played Marion Davies, but this was a whole new game because Barbara Marx is still alive. I wanted to do her justice and I wanted to give her a good heart. I think if Frank Sinatra stayed married to this woman for 20 years she must have had something good and kind in her. But at the same time, I hope she realizes it’s just a story - it’s not all what really happened, but a take on their experiences in Australia.”

“Melanie was perfect for that role,” says co-star Rose Byrne. “I think she’s really funny and I love her performance where she’s very comic and quirky and slightly nutty. She was very specific about what she does, but not precious, she was really warm and open. For a young actress like me to work with someone like her and Dennis was great because everyone rose to the occasion. I really learned a lot watching Melanie and Dennis work together.”

Comments Goldman: “Melanie has done very, very tough acting training with Lee Strasburg and Stella Adler. She’s a method actress. What that means is that she’s fighting to tell emotional truths so the work won’t become superficial. So she’s always looking for depth in her character. And sometimes with Barbara Marx, it wasn’t there on the page, so she could be quite demanding of me to find something to motivate the character. But what you get in return for that is a person who very, very clearly lights up the screen and who also keeps the work spontaneous. I think one of the remarkable things watching rushes of her is that in six takes, the sixth take will be just as fresh and as inventive as the first.”

“This is not a story about Barbara, it’s about Sinatra’s trip to Australia, so there wasn’t very much that I could bring to the character – I’m just Sinatra’s girlfriend,” says Griffith, “but working with Dennis was great. I think we were very blessed that the chemistry between us was really good. It was so easy to allow your imagination to believe that he was Frank Sinatra. He was amazing, it was like a transformation. I think he did absolutely the best work I think he’s ever done. And he’s really powerful and really scary as Frank sometimes!”

“I was initially terrified when I heard they’d cast Dennis Hopper, because he’s so famous and he’s played some characters that are quite crazy and intimidating!” laughs Rose Byrne. “The only exchange my character has with Sinatra is when Audrey interrupts him in his dressing room and does this massive monologue and leaves again. But Dennis was incredibly supportive. Not just on that day and in that scene, but of the whole production. He was so excited and passionate about the film and encouraging to everybody.”

Portia De Rossi was cast in the role as the antagonistic journalist, Hilary Hunter. Widely known as lawyer Nell Porter in *Ally McBeal*, de Rossi’s credits also include *Sirens*; *Scream 2*; *Stigmata* and *Who is Cletis Tout?*, alongside Richard Dreyfus and Billy Connolly.

“Portia just loved the script and the idea of playing the blonde femme” says Sherman. “Hilary is the antagonist in the love triangle between herself, Rod and Audrey, as well as the antagonist in terms of the Rod/Frank Sinatra relationship. In a way she is responsible for the strike because she provokes Sinatra and then Sinatra provokes her and their relationship becomes pivotal to the film. I think Portia brings an enormous amount of charisma to the screen as well as a lightness of touch. And she’s got great comic timing.”

“What attracted me was how uniquely different it was from scripts that I’d read before and the fact that it was Australian,” says Melbourne-born de Rossi. “I’ve wanted to work back in Australia ever since *Sirens* ten years ago, so it was a big thrill for me to be offered a role in something so fun and different. It’s really embarrassing, but the hardest part was getting my Australian accent even to a vaguely passable point, which is so ridiculous! I think I trained myself out of it so thoroughly in the States that to get back into it took a re-wiring of my brain! Hilary’s voice was difficult too because she’s a very brazen, tough woman who’s a little rough around the edges and this was the ‘70s, so there was a whole different feeling to her dialogue which was quite foreign to me. Although I had a lot of time to rehearse I was worried right up until I got to Sydney. Then the whole character fell into place.”

“Working with Dennis Hopper was the biggest thrill!” says de Rossi. “To work with someone of his caliber is amazing for any actor, but I was playing the woman his character hates the most in the world! I was a little intimidated, to be honest, particularly as I’m in his face asking questions about the Mafia and Marilyn Monroe and Ava Gardner and stuff. His intense eyes burnt through me and I felt like I had holes in the back of my head because he’s just got such a presence and intensity, but when Paul called cut, Dennis was just a sweet lovely person and such an easy, generous actor to work with.”

The role of Sinatra's lawyer Micky Rudin, went to British actor David Hemmings. "After seeing *Last Orders* I rang the producers and said 'that's Micky Rudin,'" says Goldman. Hemmings came to epitomize the swinging '60's following his role in *Blow Up* in 1966. Other early films include *Barbarella*; *Saint Joan*; *Juggernaut* and *Eye of the Devil* with Deborah Kerr. More recently he starred in Ridley Scott's *Gladiator* and as Lenny, a one-time boxer in Fred Schepisi's *Last Orders*. He will soon be seen in Martin Scorsese's highly anticipated *Gangs of New York*.

"Once we'd cast Hopper we needed someone with a gravity about them as well," says Goldman. "Interestingly, David Hemmings has been compared to an English Dennis Hopper. He's a bad boy with a very rich and colourful history as both a human being and an actor. And Dennis and David had in fact been friends in the '60s and '70s so to reunite them in front of the camera was a very nice idea. David's a remarkable actor and his role really fizzles and pops."

"Micky Rudin is a hard-headed, very tough, in-your-face kind of lawyer, exactly as you'd expect someone like Sinatra to have," explains Hemmings. "He knows what side his bread is buttered, so he has to be a little bit more obsequious than he would like, so there is a long-suffering side to his character. He's tired of constantly being the yes man and getting people out of trouble. He's war-weary in some regards, but he's as sharp as a tack."

"David's this big guy with an incredible face and a deep, gravely voice, that contrasts so well with Hopper," says Sherman. "He had the gravitas and the menace to play the part, but he also had the humor. One of the things we made sure of in the casting process was that all the actors were strong dramatic actors, but could also bring the right tone to the performance, as comedy is essential to this film."

“I vaguely remembered the story of Frank Sinatra’s visit to Australia and I thought the concept was really terrific,” says Hemmings. “But when I heard Dennis was playing Sinatra I thought that was a really great piece of casting. I’ve known Dennis since the ‘60s and although we haven’t kept in contact over a long period of time it was exciting to work with him. I think this was a very courageous role for Dennis to take on, but he’s perfect. In the scenes I did with him he nailed it every time. It was such a pleasure to be involved.”

