

OPAL DREAM

Production Information

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

OPAL DREAM, a UK/Australian co-production, directed by Peter Cattaneo (“The Full Monty”), and starring Vince Colosimo and Jacqueline McKenzie, was filmed on location in Adelaide and Coober Pedy, Australia in August/September 2004. The film is supported by BBC Films and the UK Film Council’s Premiere Fund, in association with the South Australian Film Corporation.

... Pobby and Dingan are invisible. They live in an opal town in Australia, and are friends with Kellyanne,, the nine year old daughter of an opal miner (Vince Colosimo). The film is a funny, uplifting and touching story of the bizarre and inexplicable disappearance of Pobby and Dingan, Kellyanne’s imaginary friends, and the impact this has on her family and the whole town. The story is told through the eyes of Kellyanne’s eleven year old brother Ashmol.

Vince Colosimo was seen in three back to back internationally acclaimed features: *Chopper*; *Lantana* and *Walking on Water*. He won an Australian Film Institute Award as Best Supporting Actor for his role in *Lantana* and was nominated as Best Actor for his role in *Walking On Water*. He also won the Sydney Film Critics Circle Best Actor Award for this role. Vince has also appeared in five episodes of the hit television drama, *The Practice* as well as a guest appearance on *Without A Trace*.

Jacqueline McKenzie is one of Australia’s best known and celebrated actresses. She first won critical acclaim for her roles in the arthouse hits *Romper Stomper* and *Angel Baby*, for which she received her first Australian Film Institute Award as Best Actress. More recently she was seen in the ABC movie of the week *When Billie Meets Bobbie* opposite Holly Hunter, and in the acclaimed TV series *The 4400*, executive produced by

Francis Ford Coppola's Zoetrope Productions, which premiered with record ratings on the USA Network.

Twice Academy Award nominated director Peter Cattaneo was responsible for one of the biggest sleeper hits of the 1990's. A comedy about a group of out-of-work Sheffield steel workers who take to striping to earn some money, *The Full Monty* received an Academy Award and established Cattaneo as one of the industry's most exciting filmmakers.

Produced by Lizzie Gower, Nick Morris and Emile Sherman from a screenplay by Peter Cattaneo, Ben Rice and Phil Trail, OPAL DREAM is based on Ben Rice's novella *Pobby and Dingan*, which has been published in many languages and won the Somerset Maugham Award in 2001. The New York Times said of the book: "*Pobby And Dingan*" is an enormously touching, imaginative and unexpected novel that just glows in your hands. What's so extraordinary about Rice's novel is how unpredictable it is, how effortlessly it mingles whimsy and gravitas, how its plot races ahead long after you figured it would run out of gas." The Observer called it "an important milestone in the literature of Australia. A masterpiece."

OPAL DREAM's behind-the-scenes team includes director of photography Robert Humphreys (*Somersault*), costume designer Ruth de la Lande (*Rabbit Proof Fence*) and editor Jim Clark (*The Killing Fields*). Executive Producers are Robert Jones, David Thompson, Ben Rice and Finola Dwyer.

BBC hold the UK rights. OPAL DREAM is an Academy Features and Sherman Pictures Production. The film will be distributed in Australia by Icon Films.

BACKGROUND TO THE FILM – Q& A with director PETER CATTANEO

Why did you want to make this film – what was the appeal?

I had read Ben Rice's novel 'Pobby and Dingan' about four years ago and I loved the story. I found it very moving and very funny. It dealt with universal themes of belief and dreams in a wonderfully original and charming way. So I was determined to make the film from that point on. I met Ben persuaded him that I was the right man to turn his book into a film! I collaborated with him from that point on in writing the script. It always takes a while to develop these things and it was in fact four years exactly from when I read the book to when I made the film.

The film is set in an opal mining town in outback Australia. What preparation did you do to familiarise yourself with that world?

