

Australia at Cannes Film Festival May 2014

Report by Kathleen Drumm, Head of Marketing; Sally Caplan, Head of Production; and Veronica Gleeson, Senior Development Executive

- \$17 million+ in sales
- Best Actor Award for David Gulpilil
- Three Australian films in Official Selection
- Jane Campion is Cannes Jury President
- 260 Australians in Cannes
- High-profile Australian talent on show
- Praise for quality of Australian projects
- Industry panels with BFI and NZFC



It was a bullish market for Australia, fuelled by a substantial multi-million dollar deal for Garth Davis's debut feature, *Lion*, with worldwide rights snapped up by The Weinstein Company. Jocelyn Moorhouse's *The Dressmaker* and Julius Avery's *Son of a Gun* also figured strongly with buyers, each earning over a million dollars in sales.

There was consistent positive feedback on the quality of the Australian slate from international sales agents, who noted that Australian producers are presenting better developed scripts with demonstrable marketing hooks, including commercially appealing talent.

Festival

Over 10,000 titles from around the world were submitted to Cannes 2014 (across the Cannes Film Festival, Directors' Fortnight and Critics' Week). The festival's top award, the Palme d'Or, went to Turkish director Nuri Bilge

Ceylan for his film *Winter Sleep* and the Grand Prix to Alice Rohrwacher for the Italian drama *The Wonders*.



Eminent Sydney-based filmmaker Jane Campion presided over the jury of the 67th Festival de Cannes. She remains the only woman to have ever won the festival's top prize, the Palme d'Or (for *The Piano* in 1993).

Australia's David Gulpilil triumphed in Cannes sidebar, *Un Certain Regard*, taking out the Best Actor Award for his powerful performance in *Charlie's Country*. Gulpilil both starred in and co-wrote the film in collaboration with director Rolf de Heer, who was joined in Cannes by actor Peter Djigirr and producer Sue Murray. The film marked de Heer's fourth selection for Cannes.

Director David Michôd's highly anticipated *The Rover* screened during the opening weekend in Official Selection Out of Competition, earning a standing ovation from a capacity audience. The director was supported by producers Liz Watts and David Linde along with actors Guy Pearce and Robert Pattinson who garnered considerable red carpet attention.

Zak Hilditch's debut feature *These Final Hours* had its international premiere in Directors' Fortnight, with producer Liz Kearney and actors Nathan Phillips, Angourie Rice and Jessica de Gouw all in attendance.

The Australian presence was further emphasised by attendance from Cate Blanchett for *How to Train Your Dragon 2*; Nicole Kidman, the star of controversial opening night film *Grace of Monaco*; Russell Crowe with his directorial debut, *The Water Diviner*; Mia Wasikowska in *Maps to the Stars*, Miranda Otto in *The Homesman* (both of which were In Competition); and Ben Mendelsohn in *Lost River* (*Un Certain Regard*).

Australian filmmaker Sam Holst joined us as one of only six international participants in Cannes' Cinéfondation Résidence (March to July in Paris). The prestigious course is designed for young directors working on their first or second feature.



Market

Australia had a strong industry presence with 260 attendees and a cluster of new titles attracting strong interest from buyers.

Australia had a remarkable year at the marketplace, clocking up over \$17 million in sales. Top earners were *Lion*, *Son of a Gun*, *The Dressmaker* and *Life*.

Charlie's Country, *Backtrack*, *My Mistress*, *Predestination*, *The Rover*, *These Final Hours* and *The Turning* all achieved solid sales during the market.

Russell Crowe flew into Cannes for 24 hours to screen footage from his directorial debut, *The Water Diviner*, prompting negotiations for US rights with Harvey Weinstein, a strong and consistent enthusiast for Australian feature filmmaking.

Of the estimated 100,000+ people on the ground during Cannes, over 11,000 from 115 countries registered for the market (up from 109 countries in 2013) with growth from China in particular which registered a 30 per cent increase in participants. Six nations made an official appearance in the market for the first time: Iraq, Kurdistan, Syria, Burma, Brunei and Laos.

Over 5,200 titles were on sale this year in Cannes, including 3,100 completed films and 810 documentaries. There were 1,450 films screened in the marketplace.

Marketplace activities most represented were production (29 per cent), theatrical distribution (21 per cent) and sales (11 per cent), followed by VOD/new media (4 per cent).