In the film Sinatra’s songs are sung by Australian Sinatra performer Tom Burlinson. “I knew we would never be able to clear Frank’s original recordings, because they’re with various record companies,” explains writer Peter Clifton. “I knew of Tom Burlinson and knew that Nancy Sinatra and the Sinatra estate approved of him, so we decided to use his voice in the recordings. The estates of people like Cole Porter and Irving Berlin are most co-operative and they’re used to licensing their publishing rights to films, so it then became a question of which songs to use.”

“I certainly wasn’t convinced that I could play Frank Sinatra and I certainly wasn’t going to be a Frank Sinatra impersonator,” says Hopper. “I’ve never sung anything, ever. I’ve never even thought of performing a song or lip-synching a song or doing any of that, so the singing was a real challenge. And to have someone who’s already established a sound and then perform a song to his words, is so contrary to my way of working. I like to be spontaneous and free and not have preconceived ideas. This film was about throwing all that out the window and starting over again. I had to work really hard on the singing part of it, it was very difficult.”

Hopper undertook vocal training with coach Gary Catona, who had toured with Sinatra in 1992/93:

“Dennis is not a singer so he had to learn how it feels to sing,” Catona explains. “I had to teach him about timing and pitch and phrasing and breathing and all of that. It was even more difficult because he was being required to impersonate not Frank Sinatra but Tom Burlinson impersonating Frank Sinatra and they sing quite differently. Dennis is an artist and he’s a perfectionist so he was understandably nervous, but he was an extremely good student.”

“One of my favorite memories of the shooting process is coming in after we’d done a couple of hours of Sinatra’s first concert,” adds Sherman. “Everyone was very nervous, Dennis the most. I arrived just as he came off stage and he was watching himself for the first time on the video split – and he was amazed. We all thought we were watching Sinatra. From that moment on he relaxed and everyone around him relaxed and he knew he was onto something.”

“Dennis was nothing less than professional and a great craftsman,” says Goldman. “He’s not only an actor, (I think this is his 150<sup>th</sup> film), but he’s also directed a dozen films one of which, “Easy Rider”, changed the whole landscape of American filmmaking. So it was very intimidating for an inexperienced young director like me. But Dennis was amazingly generous with his knowledge and his advice off set and on and I think he raised the bar in a way that not many other actors could have, which was exciting for everyone. I’ve learned an enormous amount from him. He made a remarkable contribution to the film.”

“With actors like Hopper, Hemmings and Griffith, you’re not directing you’re just adjusting performances,” continues Goldman.

“The only work you really do is to keep everyone on the same page and hold everyone around them. There’s a big cast in this film, a lot of characters and a lot of scenes. It was a beautifully written piece of work, but a screenplay is only a blue print. So we were often casting for very small roles and expecting actors to bring an enormous amount to a very small part. Penny, played by Victoria Thaine, was a very small part on the page and a character in a lot of scenes, but with not much to do. Through Victoria’s invention and creativity, she made the character into a really wonderful little cameo. David Field I think enlivened the on-screen Bob Hawke in a way that I don’t think anyone could have imagined and I don’t think many other actors could have possibly measured up. Nicholas Hope had a very small, thankless part playing Frank Sinatra’s valet but again brought another dimension to that role. And Stephen O’Rourke had to share the screen with David Hemmings, Dennis Hopper and Melanie Griffith – all actors with enormous screen presence, but still he held his own.”

For Goldman it was important to work with a director of photography who was going to be very adaptable and flexible. “This is a romantic comedy and I wanted to have scenes that reminded me of classic screwball comedies. I wanted to undermine the audience’s expectations; to go into scenes in close up and try and delay the reveal of where the scene was taking place or who was in the scene until the last moment. That requires a lot of coverage, so I needed a DOP who could deal with that. I knew of Danny Ruhlmann’s work and I was very, very pleased when he came on board.”

“I’d seen *Australian Rules* which I thought was a great film,” says Ruhlmann. “Paul’s brief to me was that he didn’t want the look of the film to be too self-conscious or over-ride the performances, it needed to compliment them. We spent some time discussing it and looking at other films as reference, but when it came time to shoot, he pretty much left me to get on with it, which was great.”

“The film is about a clash of cultures, so we wanted to represent that visually without being too obvious,” Ruhlmann continues. “The overall plan was to have one look for the Americans, which I used when Sinatra and his entourage come to town. That was quite sophisticated, with longer dolly tracks and very flattering lighting. It was almost like they brought their own backlight with them. The Australian look, prior to their arrival, was slightly rougher and less sophisticated. Joel’s character is full of enthusiasm and life so the camera is quite raw in those scenes and moved a lot to convey that energy in the photography.”

“The worlds of Frank Sinatra and Rod Blue are very different,” explains Production Designer Michael Philips. “One is big money America and the other is rock ‘n’ roll, slightly naïve Australia, so they’re very different. In Frank’s world there’s a particular color palette and particular surface texture that you associate with him - gold and black, burgundy and red and everything’s lustrous. In Rod’s world, it’s contrasting. It’s cool; it’s greens and blues, it’s ramshackle and chaotic. The other characters that intersect with these two then spin off, depending where they come from. Micky Rudin comes from Frank’s world, Audrey from Rod’s and so on. So you’ve immediately got guidelines to help plot a visual landscape. But overall we wanted it to be a completely naturalistic period film, where things looked real and worn and used.”

“The biggest challenge was the Presidential Suite,” Philips continues. “To create something which felt right for the time and right for Frank Sinatra but could also go through that transition from a luxurious nest to a concrete bunker. That was the most interesting exercise in design terms.”

“The Masonic Centre in the heart of Sydney was chosen as the location for the hotel foyer and it had a strong architectural style – ‘70s brutalist concrete. So the Presidential Suite had to feel like it was part of the same building - the architectural elements had to be carried through. The pure geometries, the harder surfaces, immediately gave me a kind of architectural shell. Then we had to furnish it and make it feel luxurious and indulgent. Elements like a conversation pit and built-in bar, marble surfaces and soft deep pile rugs - that kind of thing. So there’s this juxtaposition of contemporary brutalist architecture and this over the top, padded velvet furniture which is slightly ridiculous but kind of appropriate as well.”