I didn't know anything about opal mining before I read the book. I started my research on-line, looking at Lightning Ridge and Coober Pedy - both opal mining towns in Australia. I went on a recce and met some of the miners in Lightning Ridge where the book is set. I ended up shooting in Coober Pedy because it offered me more dynamic visuals. The book is full of descriptions of a barren, arid landscape as Ben wrote it having visited Lightning Ridge during a drought. When I went to Lightning Ridge I was surprised to find green, fertile pasture land with the odd opal mine scattered around. Then I went to Coober Pedy and saw the extraordinary geology and I knew it was definitely the right place to make the film.

I went down a few mines and spent time in the bars where all the miners meet at the end of the day. As well as the famous Bore Baths in Lightning Ridge which is great place to hear mining tales.

Down a mine in Lightning Ridge I found myself chipping away, hoping to find something. You get the bug straight away – it's an amazingly vertiginous thing going down the tunnel into the darkness then. When you get to the bottom, you feel the terrible weight of all this earth on top of you. And then you start chipping away and you think 'if I just went one little chip further I might find something' and then you hear a scrape. All the miners stop when they hear this scrape of the potch and they all come scuttling over, but usually it's just potch which is the milky stone which is not opalised. I found it very hard to leave - I just kept chipping away and chipping away.

I found it a great education and I hope that audiences world-wide will be as intrigued by Australian opal mining as I was.

What was it like when you actually came to shoot in the Australian outback?

The crews were terrific in Australia and very friendly. It was great to work with people I didn't know who were so open and so welcoming. And they really worked hard, with a 'can-do' attitude that I just love being around. It was also marvellous to shoot somewhere where everywhere I looked there was a fantastic image; where the landscape was so striking and the desert light was so pure. We shot a lot of exteriors at the end of the day and the beginning of the day. You get this low desert light which is quite amazing. And the town itself was very visual - a one horse town that was like a time warp with a Drive-in...It made a really nice change for me to not be in some grey, English supermarket car park, trying to make it look cinematic, which I've been doing for years.

What are some of the themes in the film?

The thing that really appealed to me about the story was its grand universal themes of faith, belief, dreams, loss and love - and family. - They're themes that cross all cultures

Do you have an idea of what Pobby and Dingan look like?

I do. In the book there are wonderful descriptions of Pobby and Dingan - of Pobby speaking English or whistling to be understood, and having a wooden leg - and of Dingan's hair cut. Many things are mentioned in the book. But it was always going to be a big challenge - how do I shoot people who don't exist? The question was asked 'should we in fact see them' through CGI or prosthetics but I really thought we shouldn't, - because the film is about imagination - it's about having faith in things that you can't see. But I did have a very strong visual image in my mind of what they would look like, and I when I re-visited the classic film 'Harvey' the portrait of Jimmy Stewart and his rabbit gave me the idea for a scene where Kellyanne draws her imaginary friends - which isn't in the book. We sent descriptions of Pobby and Dingan to the school in Coober Pedy and had lots of children draw their impressions. I chose what I thought were the best and they became the images of Pobby and Dingan we see in the film.

I read a great book by Marjorie Taylor about children who have imaginary friends. I think there's a misconception that only lonely, troubled children have imaginary friends. The book points out that in fact all sorts of children have imaginary friends - they can be really creative, imaginative kids or they can be not very creative at all; they can be only children or the oldest of five or the middle of three; they can be lonely or quite sociable - there aren't any rules.

There are some wonderful drawings in Marjorie's book and this inspired the closing credits sequence of pictures on 'real' imaginary friends from all over the world.

Where did you find Sapphire and Christian and why did you cast them?

The casting process was long and arduous as I knew the film would stand or fall on the casting of the two kids. The casting director met children, advertised in papers, on radio and went to schools, youth clubs all across Australia. She then sent me hundreds of tapes. Sapphire was on one of those early tapes and she just leapt out...I knew that Kellyanne had to have a frail, otherworldly waiflike quality about her and Sapphire just seemed right straight away. She clearly had this incredibly vivid imagination and when she started talking about her own imaginary friends on the tape I really did think that she might be the one. I then met with her and probably 20 other girls that I'd seen on tape and she was clearly way ahead of the rest so I cast her pretty much straight away, subject in my mind to finding the boy and finding the parents.