Trends and observations

Over 50 films sold to the US, which along with Asia was the big territorial buyer during Cannes. This was in part Australia's experience too, with US sales for *Lion* (The Weinstein Co) and *Son of a Gun* (A24) as well as North American offers on other titles. China's enthusiasm was mostly towards the next *Avatar* or *Star Wars*.

In contrast, the international sales business showed strain, including Australia, with several local distributors telling us they came home with little.

"Unlike the US or Asia, the bigger, more mature European markets face multifarious challenges: in France, paybox Canal Plus's more contained acquisition of foreign titles; Russia's weakened rouble, down about 20 per cent year-on-year vs the dollar, its face-off with Ukraine, and possible quotas on foreign movies; German broadcasters' pull-back on movie buying; Spain and Italy's continued doldrums." – <http://variety.com/2014/film/news/cannes-u-s-market-surges-international-biz-hurts-1201194976/>

The market saw a lack of star-driven pre-sale titles compared to previous years, with sellers bemoaning the movement of profile actors into high-end TV. Further themes were the continued contraction of DVD and TV sales and "distributors' reluctance to pre-buy projects which are not fully-financed and might never get made...the pre-sales market isn't dead. But, in order to get big projects greenlit, financiers will probably have to stump up more equity to compensate volatile international pre-sales finance." – *Variety*.

The gap in the market meant that acquisitions slates were filled with non-US fare that was completed or fully financed, for example the *Son of a Gun*, *Lion* and *The Dressmaker* deals. The take-home message is without finance in place, trying to use pre-sales to cover production budgets will be difficult unless major stars can be attached.

Australian producer Tim White noted of his 14th Cannes: "There is still a dearth of outstanding projects and indie distributors will pay a premium to secure rights to a film with commercial prospects. Of course one is always faced with the standard dilemma of needing cast attached and this is really difficult unless one has a major Hollywood agency effectively packaging the film. The issue often raised by sales companies and financiers was that Australian films are too expensive and are not budgeted according to market/commercial expectation."

Australian producers with a rich variety of feature projects continue to gain access to leading sales companies, with entities such as Protagonist, XYZ, Embankment, FilmNation, Hanway, eOne, Studio Canal and Memento now enjoying sustained relationships with filmmakers. Scripts are generally regarded as well-developed with smart packages. Producers are seen to be pitching and presenting their projects very well.

Closely tracked Australian talent included Justin Kurzel, Emile Sherman, Ariel Kleiman, Julius Avery, David Michôd, Cate Shortland, Liz Watts, Zak Hilditch, Luke Davies, Jennifer Kent and Sophie Hyde. There was a high level of praise and curiosity about emerging talent. Agents and potential co-producers were keen to engage in discussions about early-career directors and writers (Screen Australia's Springboard and Hot Shots projects were being tracked; also the filmmakers involved in *The Turning*). There was real market hunger not for competent helmers or projects that tick certain genre boxes, but for unique and bold voices (eg Sophie Hyde and Jennifer Kent). The 'new Australian wave' was a term we heard a number of times.

Amid much talent enthusiasm, there is still a concern around projects that are too hybrid to meaningfully reach out to their potential audience (neither arthouse nor mainstream), and budget level continued to be a talking point. With *The Infinite Man* and *52 Tuesdays* buzz projects, the FilmLab model self-announced as a success. In general terms, the message about overall production budget is unwavering: the international market wants films from emerging talent to be priced far lower, around the \$500,000 to \$1.5K mark.

Screen Australia at Cannes

Maximising the opportunities presented by Cannes is crucial to maintaining a prominent profile for Australia's cinema and production community. We put together a schedule of meetings, events, business activities and promotional materials, in support of Australia at Cannes.

Objectives

1. To celebrate and support the films screening in Official Selection.
2. To promote Australian screen talent, both directorial and acting.

3. To position Australia as an expert, friendly partner for international collaborations.
4. To enable business opportunities for Australian producers, including with their peers from selected territories around the world.
5. To profile Australian producers at Cannes as well as their slate of upcoming projects.
6. To create opportunities for Australian producers to engage with key international industry execs across distribution, sales, finance, development and acquisitions. This included providing on-the-spot advice, introductions and practical support.
7. To secure information about market trends and developments across key territories.
8. To secure sales information on the status of Australian films in the marketplace and to explore the latest on sales strategies for Australia's major titles.
9. To pitch new projects, ensuring that sales agents and buyers have the latest information on new titles coming through.
10. To provide an opportunity for significant international film festivals to focus on Australian cinema, particularly upcoming projects.