“I really didn’t want to play up the ‘70s period too much,” says Goldman. “I didn’t want people to be making comments on a lava lamp or on the hair-styles – I didn’t want them to become dominant, they needed to take a back seat to the story-telling, the drama and the characters. I didn’t want anything to intrude on that.”

Says Costume Designer Emily Seresin: “Dennis’ colors were very somber charcoals and blacks and very classic. I wanted he and Melanie to look clean and stylish and just a bit beyond what was happening in Australia at the time. We kept Rod quite simple to contrast to that. Melanie was great, because she knew exactly what suited her. Hilary’s color was scripted, while Audrey’s colors evolved by seeing what really worked on her. Rose just seemed to look right in the creams.”

The film was shot in over forty-five locations around Sydney from Bankstown airport to Camden to Bondi Beach. “Finding the hotel foyer was the biggest challenge,” says Location Manager Robin Clifton. “We had to shoot in there for three days and we also needed it to be within a period street for the picket line, so that was quite difficult. And because we were filming close to Christmas the concert venues – the Hordern Pavillion, Enmore Theatre and Parramatta Town Hall – were all heavily booked, so that was a bit of a struggle.”

“This was a very hard film to make. It was a ten week schedule jammed into eight weeks and all the departments over-reached,” says Goldman. “There were a lot of people working very long hours. We’d do big scenes, with big set-ups, with lots of rigging and it was very, very difficult to maintain turn-around and for people to maintain their sanity. As director your people management skills are tested as well! But it was an enormous privilege for me to work with people like Dennis – he was a boyhood hero of mine,” says Goldman. “I’ve been well-aware of his photographic work all my life, as I’m a very keen collector of photography and he’s now a recognized painter too. His cultural life is incredible. He’s an American icon. He’s a man you can sit down with and have a conversation about working with James Dean. For me that was one of the great pleasures. There was a very remarkable array of talent on this film which was really exciting. It was a sheer joy watching Dennis and Melanie and David as well as Joel and Rose.”

“When this film got the green light, we needed to move into pre-production incredibly quickly to meet the availability dates of all our key cast as they all had other engagements,” explains Sherman. “There were lots of quick decisions that needed to be made in terms of where to prioritize our resources. We are thrilled with the final result - I think the film looks fantastic.”

# # #

**CAST**

Rod Blue	Joel Edgerton
Audrey	Rose Byrne
Frank	Dennis Hopper
Barbara	Melanie Griffith
Hilary	Portia De Rossi
Mickey Rudin	David Hemmings
Bob Hawke	David Field
Penny	Victoria Thaine
Jilly Rizzo	Stephen O'Rourke
Phil	Nicholas Hope
Vinny	George Vidalis
Ruby	Peter Demlakian
Ralph Blue	Tony Barry
Rex Hooper	Vincent Ball
Doris	Jennifer Hagan
Mr Fiddler	Keith Robinson
Luigi	Nicholas Papademetriou
Margarita	Lena Cruz
Hal	Alex Babic
Jim	James Garcia
Ferret	Stephen Curry
Shorty	Gary Eck
Reporter	Mark McCann
Reporter # 2	Andrew Blaxland
Lance MacCallum	Robert Carlton

Shirley	Marcia Neal
Sammy Davis Jnr	Simeon John
Manicurist	Marcia Hines
Jim North	Tony Harvey
Mrs Appleby	Michelle Collins
Mr Ed	Simon Bull
Palm Man #1	Stephen Holt
Palm Man #2	Sean Lynch
Goran	Andrew Johnston
Art Dealer	Hamish McDonald
Mechanic	Peter Callan
Aunt Joyce	Pam Morrissey
Bellboy	Abe Forsyth
Bouncer #1	Pouli Teapa
Bouncer #2	Paea Kaifoto
Billy Thorpe	Richard Williams
Kerry Packer	Max Fairchild
Furry Freak	Adam Libke
Furry Freak # 2	Brett Sorrell
Band Manager	Paul McDermott
Geeky kid	Tom Budge
Barman	Richard Thorpe

## **ABOUT THE CAST**

### **JOEL EDGERTON – Rod Blue**

Since graduating from Theatre Nepean Drama School in 1994, Joel Edgerton has amassed an impressive list of credits both locally and internationally – culminating in his inclusion as one of Variety Magazine’s 2002 ‘10 Actors to Watch’.

Most recently Edgerton appeared as Uncle Owen in *Star Wars: Attack of the Clones* with Ewan McGregor and Natalie Portman; *The Hard Word* with Golden Globe winner Rachel Griffiths and Guy Pearce and alongside Heath Ledger and Orlando Bloom in Working Title’s *Ned Kelly*, directed by Gregor Jordan. Additional feature film appearances include *Erskineville Kings* alongside Hugh Jackman; *Praise* and *Sample People*.

Edgerton’s numerous television roles include the US telemovie *The Three Stooges* and most notably, as Will in the acclaimed Australian drama series *The Secret Life of Us*.

Edgerton gained recognition for his roles in The Bell Shakespeare Company’s stage productions *Henry V* and *Henry IV* parts *I* and *II*. For the Sydney Theatre Company, his credits include *Third World Blues*, *Blackrock* and *Love for Love*.

# # #

**ROSE BYRNE – Audrey**

Most recently Australian actor Rose Byrne starred in the feature film *The Rage in Placid Lake* playing the lead role of Gemma Taylor for director Tony McNamara. Prior to that, she starred as Sonja opposite Vince Colosimo and Stephen Curry in Marc Gracie's directorial feature film debut *Takeaway*, shot on location in Melbourne.

In 2001 Byrne traveled to Cambodia to film *Beneath the Banyan Trees*, directed by Matt Dillon, in which she plays Sabrina and to the United Kingdom to shoot *I Capture the Castle*, directed by Tim Fyfe.

She also appeared as Dorme in *Star Wars: Episode II* and starred as Deidre opposite Japanese actor, Rikiya Kurokawa in the feature film *Goddess of 1967* directed by Clara Law. The role earned her the Best Actress Award at the 2000 Venice Film Festival and a Best Actress nomination from the Australian Film Critics Circle.