Finding Christian was a great relief because we found him very late in the process, and I think he's absolutely fantastic. His aunt saw an ad in a paper in Sydney and he'd just played Romeo in his school play, so his aunt thought he should try for the film. When we put him together with Sapphire the chemistry was great. Both of them were really lovely and immersed themselves totally into their roles.

Did they have any acting experience?

No. Christian had played Romeo in his school play but that was it, and Sapphire hadn't done any acting at all.

Did it change your approach to working with them on set?

Yes. First of all I had to explain how it all worked. Then there were two weeks before we started shooting where they did a crash course in drama so they could really understand the notion of acting. I encouraged them not to learn the script – otherwise, for children, acting becomes all about learning lines and some sort of test of getting the lines right. I encouraged them just to feel the moment and let the lines come. Christian spent time with Vince and went down a few opal mines and became very inspired by that. Sapphire was encouraged to play games with Pobby and Dingan and to walk around holding hands with them. After a while she'd chat away to them very naturally.

What was the most difficult aspect of working with them?

The most difficult aspect of working with children – and both Christian and Sapphire were really good – is that they just are what they're children. The problem really is stamina - they lose concentration when they get tired or hungry. And because they are children they can of course only work for so many hours a day. So that has implications on the schedule. But I love working with kids. If there left to find their own way, there's a truly natural and real innocence to their performance.

Why did you cast Vince? What did he bring to his role?

I'd seen Vince in "Lantana" which is a very classy film and Vince was terrific in it. He's a real bloke - you really can believe that he'd go out and pick up a big drill and actually go mining. He's also got a great humanity and warmth to him - and a boyish charm which was great for Rex. So Vince fitted perfectly. And I was very pleased to find that he and Christian really did look like father and son..

What about Jacqueline?

I was looking for someone unusual to play Annie, who would look and feel out of place in the middle of the outback in that dusty, rocky terrain. And someone who, as Kellyanne's mother, would probably share a bit of that dreamlike shyness. There's something wonderfully fragile and sensitive about Jacquie's face that really drew me in. There's a slight other-worldly thing about her as well. When I met her she was very enthusiastic about the script and I was thrilled to cast her.

What was it like shooting in Coober Pedy?

Shooting in Coober Pedy was great in terms of the light, the geography and the architecture. And the fact that it was just a little town. I had a mountain bike that I could ride from my motel to whichever location we were shooting at.

There were also certain challenges that I hadn't forseen at all. I had no idea what a hassle the bush flies would be. When you're out in the opal fields it's quite windy and we'd have flies and dust and very strong sun. So I'd go to work with sun block - about factor a million - and then sun glasses because the white ground was very flary, and then goggles, because the dust was blowing in my eyes. And then I'd have a fly net to keep the flies off and then muslin soaked in insect repellent wrapped around my head, along with a sun hat. So no one actually saw my face for the first month of the shoot. Which wasn't ideal but it was the only way I could survive.

What makes Opal Dream special?

The main thing for me is the story, it's a really great story and it seems to hit a collective unconscious nerve...it's about faith and dreams...and the way that everyone turns up for Pobby and Dingan's funeral at the end has a kind of fable-like feeling to it that I hope people will relate to. That and the heartbreaking nature of Ashmol's journey; his boyish courage and the quirky solutions he comes up with are all very touching.

How did you want the film to look?

Robert Humphries is the DOP on the film. I saw "Somersault", which was a very visually strong piece and "Mullet", another film that he'd shot, which I thought had a

lovely graphic look. He's from a stills background and he frames things in a very elegant way. I knew I wanted the film to have a strong visual side without being glossy and without being the stereotypical outback view, so Bob seemed to be the ideal guy. It was clear to me that to believe in the imaginary friends we had to create a very real world, so we wanted to keep it simple, beautiful and graphic with a limited colour pallet of muted hues. Bob and I went for a 'white heat' look with strong backlight and a few blue skies as possible. We looked at a lot of films that have a big sense of space – 'Paris Texas' ... 'Badlands'. Absence and space is a theme in the film: Kellyanne's lost these imaginary friends and there is something about the outback where you feel like you turn a corner and kind of disappear into the horizon. That sense of infinity, of wideness was very important..

