

TRAVEL REPORT – Hot Docs and INPUT 2008

Report prepared by Julia Overton, FFC Documentary Investment Manager

Hot Docs 2008

The objectives for attending Hot Docs this year were three fold. To have face to face meetings with potential co producing partners, broadcasters, commissioning editors, sales agents and distributors who could work with Australian companies to enable developed projects to be produced and finished projects to find a place in the market. To support the Australian filmmakers attending the event either those who had projects screening in the festival or who were pitching projects in the Toronto Documentary Forum or private meetings. Finally, to observe which documentaries were finding an audience, and in what form, in other words take a reading of the zeitgeist.

This year the programme for Hot Docs was full of imagination and creativity in form and content. Documentary gives us access to people and places that otherwise would not find their way onto our screens, pages, and stages. The celebrations of the marginalised and the broadening of a sense of the world, whether via a primate lab in Abkazia, a young Thai political activist, an English brain surgeon performing surgery in the Ukraine with a standard power drill or a Dutch guitar expert, all these stories touch and inform in a special way.

Hot Docs screened more than 170 films from 36 countries during the 11-day run from April 17 to 27. Many of these came to Toronto as world, international or North American premieres. In addition the Toronto Documentary Forum presented 34 projects from 11 countries from a record 231 submissions being pitched in what turned out to be TDF Director Michaelle McLean's seventh, and last year, in the job. Some were presented in the traditional oak panelled Toronto University hall whilst others were presented in a new programme of private one on one meetings which proved to be very successful.

The final part of Hot Docs is The Doc Shop, running concurrently with the festival. This provides industry participants an opportunity to screen films they might have missed during the festival, as well as other projects from the catalogues of participating sales agents that are looking for buyers. Documentaries are very popular with Toronto audiences. The numbers of people attending Hot Docs events was in excess of 70,000 and there were more than 1900 delegates registered for the Forum. Theatrical standouts amongst the slate included *The English Surgeon* from director Geoffrey Smith and producer Rachel Wexler (the winner of the Best International Feature Documentary); *Corridor # 8* from the Bulgarian team of Boris Despodov and Martichka Bozhilova; *The Lie of the Land* which is Molly Dineen's look at the conflicting rights of hunters, animal activists and the changing role of an agrarian society in the UK; Dilip Mehta's *The Forgotten Woman, Anvil, the Story of Anvil!* from director Sacha Gervasi with Australian producer Rebecca Yeldham and *Stranded* from Gonzalo Arijon. One of my personal favourites was the Australian (I'm not biased of course!) film *Searching 4 Sandeep* from filmmaker Poppy Stockwell. This insightful film about Poppy's quest for love made it down to the final four in the 'best international medium length documentary' category, and this was well deserved.

As with any film festival, technology is now at the forefront, and filmmakers and distributors are taking advantage of website information which is always more up to date than anything else. Festival organisers were able to find out which films were 'hot' by looking at the website traffic they were generating. This built up a sense of buzz and anticipation around certain films, including the aforementioned *Searching 4 Sandeep* as well as another Australian production *Beyond Our Ken* from filmmakers Luke Walker and Melissa Maclean, a film about the Kenja spiritual movement.

Hot Docs is set around seven screening venues and a number of different programmes including an International Co Production Day, International Spectrum, Canadian Spectrum, World Showcase, Made in Mexico, Make Me A Believer, Spotlight on Iran as well as special showcasing of particular filmmakers. This year the filmmakers were documentary legend Richard Leacock who worked with D.A. Pennebaker, Robert Drewe and Albert Maysles and the other honoree was Jennifer Baichwal (*Manufactured Landscapes*). As always there were a number of films screened at the festival which started life at the Documentary Forum, this year the most notable were *Blast!* and *la Corona*.

There was lively debate from industry legends such as Sheila Nevins from HBO and Nick Fraser from Storyville. Sheila gave an interesting and insightful look at the HBO world, somewhat changed from the time she started there as a documentary maker in 1979 and Nick, who was awarded the Doc Mogul Award took the opportunity to highlight the perilous plight of the documentary in the 'rapidly morphing TV industry'.

A number of Australians attended the entire event including Poppy Stockwell, Luke Walker and Melissa Maclean, Alan Erson from ABC, Martin Butler, whose film *Contact*, was in the forum, Mark Atkin representing SBS and Yvonne Body representing Beyond. Ali Russell was there as a finalist in the International Documentary Challenge where teams from around the world have five days to make a documentary film. As well as the usual Commissioning Editors, sales agents and distributors from around the world it is worth noting that each year there are more and more representatives from theatrical sales agents and distributors in attendance from companies such as Magnolia, Think, Maximum and Participant. Magnolia has an involvement in Australian documentary through *Not Quite Hollywood* and Participant has a substantial involvement in *Cane Toads*. A high proportion of the projects being pitched were multiple lengths and had hopes for a theatrical screening for their feature length version. There was interest in ideas that could become the basis for strong narrative projects. There was also an international co production day led by the redoubtable Pat Ferns with delegations from the Nordic countries, Italy, Catalan, South Korea and Brazil, devoted to the discussion of co production in a number of countries which was well attended.