Byrne made her feature film debut as Rastus in *Dallas Doll*, directed by Ann Turner, followed by Gregor Jordan's *Two Hands*, in which she starred with Heath Ledger and Bryan Brown. She also appeared as Jenny in *My Mother Frank*, directed by Mark Lamprell.

Byrne has appeared in numerous television shows playing leading guest roles and the music video clip, *Black the Sun*, for Alex Lloyd. She also starred as Irina in *Three Sisters* and as Adine in *La Dispute*, both directed by Benedict Andrews for the Sydney Theatre Company.

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## **DENNIS HOPPER – Frank Sinatra**

Dennis Hopper was born in Dodge City, Kansas on May 17. After WWII his family settled in San Diego where he graduated from high school. He appeared in stage productions at the La Jolla Playhouse and on early television before signing to play the role of Goon opposite James Dean and Natalie Wood in Nicholas Ray's classic *Rebel Without A Cause*. He followed this with *Giant*, also with James Dean, in which he played the son of Rock Hudson and Elizabeth Taylor.

Warner loaned him out to Paramount for *Gunfight at O.K. Corral* with Kirk Douglas and Burt Lancaster and then to 20th Century Fox for Henry Hathaway's *From Hell to Texas*. He ran into problems with Hathaway, however, which resulted in him being dropped from his contract at Warner.

Hopper then went to New York and studied with Lee Strasberg for five years. He starred in over 140 television shows including: *The Twilight Zone*; *Loretta Young*; *Wagon Train*; *The Defenders* as well as John Frankenheimer's live production of *The Last Summer*. His one Broadway experience was starring as Franchot Tone's son in *Mandingo* where he met his first wife, Brook Hayward, daughter of Leland Hayward and Margaret Sullivan. Their daughter Marin was born in 1962.

Hopper returned to Hollywood and worked in independent features such as *Night Tide* and *Key Witness* as well as low budget films including *The Trip*, directed by Roger Corman from a Jack Nicholson script. Hopper and co-star Peter Fonda both directed second unit sequences.

*Easy Rider* followed in 1969, with Fonda producing and Hopper directing. The film starred Hopper, Fonda and Jack Nicholson, who received a Best Supporting Actor nomination at the Academy Awards. The screenplay, by Hopper, Fonda, and Terry Southern, was also nominated. The film grossed in excess of \$50 million and earned Hopper the Best New Director Award at the Cannes Film Festival.

He subsequently developed a script with Stewart Stern, about the process of movie-making - *The Last Movie*. Although it received the prestigious C.I.D.A.L.C. Award at the 1971 Venice Film Festival, Universal refused to distribute the film unless Hopper re-edited it. Hopper was intransigent. During editing he married Michelle Phillips which ended in a friendly divorce after eight days. In 1972 Hopper married Daria Halprin, and his second daughter Ruthana was born the following year.

Throughout the '70's Hopper acted in numerous films, most notably *Kid Blue*, *Tracks*, *Mad Dog Morgan*; *The American Friend* by Wim Wenders, and *Apocalypse Now* and *Rumble Fish* by Francis Ford Coppola. In 1980 Hopper directed and starred in *Out of the Blue* with Linda Manz and Raymond Burr. He also appeared in Sam Peckinpah's *Osterman Weekend*, Neil Young and Dean Stockwell's *Human Highway*, and Robert Altman's *O.C. and Stiggs*.

In 1985, Hopper re-emerged as a leading actor in *Blue Velvet* by David Lynch; *River's Edge* by Tim Hunter, and *Hoosiers* by David Anspaugh, for which he received an Academy Award nomination as Best Supporting Actor. He later starred in the critically acclaimed *True Romance*, written by Quentin Tarantino; the noir thriller *Red Rock West*; *Super Mario Brothers* and *Boiling Point*. More recently he starred in *Waterworld* with Kevin Costner and Jeanne Tripplehorn; *Witch Hunt* directed by Paul Schrader, the box-office hit *Speed* with Sandra Bullock and Keanu Reeves, and *Search & Destroy*, co-starring Christopher Walken, Griffin Dunne, John Turturro, Ethan Hawke, and Rosanna Arquette.

Hopper has also directed the highly acclaimed and successful film *Colors* starring Sean Penn and Robert Duvall; *The Hot Spot*, starring Don Johnson, Virginia Madsen, and Jennifer Connelly; the comedy *Chasers*, starring Tom Berenger and directed and starred in *Backtrack* with Jodie Foster, Dean Stockwell and Vincent Price.

In 1991, Hopper acted in *Paris Trout* for which he received both Emmy and Ace nominations for Best Actor. He received a second Ace Best Actor nomination the same year for his role in *Doublecrossed*. Robert Guenette's documentary *Crazy About the Movies: Dennis Hopper*, for Showtime, was also nominated for an Ace Award.

Additional feature film credits include *The Venice Project*, with Lauren Bacall, *Jesus' Son*, also featuring Holly Hunter and Billy Crudup; *The Spreading Ground*; *The Prophet's Game*; *Bad City Blues*; *Ed TV*, from director Ron Howard; *Straight Shooter* by Thomas Bohn; Julian Schnabel's feature *Basquiat*; *The Last Days of Frankie the Fly*, starring Daryl Hannah, Kiefer Sutherland and Michael Madsen; *Space Truckers*; Disney's *Meet the Deedles*; *Road Ends*; *Lured Innocence*; *Carried Away*, *Michaelangel* and *Tycus*.

Most recently, Hopper was featured in the acclaimed television series *24*, starring Kiefer Sutherland. He also stars in the Shanghai-based series *Flatland*, and can be seen as Richardson in the Sci-Fi television movie, *Firestarter: Rekindled* (with Malcolm McDowell), the sequel to Stephen King's original.

Hopper just finished *Leopold Bloom* for first time feature director Medhi Norowzian, with Joseph Fiennes, Elizabeth Shue, Sam Shepard and Debra Unger and also co-stars with John Malkovich in *Knockaround Guys* for producer Lawrence Bender; with Christopher Lambert in *The Piano Player*.

He also completed the independent films *Unspeakable*; *Held for Ransom*; *LAPD - To Protect and Serve* (opposite Michael Madsen); *Ticker* (with Tom Sizemore and Steven Seagal) and the NBC miniseries *Jason and the Argonauts*, as King Pelius opposite Jason London.