What did you most enjoy about making this film?

Just being able to make it! Because it was a story that struck such a strong personal note with me. I read the book and knew I had to tell that story and keep the faith. Once we'd got the script right the funding came in quite easily, but after a while during the development period I'd get up and think 'I do need a bit of faith just to get to the end of developing this project'. But of course we got there and it was a wonderful film to make.

CAST LIST

Vince Colosimo	Rex Williamson
Jacqueline McKenzie	Annie Williamson
Christian Byers	Ashmol Williamson
Sapphire Boyce	Kellyanne Williamson
Peter Callan	Dan Dunkley
Robert Menzies	Humph
Adam Morgan	Donny
Rusty Potter	Lyndon Dunkley
Denise Roberts	Vera Dunkley

ABOUT THE CAST

VINCE COLOSIMO – Rex Williamson

Vince Colosimo was seen in three back to back internationally acclaimed features: *Chopper*; *Lantana* and *Walking on Water*. He won an Australian Film Institute Award as Best Supporting Actor for his role in *Lantana* and was nominated as Best Actor for his role in *Walking On Water*. He also won the Sydney Film Critics Circle Best Actor Award for this role.

Vince has also appeared in five episodes of the hit television drama, *The Practice* as well as a guest appearance on *Without A Trace*. Other credits include *Ain't Got No Jazz*; *Take Away*; *The Nugget* and *The Hard Word*.

JACQUELINE McKENZIE – Annie Williamson

Jacqueline McKenzie is a graduate of Australia's National Institute of Dramatic Art. She made her screen debut in *Romper Stomper*, starring opposite Russell Crowe. Her portrayal of the troubled "Gabe" in the film was the first of many award-winning performances. Her other film credits include *The Human Touch*, *Freak Weather*, *Peaches*, *The Divine Secrets of the Ya Ya Sisterhood*, *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang*, *Freak Weather* and *Eisenstein*. She also appeared with Samuel L. Jackson in *Deep Blue Sea*, and starred in *Mr. Reliable*, *Under the Lighthouse Dancing*, and *Angel Baby*, (for which she won "Best Actress" award in Australia as well as at numerous international film festivals).

On television, McKenzie starred alongside Holly Hunter in the ABC made-for-TV movie *When Billie Beat Bobbie*. She played the lead role of ‘Rachel’ in the BBC miniseries *Stark*, based on Ben Elton’s book and starring Elton himself. Additional television credits include the role of “Dancy” in the Australian miniseries *The Battlers*, “Catherine” in the miniseries *Kangaroo Palace*, and the Showtime movie *On The Beach*, with Rachel Ward, Bryan Brown and Armand Assante.

On stage, McKenzie received rave reviews for her performances as “Catherine” in David Auburn’s *Proof* at the Sydney Opera House and as “Rita” in the Williamstown Theatre Festival (USA) production of *Educating Rita*, starring opposite Edward Hermann and directed by Bruce Paltrow. McKenzie also appeared in the highly regarded Sydney Theatre Company production of *The White Devil* at New York’s Brooklyn Academy of Music, and starred as “Joan” in George Bernard Shaw’s *Saint Joan*, also at the Sydney Opera House. Her other stage work includes: Theatre de Complicite’s production of *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* with Al Pacino, Steve Buscemi, John Goodman, Billy Crudup and Paul Giamatti; *Master Builder*; *Twelfth Night*; *Rebecca*; *The Barber of Seville*; and *Hamlet* with Geoffrey Rush.

She is currently filming “*Umney’s Last Case*” alongside William H Macy, and is soon to commence shooting the third season of USA Network Original Series *The 4400*, in which she stars as Diana Skouris.

CHRISTIAN BYERS – Ashmol Williamson

Since the age of two, ten year-old Christian Byers has been very keen to act and although he hasn’t undertaken any professional work, he’s taken some acting classes, including a course at National Institute of Dramatic Arts.