Business activity

Office: Australia's office in Cannes is situated directly opposite the Palais Theatre. Feedback from producers and business clients was positive regarding its convenience, location and the facilities available. While great for business, the space provides limited opportunity for entertaining. However, both its price and accessibility is extremely good by Cannes standards, so we are working on refinements for next year to ensure maximum use of the space. A separate larger venue for key networking events is being explored.

Meetings: Screen Australia met with a range of sales agents, acquisitions executives, film festivals, partner organisations and producers throughout the festival (Appendix A).

Festival lunch: We hosted a lunch for festival selectors from Cannes, Sundance, Venice, Berlin and Toronto, and the filmmaking teams behind *The Rover*, *Charlie's Country* and *These Final Hours*. Australian Ambassador to France, Ric Wells, welcomed guests, alongside Screen Australia CEO, Graeme Mason.

Networking functions: Screen Australia's office hosted Happy Hour drinks over three nights for Australian producers to network with international guests. A networking session for Australian producers was organised with the NZFC, which took place at their office. In collaboration with FICCI Frames, we organised a function for Australian and Indian producers at the Indian pavilion. Guests were welcomed by the Secretary of the Indian Government's Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Shri Bimal Julka and Australian Ambassador, Ric Wells.

ScreenWest function: Screen Australia's Cannes team co-ordinated arrangements for a ScreenWest event which was hosted by their CEO Ian Booth.

Media: We responded to opportunities as they arose and several interviews were held with filmmakers and Screen Australia staff including Channel 9, Channel 7, IF magazine and SMH.

Industry initiatives

Co-producing with the UK and NZ: We organised a session with the UK and New Zealand, who are natural production partners for Australia. Isabel Davis (BFI), Sally Caplan (Screen Australia) and Dave Gibson (NZFC) presented the best way for producers to access the financial incentives available in each country, while producers Iain Canning (*Tracks*, *The King's Speech*, *Top of the Lake*) and Tim White (*Ned Kelly*, *The Boys Are Back*, *Untitled Jim Loach Project*), who work regularly across these territories, discussed the most effective ways to collaborate.

Women Directors: 21 Years and Counting: Jane Campion remains the only woman to have won the Palme d'Or in Cannes' 67th year. How different is it for a woman to make a film and what wider social issues come into play? Award-winning Australian director Sophie Hyde (*52 Tuesdays*), UK director Destiny Ekaragha (*Gone Too Far*) and French director Audrey Dana (*French Women*) discussed their experiences with Deborah Sathe of Film London.

Power to the Pixel – Financing Innovation and Cross-media: This session was one of a series of presentations and networking events run by NEXT, featuring thinkers and players at the forefront of innovation in film and media. Heads of funds and commissioners of cross-media spoke about the types of projects they are financing and the challenges around innovation. Screen Australia's CEO Graeme Mason presented the Australian viewpoint.

Market pitching: Six Australian producers received one-on-one pitch training with renowned Hollywood script consultant, Michael Hauge in advance of the market. These same producers received travel support through Screen Australia's market program: Matt Reeder, Justin Dix, Jamie Hilton, Sheila Jayadev, Raquelle David and Janelle Landers. Travel assistance was also provided for Liz Kearney, Tim White, Raquelle Dix and Lisa Shaunessy.

Market induction program: In collaboration with Initialize Films, we ran an induction program for producers new to the market: Raquelle David, Justin Dix, Liz Kearney, Matt Reeder and Lisa Shaunessy. Initialize Films posted 12 pre-market podcasts featuring interviews with sellers, distributors and producers. At Cannes there were four morning sessions with the group, with leading industry players presenting an insider's guide to financing and selling feature films.

\$10M+ program: Australian producers Janelle Landers and Steve Topic heard from international experts, who provided an insider's guide to financing \$10m+ budget action, adventure, crime, sci-fi and thrillers. Twelve pre-market and three post-market podcasts from Initialize along with one-on-one consultancy, a panel and networking drinks were included.