In addition to acting and directing, Hopper is a noted photographer and painter. Many exhibitions of his work have been mounted in the United States, Europe and Japan. His photographic book entitled *Abstract Reality* was published in 1998 in conjunction with an international exhibition of his color photography. *Out of the Sixties* was published in 1986 and in 1988 The Kunsthalle Basel in Switzerland published a book of Hopper photographs to coincide with this traveling exhibition. His work has been featured in many prominent museum exhibitions and at galleries throughout the US and Europe. A major retrospective examining the scope of Hopper's entire career opened at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in 2000 and then continued on to the MAK in Vienna. The exhibition will tour through various other international locations and finally to America. Dennis Hopper's most recent publication - *1712 North Crescent Heights* is a collection of his photographs from the 1960's when he lived at this Hollywood address.

Hopper married Katherine LaNasa in 1989. They have a son, Henry Lee, born September 1990. Hopper and LaNasa divorced in 1992 and in 1996, he married actress and singer Victoria Duffy.

# # #

## **MELANIE GRIFFITH – Barbara Marx**

Melanie Griffith, who received an Academy Award nomination and won a Golden Globe award for her memorable role as Tess McGill in Mike Nichol's smash hit *Working Girl*, will soon be seen starring in *Tempo*, opposite Rachel Leigh Cook and Hugh Dancy and can be heard as the voice of Magalo in Sony's *Stuart Little 2*.

Griffith's performance opposite Live Schreiber, John Malkovich and James Cromwell in the HBO movie *RKO 281* earned her both an Emmy and Golden Globe nomination. She has received rave reviews for her performance in Antonio Banderas' directorial debut *Crazy in Alabama*, in Larry Clark's *Another Day in Paradise* and in Woody Allen's *Celebrity*, opposite Kenneth Branagh. She starred opposite Stephen Dorff in John Waters' *Cecil B. Demented*.

Griffith has collaborated with some of the film industry's most important directors. Her career began at age sixteen in Arthur Penn's *Night Moves*. She then appeared in the murder mystery *The Drowning Pool*, starring Paul Newman; gained attention as a starlet who holds the missing piece to the murder puzzle in Brian de Palma's *Body Double* and then she co-starred in Jonathan Demme's off-beat comedy-drama *Something Wild*.

She went on to star in Mike Figgis' stylish film noir *Stormy Monday*, with Tommy Lee Jones and Sting; Robert Redford's *The Milagro Beanfield War* and John Schlesinger's psychological thriller *Pacific Heights*, opposite Michael Keaton and Matthew Modine. Re-teaming with director Brian de Palma, she starred with Tom Hanks and Bruce Willis in *Bonfire of the Vanities*, before joining Michael Douglas and Liam Neeson in the World War II espionage romance *Shining Through*.

After starring in *Paradise* with Don Johnson, Griffith followed with Sidney Lumet's police drama *A Stranger Among Us*, a remake of Garson Kanin's "Born Yesterday", and Robert Benton's *Nobody's Fool*, opposite Paul Newman. Her other credits include Richard Benjamin's charming comedy *Milk Money*, opposite Ed Harris; a cameo role in *Now and Then*; Fernando Trueba's *Two Much*, starring Antonio Banderas and Daryl Hannah; Lee Tamahori's *Mullholland Falls*, with Nick Nolte and Adrian Lyne's controversial film *Lolita*.

On television, Griffith starred in the mini-series *Buffalo Girls*, which earned her a Golden Globe nomination and starred with James Woods in the HBO film *Women and Men: Hills Like White Elephants*.

Griffith is a founding partner and managing director at One World Networks, an internet company ([www.oneworldlive.com](http://www.oneworldlive.com)) that pledges to make a difference in people's lives through influential personalities, celebrities and expert content and commerce.

Griffith was honored with a Special Festival Award for her body of work at the 2001 Cannes Film Festival.

# # #

**PORTIA DE ROSSI – Hilary**

Portia de Rossi has had a widely varied career, having captivated audiences for four seasons as lawyer Nell Porter on Fox's award-winning series *Ally McBeal*. De Rossi received her first acting break in producer John Duigan's film *Sirens* which co-starred Hugh Grant, Sam Neill and Elle McPherson, and went on to become an international and critical success.

In 2001, she completed *Women In Film*, based on Bruce Wagner's book "I'm Losing You" co-starring Beverly D'Angelo and Marianne Jean Baptiste in a comedic look at three women in Hollywood. She also portrayed Christian Slater's love interest in *Who Is Cletis Tout?*, a comedy with a crime element which hit US theatres in summer 2002 and also stars Tim Allen; Richard Dreyfuss and RuPaul.

De Rossi has also starred in the mega-hit *Scream 2*; the supernatural thriller *Stigmata*, co-starring Patricia Arquette and Gabriel Byrne; *A Breed Apart* with Andrew McCarthy and *The Invisibles*, a two character film with Michael Goorjian.

Recently she finished filming *America's Prince: the John F. Kennedy Jr. Story* in which she portrays Carolyn Bessette Kennedy, and *I Witness*, a feature film in which she co-stars with Jeff Daniels.

De Rossi currently resides in Los Angeles.

# # #

## DAVID HEMMINGS - Mickey Rudin

David Hemmings came to epitomize the Swinging 60's after his role in Michelangelo Antonioni's *Blow Up* in 1966. His early films include: *Saint Joan*; *The Painted Smile*; *Play it Cool*; *Live it Up*; *The System* with Oliver Reed and *Eye of the Devil* with Deborah Kerr. He also appeared in a range of roles in films such as *Camelot*; *The Charge of the Light Brigade*; *Barbarella*; *Only When I Larf*; *The Best House in London*; *Alfred the Great*; *The Walking Stick*; *Fragment of Fear*; *The Love Machine*; *Unman, Wittering and Zigo* and *The Disappearance* (both of which he also produced); *Prisoners* (which he also executive produced); *Voices*; *Juggernaut*; *Deep Red*; *The Squeeze*; *The Drug Busters*; Claude Chabrol's *Blood Relatives*; *Crossed Swords*; *Murder by Decree*; *Just a Gigolo*; *Man, Woman and Child* with Martin Sheen; *The Rainbow* with Paul McGann; Ridley Scott's *Gladiator*; *Spygame*, with Robert Redford and Brad Pitt and as Lenny, a one-time boxer in Fred Schepisi's *Last Orders* with Michael Caine. He will soon be seen in Miramax's highly anticipated *Gangs of New York* directed by Martin Scorsese and Twentieth Century Fox's *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*.