Possessing intensity beyond his years, Christian is incredibly bright, focused and determined. Christian is from Sydney and has a younger brother.

SAPPHIRE BOYCE – Kellyanne Williamson

“Wildly imaginative” is just one term used to describe Sydney’s Sapphire Boyce. The irrepressible ten-year old decided to audition for the role of Kellyanne after seeing the details in her school’s newsletter and even took her own imaginary friend along with her!!

Sapphire has no previous acting experience, although she writes and performs in her own plays with her sister!

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

PETER CATTANEO – Director/Writer

In 1989, Peter Cattaneo graduated from the Royal College of Art. A year later he completed a short film “Dear Rosie” which was nominated for an Academy Award and a BAFTA in the Best Short Film Category. Throughout the next few years he worked on various television projects for Thames Television, Channel 4 and the BBC, including the acclaimed drama “Loved Up”, which screened at Sundance Film Festival.

In 1996 Peter directed a film that would bring him his second Academy Award nomination – “The Full Monty”. Premiering at the Sundance Film Festival, “The Full Monty” was nominated for four Academy Awards, including Best Director.

In 2001 Peter directed “Lucky Break” starring Christopher Plummer, Bill Nighy and Tim Spail.

Most recently Peter has directed and co-written “Opal Dream” which was adapted from the highly acclaimed novella “Pobby and Dingan” by Ben Rice. This film is due for release in Spring 2006.

LIZIE GOWER - Producer

Lizie Gower opened her own commercials production company in 1985. Gower's ability to spot and nurture talent has helped Academy to become one of the biggest and most awarded companies in its field in the United Kingdom.

In 1996 Gower opened a music video department at Academy which has won enormous recognition in the industry. Academy videos have won MTV Video Of The Year Awards twice in New York and twice in Europe.

In 2000 Gower financed the initial development of "Sexy Beast" directed by Jonathan Glazer, one of Academy's directors. Subsequently Academy started a features division to develop projects for the company's 16 in house directors. In 2003, Gower alongside Nick Morris produced "Birth", starring Nicole Kidman and Lauren Bacall, directed by Jonathan Glazer.

Academy continue to produce some of the world's most acclaimed music videos and commercials of the last decade including Guinness "surfer" voted the best television commercial ever made.

EMILE SHERMAN – Producer

Emile Sherman is one of Australia's leading film producers. In 2000 he founded Ocean Pictures, a feature film production and distribution company which produced and/or distributed a range of films including Phillip Noyce's internationally acclaimed *Rabbit Proof Fence*; *The Night We Called It A Day* (starring Dennis Hopper and Melanie Griffith), and *The Honourable Wally Norman*, which opened the Sydney Film Festival in 2003. *Rabbit Proof Fence* grossed over AUD\$7 million at the Australian box office and was released in all major territories including by Miramax in the US. He also co produced the multi award winning documentary *Uncle Chatzkel* which was nominated for an AFI Award Best Documentary.

Through his current company Sherman Pictures, Emile is in post production on Neil Armfield's *Candy* which stars Heath Ledger, Geoffrey Rush and Abbie Cornish. Widely anticipated, *Candy* marks Heath Ledger's return to Australia and teams him up with Academy Award Winner Geoffrey Rush and Australia's rising star Abbie Cornish.

Sherman Pictures also executive produced and acted as Australian distributor on Anna Reeves' *Oyster Farmer*, which has been the most successful Australian film at the box office in 2005.

Sherman Pictures has a number of films in development, including ones with director John Curren (*We Don't Live Here Any More*), Damien O'Donnell (*East is East*) and Jonathan Taplitsky (*Getting' Square*).

Emile has a Masters Degree in English Literature, a Bachelor of Law Degree, and has a background in journalism before entering the film industry.