Website, resources and collateral

We launched a fully interactive site australiaatcannes.com in advance of the market, featuring 205 pages including pop-ups – with information on titles; links to trailers; producer home pages; distributors; screening schedule; a guide to doing business with Australia and a news feed from Cannes which had regular postings. A mobile-optimised version of the site was also created. There were over 7,500 page views of the website during the festival, the most popular feature of the site being ‘Australian producers’. Viewers remained on the site for an average of 4:17 minutes. The top five countries visiting the site were Australia, France, the UK, US and India.

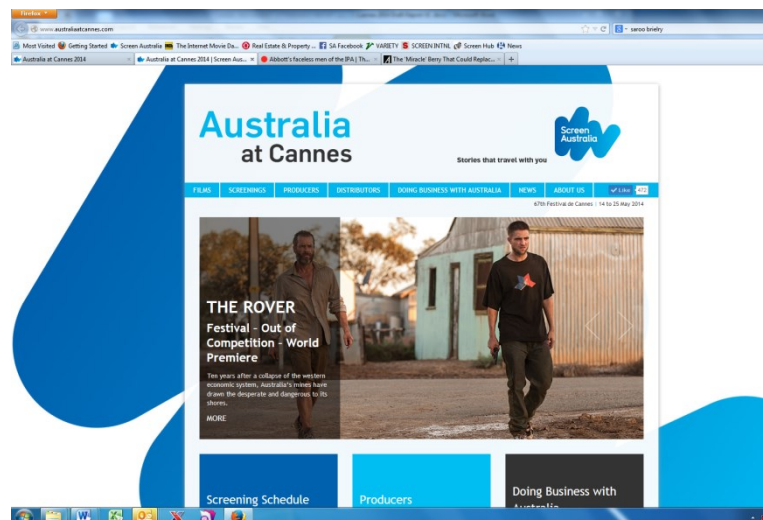


Our online [Guide to Cannes for Australian producers](#) featured an introduction to the festival along with sections on navigating the market, accreditation, plus tips for first-timers and practical information about Cannes.

The [Australians at Cannes Facebook page](#) featured regular posts before and during the festival.

Our [Directory of International Sales Agents](#) is regularly used by producers setting up meetings.

Marketing collateral included booklets detailing the line-up of new and upcoming Australian films. A *Directory of Australian Producers in Cannes* and our *Guide to Doing Business with Australia* were on hand for international executives. Large posters and banners promoted the films in Official Selection and latest high-profile features, while a ‘talent wall’ drew attention to the diverse range of both commercially appealing and rising stars attached to projects.



Conclusion

Cannes is the world's biggest film festival and market. It is the best-attended event in the annual calendar and brings together a huge number of influential personnel, from lawyers and politicians through to international distributors, film buyers, financiers, festival directors, actors, bloggers, press, talent agents and, last but not least, filmmaking talent.

The effort put in by Screen Australia to organise Cannes is enormous, particularly this year, where Australia had three films in the festival. However, Cannes is an extraordinary occasion where so much can be achieved in a concentrated period of time. The film world is acutely aware of the deep talent pool in Australia, but Cannes really brings the spotlight to bear on those talents, Australian culture, the excellence of Australian storytelling and what a great place Australia is to film. Through training programs, introductions, meetings, panel sessions, functions, and first-rate marketing materials initiated by Screen Australia at Cannes, Australia's prominence in all areas of film was further heightened to the rest of the world.

Screen Australia executives attending Cannes were CEO Graeme Mason; Head of Production Sally Caplan; Head of Marketing Kathleen Drumm; Senior Development Executive Veronica Gleeson and Marketing Executive Harry Avramidis.

Appendix A

Screen Australia held a broad range of meetings in Cannes with financiers, sales agents, acquisitions executives, film festivals, partner organisations and producers, including:

1. **Access Industries** Toby Hill
2. **AES** Chris Maughan
3. **Altitude** Andy Majors, Bradley Quirk, Will Clarke
4. **Altitude Film Sales** Mike Runagall
5. **AMC TV** Kristin Jones
6. **Ancine** Eduardo Valente
7. **Arclight** Gary Hamilton
8. **Arsam** Ilann Girard
9. **Aver** Peter Sussman
10. **Bankside** Hilary Davis, Rachael Rauch
11. **BBC** Joe Oppenheimer
12. **BFI** Isobel Davis, Lizzie Francke, Laura Giles
13. **Cargo** Mark Lindsay
14. **Celluloid Dreams** Hengameh Panahi
15. **Cohen Media** Daniel Battsek
16. **Content Films** Jamie Carmichael
17. **Creative England** Celine Haddad
18. **Daybreaker** David Aukin, Hal Vogel
19. **Diaphana** Karin Beyens
20. **Ealing Metro** Natalie Brenner
21. **Echo Lake** Doug Mankoff
22. **Element Films** Lee Magiday
23. **Embankment** Hugh Grumbar, Tim Haslam
24. **Endgame** Doug Hansen
25. **eOne International** Anick Poirier, Mike Powell
26. **eOne Production** Xavier Marchand, Benedict Carver
27. **European Film Promotion** Jo Muhlberger, Renate Rose
28. **FICCI Frames** Leena Jaisani, Anirban Chatterjee
29. **Film Four** Sam Lavender, Tessa Ross, Sue Bruce-Smith
30. **FilmNation** Milan Popelka, Gregorie Gensollen
31. **Focus** Lia Burman

32. **Fortissimo Films**, Michael Werner
33. **Fox Searchlight** Tony Safford
34. **General Film Corp** Matthew Metcalfe
35. **Goalpost** Tristan Whalley
36. **Hanway Films** Matt Baker, Phillipa Tsang
37. **Hopscotch** Troy Lum
38. **Icon** Zak Brilliant
39. **IFC** Arianna Bocco
40. **IFF** Jan Nathanson
41. **Industry Media** Sara Curran
42. **Italian Cinema Directorate** Antonio Falduto, Chiara Fortunata
43. **Kinology** Ram Murali
44. **KMI** Kathy Morgan
45. **KOFIC** Young-gu Kim
46. **Libertine Pictures** Richard Fletcher, Paul Davis
47. **Lightning** Richard Guardian, Ken Dubow
48. **Memento** Naima Abed, Nick Shumaker
49. **MDA** Yeo Chun Cheng, Dillon Tan
50. **MIFF Accelerator** Mark Woods, Claire Dobbin
51. **Miramax** Zanne Devine
52. **Mongrel Media** Charlotte Mickie
53. **Mr Smith Entertainment** David Garrett
54. **Myriad Pictures** Kirk d'Amico
55. **NZFC** Dave Gibson, Jasmin McSweeney
56. **OMDC** Kristine Murphy
57. **Oscilloscope** David Laub
58. **Pacific Merchantile Bank** Adrian Ward
59. **Parabolix** Larry Malkin, Tania Chambers
60. **Pathe** Cameron McCracken, Colleen Woodcock
61. **Pinewood** Jeremy Baxter, Steve Christianson
62. **Premier PR** Jonathan Rutter
63. **Prescience** Paul Brett
64. **Protagonist** Mike Goodridge, Emily Gotto
65. **Sampomedia** Pete Buckingham, Mike Gubbins

66. **Studio Canal** Jenny Borgars
67. **Sunray Films** Alison Thompson
68. **Solution Ent Group** Lisa Wilson
69. **Wild Bunch** Carole Baraton
70. **Telefilm Canada** Sheila de la Varende, Carole Brabant
71. **TIFF Industry Group** Christoph Straub
72. **Tohokushinsha** Kinuyo Taira, Takayuki Terashima
73. **The Weinstein Company** Dan Guando, Negeen Yazdi
74. **Xantara Film Capital LLP** Gabi Christian-Hare
75. **Universal** David Kosse
76. **UTA** Bec Smith
77. **Warp** Alex Marshall, Robin Gutch
78. **WME** Deb MacIntosh
79. **Toronto International Film Festival** Jane Schoettle
80. **Venice International Film Festival** Paolo Bertolin
81. **Directors' Fortnight** Benjamin Illos
82. **Sundance Film Festival** John Cooper
83. **Rome Film Festival** Marco Muller
84. **Berlin International Film Festival** Maryanne Redpath
85. **Istanbul Film Festival** Azize Tan
86. **Mumbai Film Festival** Anu Rangachar
87. **BFI London Film Festival** Andrea Bigger
88. **Venice Days** Renata Santoro
89. **Busan International Film Festival** Jin Park
90. **Festival Tous Ecrans** Florian Pfingsttag
91. **Locarno Film Festival** Sergio Fant
92. **Italian Film Critic/Locarno** Sandra Bordigoni
93. **Convergence Entertainment** Tim Kwok
94. **Berlinale Co-Production Market** Sonja Heinen