Hemmings is also a prolific director, and his work includes such films as *The Wild Little Bunch*, which won the Silver Bear at the 1973 Berlin Film Festival; *The Survivor*, which received the International Critics Prize at the Catalonian Film Festival in Spain and *Race for the Yankee Zephyr*, which he also produced. Hemmings also directed several television series, such as: *Quantum Leap*; *Airwolf*; *Murder, She Wrote*; *A-Team* and *Magnum P.I.*

With producer/writer/director John Daly, Hemmings formed the production company Hemdale in the early 1970's. Hemdale was responsible for many notable films, including John Schlesinger's *The Falcon and the Snowman*, starring Sean Penn and Timothy Hutton, Gillian Armstrong's *High Tide*, with Judy Davis; *Strange Behavior* and Denzel Washington's film debut *Carbon Copy*.

**DAVID FIELD - Bob Hawke**

David Field began his film career with one of the most powerful debuts seen in Australia, in the highly acclaimed *Ghosts of the Civil Dead*.

He has since built an exceptional film and television career. He received the Australian Film Institute Best Actor Award in 2001 for his transformation into the character Bill Vandenberg for the tele-film *My Husband My Killer* and was nominated for a further award for his guest appearance in *Grass Roots*. He has played standout roles as Acko in *Two Hands* and Keithy George in *Chopper* and also co-produced and starred in *Silent Partner*, where, according to critics, his portrayal of the drunken, gambling John was almost too real. This less than small two hander, received standing ovations at the Toronto Film Festival and defied film constraints by being filmed in one single week. With a list of over twenty features in his 17 year career, Field is considered a benchmark as an actor constantly in demand and capable of top line performances.

He trained with the prodigious Hayes Gordon at the Ensemble Studios and has subsequently performed in over thirty theatrical productions, many for Neil Armfield at the Belvoir Street Theatre, rarely fulfilling these roles with less than critical acclaim. Several one man shows included, one of which Field co-wrote, both confirmed the power and range of Field as a solo performer. He has worked for most major theatre companies in Australia and this year directed a sell out season of Patrick Marber's *Dealer's Choice* for the State Theatre Company of South Australia.

# # #

## **TOM BURLINSON – Sings Frank Sinatra**

After graduating from NIDA in 1976 Tom Burlinson began his career in various productions such as *The Merchant of Venice; Da* and *The One Day of the Year* for the Queensland Theatre Company, the Old Tote Theatre Company and the State Theatre Company of South Australia . He co-starred in *Tribute* in Sydney and Brisbane and played continuing roles in the television series *Kirby's Company* and *The Restless Years*.

Burlinson's career break came in 1981 when he was cast as Jim Craig in *The Man From Snowy River*, alongside Kirk Douglas, Jack Thompson and Sigrid Thornton. He subsequently starred in numerous international and domestic features and mini-series including *Phar Lap; Eureka Stockade; Fresh and Blood; Windrider; Piece of Cake; The Way To Dusty Death* and *The Legend of Kootenai Brown*, as well as *The Man From Snowy River II*.

A Frank Sinatra fan since the age of seven, in 1991 he sang the voice of the young Sinatra in the Warner Bros. mini-series *Sinatra*. He subsequently returned to Australia to star in the musical *How To Succeed In Business Without Really Trying*, where he met singer and dancer Mandy Carnie, whom he married in 1996. He later starred in the musicals *Miracle City* and Stephen Sondheim's *Merrily We Roll Along*, both for the Sydney Theatre Company.

In 1997 Burlinson hosted the television series *Animal Hospital* followed by an appearance in concert at Taronga Zoo in *A Tribute To Frank Sinatra*. This prompted him to create *Frank, A Life in Song* – a celebration of the music and career of Frank Sinatra. The show's success led to Burlinson performing in concert at a variety of venues for charities and other organizations throughout 1999 and 2000. In May 2001 he was asked to remount *Frank* for the Adelaide Cabaret Festival and the following August he returned to the Capitol Theatre in Sydney for another highly successful season of the show.

## **ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS**

### **PAUL GOLDMAN – Director**

Paul Goldman's feature film directorial debut, *Australian Rules* was selected for screening at the Sundance Film Festival in 2002 it received an AFI award for best screenplay adaptation. Co-written by Paul and Phillip Gwyne and based on Phillip's book "Deadly Unna?", it was produced by Mark Lazarus and shot in South Australia.

Goldman attended Swinburne Institute of Technology Film and Television School (now known as the VCA Film School) from 1979-80. In controversial circumstances he was expelled after the completion of second year (in protest the student body went on strike) but continued unofficially attending classes and crewing graduate films. During this time he was very occasionally and ceremoniously escorted off the premises by campus security.

After Swinburne, Goldman established a specialist music video production company. The Rich Kids, with fellow Swinburne graduate Evan English. Goldman's videos soon won him acclaim in Australia and internationally, culminating with him living between London and Los Angeles during 1983-85, directing music videos for various record companies and film production companies in both Europe and America.

Goldman has directed over two hundred music videos, including work for Elvis Costello; INXS; Nick Cave; Kylie Minogue; Aztec Camera; Jimmy Barnes; Paul Kelly and Crowded House. He has won many prestigious Australian and international awards for his work.

In 1987, Goldman was appointed Director of Photography on John Hillcoat's controversial and critically acclaimed Australian feature film *Ghosts of the Civil Dead*.

In early 1995 Goldman moved back to Sydney and has since continued to direct high profile television and cinema commercials for local and international clients through Sydney based production companies Who Show That?; Black; 8 Commercials and is currently working with The Doll Collective directing for Qantas, ANZ, MLC, Ford, Honda, Panasonic, Telstra, Foxtel and Sony. Goldman is ranked among the best in Australia and his work has received numerous awards.

Goldman has also directed various documentaries including the classic *Ritual Habitual*, a wild warts-and-all expose of the 1996 Big Day Out Tour.

In 2000, Goldman directed the second unit on Warner Bros. feature *Queen of the Damned*, the sequel to *Interview with a Vampire*, shot in Melbourne. He also directed all the music videos that appear in the film.