FINOLA DWYER – Executive Producer

Finola Dwyer is an award-winning producer of feature films, television dramas and documentaries. Born in New Zealand, Finola entered the industry as a film editor, and since turning to producing her feature film credits include *'Queen City Rocker'*; *'Starlight Hotel'*, which enjoyed great critical acclaim in the US, *'A Soldier's Tale'*, with Gabriel Byrne and Judge Reinhold and producer of the highly acclaimed three-part drama series, *'The Shadow Trader'*. Finola produced and conceived the award-winning documentary *'Raglan by the Sea'*, which was the inspiration for the top rated documentary series in New Zealand, *'Heartland'*. She also conceived one of the most successful chat shows in New Zealand, *'McCormick Country'*.

Finola moved to the UK in the early 90s, and produced Iain Softley's internationally acclaimed debut feature *'Backbeat'*, for Stephen Woolley's and Nik Powell's Scala Productions. *'Backbeat'* was nominated for the British Academy Alexander Korda Award for Outstanding British Film. Ian Hart who portrayed John Lennon received the Evening Standard Newcomer Award. Finola was co-executive producer on Scala's *'Hollow Reed'* and produced *'Welcome to Woop Woop'* for Scala and Goldwyn Entertainment Company, directed by Stephan Elliott (*'The Adventures of Priscilla Queen of the Desert'*) starring Jonathan Schaech, Rod Taylor and Susie Porter. *'Welcome to Woop Woop'* screened in the Official Selection at the 1997 Cannes Film Festival. Finola produced *'The Lost Son'* directed by Chris Menges (*'A World Apart'*) starring Daniel Auteuil and Nastassja Kinski.

Finola has been developing several films under her production banner FDP, and produced *'Me Without You'* a co-production with Dakota Films, directed by Sandra Goldbacher (*'The Governess'*) starring Anna Friel, Michelle Williams, Kyle MacLachlan and Trudie Styler. *'Me Without You'* screened in competition in the Venice Film Festival in 2001, was BAFTA nominated for the Alexander Korda award for Best British film in 2002 and

won Best Film at the Stuttgart Film Festival. Finola executive produced *'One Love'*, directed by Rick Elgood and Don Letts for the Film Council New Cinema Fund, set for a 2004 release and has recently completed *'The Hamburg Cell'*, written by Ronan Bennett and directed by Antonia Bird, for C4 and F2. *'The Hamburg Cell'* will premiere at the Edinburgh Film Festival. She is currently producing Stephen Woolley's directorial debut *'The Wild and Wycked World of Brian Jones'*, written by Neil Purvis and Robert Wade (*'The World is Not Enough'*, *'Die Another Day'*).

Projects in development include *'Villa Vittoria'*, a London/Italian set thriller to be directed by Roger Donaldson (*'Thirteen Days'*, *'No Way Out'*), an original Stephan Elliott project with FilmFour, a Nick Hornby project with producer Amanda Posey, and *'Group Hug'*, an original romantic comedy set in New York. Finola is also producing a West End stage version of the Oscar nominated Norwegian film *'Elling'* with ATG.

Finola is a BAFTA Council member and the Deputy Chairman of the BAFTA Film Committee.

BEN RICE – Executive Producer/Writer

Ben Rice was born in England in 1972 and educated at Newcastle University and Oxford. His first collection of poetry was published when he was still at school. His prose debut, the novella *Pobby and Dingan* was written following a trip to Australia in 1999 and has been published in over twenty countries. It also won the Somerset Maugham Award in 2000.

Several of Ben's short stories have been adapted for radio, the stage and for film and appeared in magazines such as *Granta* and *The New Yorker*. He was hailed in 2003 by *Granta* magazine as one of the best young British novelists to have emerged in the last twenty years. Ben currently divides his time between England and Australia.

ROBERT JONES – Executive Producer

With 22 years experience in the industry, Robert Jones's career spans video and theatrical distribution, international acquisition, film production and financing and public funding. He has a proven track record working with established talent and identifying and developing new talent.