# # #

### **EMILE SHERMAN - Producer**

Emile Sherman founded Australian film production and distribution company Ocean Pictures in 2000 with Jonathan Shteinman. Its first feature release was Phillip Noyce's *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, for which Ocean Pictures was Australian distributor and Sherman co-executive producer. *Rabbit-Proof Fence* grossed over \$7 million at the Australian box office and was picked up by Miramax for the US. It was also voted most popular film at the 2002 Edinburgh International Film Festival and nominated for ten Australian Film Institute Awards including Best Film.

Sherman's first feature was *Sample People*, starring Kylie Minogue, Joel Edgerton and Ben Mendelsohn, which was released theatrically in Australia through Becker Entertainment in 1999.

That same year, Sherman co-produced the documentary *Uncle Chatzkel* - nominated for Best Documentary at the 1999 Australian Film Institute Awards. It was nominated for best documentary at numerous festivals internationally including the Shanghai Television Festival Magnolia Awards, the Sydney Film Festival Awards, 'Out of That Darkness' competition, London 2000, and the NY International Independent Film 2001 (winning Best Documentary). It has also been selected for the Hot Docs International Documentary Festival, Toronto, the Fort Lauderdale International Film Festival and many other international film festivals.

Sherman most recently produced *The Honourable Wally Norman* and *Ned*, both Australian comedies which will be released theatrically in 2003. *The Honourable Wally Norman* stars Greg Pickhaver (aka HG Nelson), Sean Micallef ( ), and Kevin Harrington (*The Dish; Sea Change*) and is directed by Australia's pre-eminent comedy director Ted Emery (*The Craig; Kath and Kim* (TV)). It was chosen to open the 50<sup>th</sup> Sydney Film Festival 2003.

Sherman holds a law degree and Masters in English Literature, and has a background in journalism before entering the film industry.

# # #

## **NIK POWELL – Producer**

In the early 1970's Nik Powell set up Virgin Records with Richard Branson and in the space of ten years the pair turned a small mail-order record operation into a multi-million pound conglomerate.

In 1982 Powell went into partnership with Stephen Woolley, proprietor of the Scala Cinema. Together they formed the Palace group, followed by Scala Productions. Powell has acted as Executive Producer on all of Palace's productions including Neil Jordan's *Company Of Wolves* (1984), *Absolute Beginners* starring David Bowie, *Letter To Brezhnev* and Neil Jordan's Oscar-nominated and award-winning *Mona Lisa* which introduced Neil Jordan and Bob Hoskins to the international market.

1992 was the year of Neil Jordan's *The Crying Game* for which Powell was the sole executive producer. This is still the biggest British independent film at the US box office taking over \$65 million. Nominated for six Oscars, including Best Picture, Neil Jordan won the Oscar for Best Original Screenplay.

Scala produced George Sluizer's sadly abandoned *Dark Blood* (1993) starring the late River Phoenix, Iain Softley's *Backbeat* (1994), written by Michael Thomas and *Fever Pitch* (1997) starring Colin Firth.

Other productions include *B Monkey*; *Welcome To Woop Woop*; *Twentyfour:Seven*; *Divorcing Jack*, starring David Thewlis, *Little Voice*, with Michael Caine, Ewan McGregor and Jane Horrocks, *Fanny and Elvis*, starring Ray Winstone and Kerry Fox, and *The Last September*. *Last Orders* directed by Fred Schepisi premiered at the 2001 Toronto Film Festival.

Most recently, Powell produced *Black And White*, based on a 1959 landmark trial that irrevocably changed police procedure and judicial authority in South Australia, which stars Robert Carlyle, Charles Dance and Kerry Fox.

Powell is a member of the British Screen Advisory Council and in April of 1996 he was selected Chairman of the European Film Academy, and has since twice been re-elected. He is also a member of the American Academy of Motion Pictures, Arts and Sciences and the British Academy of Film and Television Arts.

# # #

**PETER CLIFTON - Screenwriter / Producer**

Australian film maker Peter Clifton has specialised in international documentary films as both a producer and director. All based on his own ideas, he has created over two hundred music videos and live music specials since 1970 as well as “rockumentary” feature films featuring legendary rock music stars of the past thirty years including: *America; Supertramp In Paris* and *Wind On The Water* all for EMI; Columbia Pictures’ *The Sound of the City* and *The Jimi Hendrix Story*; the Led Zeppelin box office smash *The Song Remains the Same* for Warner Bros., which received an Oscar nomination for Best Sound; *Popcorn. The Beat Goes On*, winner of the Australian Film Institute (AFI) Best Documentary Award; *The London Rock and Roll Show; Punk Rock Movie*, and writer and producer of Roadshow Entertainment’s *The Rock Film Diaries*.

Television credits include Nine Network’s *What’s On The Flip Side*; ABC TV’s *Now Time; The Surfing Years* and *The Midget Farrelly Show*; the tele-feature *Sharks Paradise* for Network Ten and in the UK, *A Secret Life* and *The Guv’ner* for ITV.

Clifton also contributed to the book *The Peter Grant Story*; the APRA compilation album *Best Ever Australian 30 songs* and the DVD *AUS*, which he produced and directed for Mushroom Pictures to be released shortly.

THE NIGHT WE CALLED IT A DAY marks Clifton’s move into drama.

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**MICHAEL THOMAS – Screenwriter / Executive Producer**

Michael Thomas is probably best known as the screenwriter of the highly acclaimed Miramax Film, *Scandal*, directed by Michael Caton Jones and *Backbeat*, directed by Iain Softley. Additional feature film credits include *Burke & Wills*; Dick Donner's *Ladyhawke*; Tony Scott's *The Hunger*; the cult classic *Countryman*, filmed in Jamaica; *Fire in the Mountain*; *Till There Was You*; *Ruby Cairo*; Stefan Elliot's *Welcome to Woop Woop*; *The McGuffin*, for producers Stephen Wooley and Nik Powell and Miramax Films' *B Monkey*. Thomas currently has several films in development with major US producers.

Thomas began his career as a journalist, as religious editor and the Carribean correspondent for Rolling Stone. In addition to his feature film credits he has also penned the books *Jamaica: Babylon on a Thin Wire*; *Jah Revenge: Babylon Revisited* and *Ocker Chic*.

# # #

**JONATHAN SHTEINMAN – Executive Producer**

Most recently Jonathan Shteinman served as co-executive producer on the highly acclaimed *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, voted most popular film at the 2002 Edinburgh International Film Festival and nominated for ten Australian Film Institute Awards including Best Film.

Shteinman has also recently produced *The Honourable Wally Norman* stars Greig Pickhaver (aka HG Nelson), Sean Micallef ( ), and Kevin Harrington (*The Dish; Sea Change*) and is directed by Australia's pre-eminent comedy director Ted Emery (*The Craig; Kath and Kim* (TV)). It was chosen to open the 50<sup>th</sup> Sydney Film Festival 2003.

Shteinman has also produced the feature films *Thank God He Met Lizzie*, starring Cate Blanchett & Frances O'Connor, *Angel Baby*, winner of the 1995 Australian Film Institute Best Film Award; *Metal Skin* (associate producer) and served as executive producer of, *On Our Selection; The Roly Poly Man; Rough Diamonds, Sample People* and *Ned*.

Shteinman has worked on the financing of other productions such as *Romper Stomper; Gross Misconduct* and the mini-series *The Man From Snowy River* and was formerly an Investment Manager at the FFC. Prior to this Shteinman worked in investment banking at Hambros specialising in corporate advice relating to mergers and acquisitions in the media industry. Jonathan currently holds the position of Feature Film Councilor of the Screen Producers Association of Australia (SPAA) and is a Board member of the South Australian Film Corporation.

# # #

## **DANNY RUHLMANN ACS - Director of Photography**

Danny Ruhlmann's feature film credits as director of photography have both been for director Bill Bennett - *In A Savage Land* and the recently released *The Nugget*, starring Eric Bana.

Upon completing his study at the American Film Institute in Los Angeles, Ruhlmann worked on location in Malaysia as a camera assistant to Dean Semler and Andrew Lesnie on the US feature *Farewell To The King*. Ruhlmann re-teamed with Lesnie on the 1988 mini-series *The Rainbow Warrior Conspiracy* and worked as a director of photography on the 1991 mini-series *Village By The Sea*. He also photographed the multi award-winning short film, *Tulip* directed by Rachel Griffiths.

Ruhlmann's work as a director of commercial photography has seen him work across the world. In 1996, he shot *A Country Story*, which was awarded New Zealand commercial of the year. In 1988 he was awarded the Australian commercial of the year for cinematography for *VW Times are a Changing* and again in 2000 for the Zurich commercial, *Because Life Changes*. In 2001 he was awarded the Asian commercial of the year for cinematography for *O.C.B.C.*

# # #

**STEPHEN EVANS – Editor**

Stephen Evans edited Paul Goldman’s feature film debut, *Australian Rules*, and, most recently, *The Honourable Wally Norman* for director Ted Emery. He was also responsible for additional editing on the acclaimed feature *Chopper*.

He received Australian Film Institute nominations as Best Editor on the television series *Halifax f.p* and *Good Guys, Bad Guys*, and additional television credits include *Dogwoman*; *Stingers*; *Crash Zone*; the children’s series *Pig’s Breakfast* and the documentary *Somebody’s Mother*.

Evans has also worked as assistant editor on major international productions including *Sniper*, directed by Barry Levinson; *Mr Baseball*, directed by Fred Schepisi; *Everybody Wins*; *Jack-Knife*; *Straight to Hell*; *Air America*, directed by Roger Spottiswoode; *Stormy Monday*, directed by Mike Figgis and Mike Leigh’s *Life is Sweet* and *High Hopes*.

# # #

## **MICHAEL PHILIPS – Production Designer**

An architect and graphic designer, Michael Philips has designed film and television since 1985. Since immigrating to Australia from Zimbabwe/South Africa in the early 1990's, Philips has become one of Australia's most exciting film designers.

His early work in Africa included *Lambarene*, for which he won the 1990 ARTES Award for Best Production Design; *Windprints* (United British Artists) and *Bopha* directed by Morgan Freeman for Paramount Pictures.

In Australia Philips' work as Production Designer includes the films *Traps*; *Vacant Possession*; *Turning April*; *The Well*; *Praise*, produced by Martha Coleman; *My Mother Frank*; *The Monkey's Mask* and most recently, *Garage Days*, directed by Alex Proyas.

Philips was nominated for Best Achievement in Production Design at the Australian Film Institute Awards for *Traps* (1994) and *Praise* (1998). In 1996 he won this award for his work on *The Well*.

Television credits include the Gannon/Jenkins series *Head Start*; *My Husband My Killer* (telefeature) for Columbia TriStar Productions; *The Violent Earth* for Crawfords/Gaumont and three telemovies of the *Naked* series for Jan Chapman/ABC Television.

As Art Director, Philips worked on international and Australian films including *A World Apart*, for Working Title; *A Dry White Season* (MGM); *The Great Hunter*; *Breathing Underwater* and *Love in Limbo*, starring a young Russell Crowe.

For television he was Art Director on *Mandela* and *Gracelands in Concert* a live concert and video special for Paul Simon Organisation.

## **EMILY SERESIN – Costume Designer**

Emily Seresin was born in New Zealand and has been working in costume design since 1990, with directors such as Gregor Jordan, John Curran, Samantha Lang and Louis Malle. She has been twice-nominated for an AFI Best Costume Design Award for *Two Hands* and *Praise*.

Emily's first experience as Assistant Costume Designer was in the UK, where she lived and worked in the early 1990s, on feature films such as Michael Karbeinikoff's *Mobsters* and David Seltzer's *Shining Through*. Emily then worked on *Damage* and *The Secret Garden* before returning to Australia.

Emily subsequently worked as Costume Supervisor on Stephen Elliot's internationally successful feature *Priscilla Queen Of The Desert*, and also on *Vacant Possession*, the first feature directed by Margot Nash.

Moving into television Emily worked as the Costume Designer for TV programs such as *Cody* on the ABC and *Housegang* on SBS.

This experience has seen Emily consolidate her career in Australian film and television costume design, with subsequent work on features such as Emma Kate Croghan's *Strange Planet* and *The Monkey's Mask*. In 2002, Emily designed for Jeff Balsmeyer's feature *Danny*.

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