Jones' first production credits were the commercial successes *Sirens* and *The Englishman Who Went Up a Hill but Came Down a Mountain*. In 1993 he met Bryan Singer (*X-Men*) and Paul Thomas Anderson (*Boogie Nights*, *Magnolia*) at the Sundance Film Festival. The association with Singer resulted in the box office hit and double Oscar and BAFTA award-winning film *The Usual Suspects*. He went on to produce Anderson's first picture *Hard Eight* with Gwyneth Paltrow and Samuel L Jackson (selected for the 1996 Sundance Film Festival and *Un Certain Regard* at Cannes and nominated for 5 Independent Spirit Awards) and *The Serpent's Kiss* starring Ewan McGregor and Greta Scacchi (which premiered in Official Competition at the 50th Cannes Film Festival).

In 1996 he formed Jonescompany Productions and signed a development deal with PolyGram Filmed Entertainment producing *Dad Savage* starring Patrick Stewart and Ben Hopkins's magical fairytale *Simon Magus* starring Noah Taylor (selected for Official Competition at the 1999 Berlin Film Festival).

Earlier in his career, Jones gained extensive experience in acquisition, distribution and marketing working with Palace, the UK's leading independent distributor/producer throughout the 80s. He established and developed the highly regarded Palace-Classics label building a catalogue of more than 150 titles and paving the way for the now flourishing market for foreign language and art-house films on video.

As Director of Acquisitions for Palace Pictures and Video, he was responsible for identifying, negotiating and closing deals for successful theatrical releases including *When Harry Met Sally*; *Prince Sign o' the Times*; *My Left Foot*; *Nikita*; *Cinema*

Paradiso; *Wild at Heart* and *The Player*. He also identified and acquired films such as *Reservoir Dogs* and *Shallow Grave* for PolyGram to distribute in Europe and North America as well as acquiring titles for German distributor NEF2.

Prior to joining the Film Council to set up and run its Premiere Fund Jones also produced Stephen Frears's *Dirty Pretty Things* starring Audrey Tautou and Chiwetel Ejiofor. The film won the South Bank Film of the Year Award, Best Film and Best Actor at the London Evening Standard Awards and Best Screenplay at the London Critic's Circle Awards. It has also been nominated for two BAFTA awards including Best British Film and received an Academy Award nomination for Best Screenplay. The Premiere Fund invests in films with commercial potential that offer quality and entertainment to the widest possible audiences both in the UK and worldwide.

Films with which the fund has been involved thus far include: Robert Altman's Oscar-winning *Gosford Park*, Patrice Leconte's Venice Film Festival winning *L'Homme du Train*; Steve Barron's *Mike Bassett: England Manager*; David Mackenzie's Edinburgh prize winner *Young Adam*; Christine Jeffs's *Sylvia*; Oliver Parker's *The Importance of Being Earnest*; John Stephenson's *Five Children and It*; Mike Leigh's *Vera Drake*; Christopher Smith's *Creep*; Michael Radford's *Merchant of Venice*; Fernando Mereilles' *The Constant Gardener* and *Valiant* a computer-generated animated feature from *Shrek* producer John Williams.

Jones sits on the Film Skills Strategy Committee and acts as a consultant to the ACE programme. He has taught at the Media Business School, at EICTV in Cuba and EMAM in Rome. He is also an external examiner at the London College of Communications and sits on the Advisory Boards of both the British Independent Film Association and The Script Factory.

DAVID THOMPSON – Executive Producer

David Thompson began his career at the BBC as a documentary maker. He began producing drama while working for the BBC's *Everyman* documentary series, where he produced the original *Shadowlands*, which won the British Academy Award for Best Drama and an International Emmy. Subsequent productions included the British Academy Award winning *Safe*, directed by Antonia Bird, Alan Clarke's *The Firm* and *Road*.

He was appointed Head of BBC Films in May 1997, overseeing a slate of films for cinema and television. Past BBC Films productions include the acclaimed *Mrs Brown* starring Judi Dench and Billy Connolly; Stephen Daldry's *Billy Elliot* (BBC Films' most successful film to date, which has taken some \$100m worldwide, won three major British Academy Film Awards and was nominated for three Academy Awards); the Academy award-winning *Iris*, starring Dame Judi Dench, Kate Winslet, Jim Broadbent and directed by Richard Eyre; Stephen Frears' *Dirty Pretty Things*; *I Capture the Castle*, from the novel by Dodie Smith; *The Heart of Me* starring Helena Bonham Carter, Paul Bettany and Olivia Williams; Roger Michell's acclaimed *The Mother*; *Sylvia* starring Gwyneth Paltrow; Michael Winterbottom's Berlin Golden Bear winner *In this World*; Lynne Ramsay's *Ratcatcher* and *Morvern Callar* and Pawel Pawlikowski's *Last Resort*.

Future releases include *Code 46* starring Tim Robbins and Samantha Morton, and directed by Michael Winterbottom; *The Life and Death of Peter Sellers*, featuring a star-studded cast led by Geoffrey Rush, officially selected in Competition at the Cannes Film Festival 2004; *The Mighty Celt* starring Gillian Anderson and Robert Carlyle; Judi Dench and Bob Hoskins in *Mrs Henderson Presents*; compelling drama *Red Dust* starring Hilary Swank and Chiwetel Ejiofor; Danny Boyle's new film *Millions*; Pawel Pawlikowski's eagerly-awaited second feature *My Summer of Love* and Richard Eyre's *Stage Beauty* starring Billy Crudup and Claire Danes.

As an executive producer, his numerous television credits include *A Rather English Marriage*, Stephen Poliakoff's *Perfect Strangers* and *The Lost Prince*, Emmy and Golden Globe award-winning *Conspiracy* and *The Gathering Storm* starring Vanessa Redgrave and Albert Finney, Dominic Savage's multi award-winning *Out of Control* and Francesca Joseph's *Tomorrow La Scala!*

ROBERT HUMPHREY’S – Director of Photography

Acclaimed cinematographer Roberts Humphreys credits include such films as *Mullet*; *Walking On Water*; *Wildness*; *More Than Scarlet* and the critically acclaimed *Somersault*.

Other television credits include the series *Fat Cow Motel* and the documentaries *Wildness*, *Gulpilil – One Red Blood*, *Stolen Generations* and *The Diplomat*.

PHIL TRAIL – Writer

Phil graduated from Newcastle University in 1995 with a First (with distinction) in English and Film Studies.

He started his career in TV, writing and directing for some of London’s leading production companies – including Planet 24, Hat Trick, Mentorn, Roger Bolton and finally the BBC. Credits include *The Big Breakfast*; *Hotel Babylon*; *Whatever You Want*; *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang*; *Tell The Truth* and *Flatmates*.

Between 1998 and 2002, Phil wrote and directed four short films – *Hiccup*; *Flipped*; *Post* and *Dangle* – with on-screen talent like Celia Imrie, James D’Arcy, Jason Flemyng and Eddie Marsan. These films won numerous International Festivals, and have all been sold to TV around the world.

Since 2002, Phil has written four feature-length screenplays. Phil appeared on the cover of Screen International as one of the “most exciting new talents emerging across the UK film industry”.

JIM CLARK – Editor

Academy Award winner Jim Clark edited his first film, *One Wish Too Many*, in 1956. Since then he has worked on such films as *Marathon Man*; *The Killing Fields*; *Memphis Belle*; *This Boys Life*; *Nell*; *Copycat*; *Marvin's Room*; *The Jackal*; *The Mission*; *The World Is Not Enough*; *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang* and the upcoming *Vera Drake*.

In 1985 Clark won the Academy Award for Best Film Editing for his work on *The Killing Fields*. In 1987 Clark received an Academy Award nomination for Best Film Editing for his work on *The Mission*. Clark won the BAFTA in 1987 for his editing work on *The Mission* as well as winning the BAFTA in 1985 for his work on *The Killing Fields*.

ELIZABETH MARY MOORE – Production Designer

Elizabeth Mary Moore was nominated for an Australian Film Institute Award in Open Craft in 2003 for her work on *Preservation*.

Other credits as production designer include *Tulip*; *Flying Over Mother*; *Above Dust Level*; *Mullet* and *The Illustrated Family Doctor*.