The Toronto Documentary Forum has been running for nine years. This year the Forum introduced the highly successful pitch meetings where a filmmaker had submitted a project and it had been sent to the commissioning editors for consideration before the forum started. If there was interest then a private meeting involving the filmmaker and perhaps a committed broadcaster was able to take place with other potential financiers in a targeted meeting that did not need to involve a preamble. The Australian project *Contact* was able to utilize these meetings most successfully. Commissioning Editors all have their own particular specialities and the trick is to match the project to the editor –

below are observations on meetings with some of these editors, as well as sales agents, distributors and producers looking for partners.

Michael Kot VP Factual and Documentary Programming, CanWest (www.canwest.com) Now firmly in CanWest's embrace, the former Alliance Atlantis specialty cable channels are back in the hunt for documentaries. Kot is responsible for nonfiction material across CanWest's channels with particular responsibility for History Television, an English language specialty television service. The audience is regularly male, from 18 – 54 but is also strong with adults 25 – 54. History Television mainly commissions documentaries about Canadian history and world history (approximately 50% of each). They are always looking for new ways to tell stories that have an historical angle. They want 'dramatic and dynamic stories with contemporary treatments'. They are not interested in a linear recounting of history or traditional, stock and talk style programmes with sit down experts. They commission one hour series and limited series, avoiding sports, arts and religion as they have many one offs currently delivering in those genres. They are always looking for co production opportunities, prebuys and acquisitions at rates which vary. They only commission programmes produced in High Definition.

Pamela Hogan, series producer, Wide Angle for PBS WNET (www.thirteen.org) an international current affairs documentary series produced by Thirteen/WNET New York for national broadcast on PBS and for worldwide distribution. Global current affairs is her brief, with six hours coming from international producers, and four hours as acquisitions. She is interested in one hour slots – looking for human stories that dramatize geopolitical trends. For instance they versioned BBC's three hour *18 With A Bullet* on Salvadoran gangs to 1 x 52 for US audience.

Jean Garner Al Jazeera International (www1.aljazeera.net) Jean is the representative for acquisition and commissioning in the area from the Arctic Circle to Argentina, based in Washington. Jean commissions 75 hours annually, all from international producers. They have a daily programme called *Witness*. Al Jazeera requires a three year global English language non exclusive licence for all media. Other slots include People and Power and For Every Woman.

Charles Schuerhoff of WGBH International (www.wgbhinternational.org) Charles commissions for WGBH, not NOVA which is the preserve of Melanie Wallace. He looks in particular for programmes on science, current affairs and history and is interested in acquisitions and co production.

Courtney Sexton of Participant Productions

(www.participantmedia.com) Participant is perhaps best known as the producers of *An Inconvenient Truth*. They are looking only for theatrical documentaries with breakout potential beyond art house. Projects with universal themes. They will take on five or six of these projects a year. They look at budgets ranging from US\$500,000 to US\$3 million, ideally in partnership with other financiers or a distributor who puts in equity. When submitting a proposal it is wise to include directing samples, either of previous work, or in the case of prior shooting, some scenes from the proposed film. They are currently involved in the new theatrical documentary from Mark Lewis, *Cane Toads*

Steve Lawrence, Director of Music and Cultural Programming, Link TV (www.linktv.org) World music and films about dance, theatre, art, spoken word and

comedy, performance documentaries, concerts and shorts come under Steve's area of responsibility. He will acquire around 25 hours and is starting to commission only now and expects to commission anything from 2 – 10 hours. Their fees however are tiny. If the purpose of your film is not only to get your story out, but to get you further along the filmmaking path by having your work seen internationally this is a good avenue for you. Additionally they can put in funds upfront.

Tabitha Jackson Deputy Commissioning Editor, Specialist Factual Channel 4 Television (www.channel4.com)

Tabitha Jackson has been with Channel 4 since March 2007 after a decade and a half of film-making. Her current slate ranges from *Time Team* to a series on the social history of British sex. Tabitha is looking for innovative prime-time films and is interested in forging creative links with a new and emerging range of filmmakers.

Sandra Whipham, Deputy Commissioning Editor Channel 4 Television

(www.channel4.com) Works on the flagship documentaries strand True Stories, which brings to digital television the best of new international filmmaking. Every week the strand presents films about a vast range of subjects – the only criteria being that the films concentrate on the contemporary world and are made by world-class directors. Very often they are international pre sales or acquisitions with some fully funded commissions. True Stories have 40 documentary slots a year.

Michael Alder, Executive Producer CBC Science and Natural History Unit (www.cbc.ca)

The Nature of Things with David Suzuki is the unit's flagship programme which explores issues, discoveries and events in the worlds of science, medicine, technology, wildlife and the environment. Analytic and humanist in perspective, it documents the increasingly complicated and interconnected worlds in which we live, seeking to interpret both advances and setbacks at a time when the speed of change is ever accelerating. Currently working with FFC on *Robot Revolution*.

Catherine Olsen, Senior Programmer and Executive Producer of Documentaries

CBC Newsworld (www.cbc.ca) For over a decade the flagship programme The Passionate Eye, has showcased a selection of the world's most provocative and creative documentaries, two nights a week, 52 weeks a year. The focus is primarily contemporary character driven stories dealing with political and social issues. Stories that help people better understand the world they live in and the issues they deal with. Lengths vary from one hour to feature. Currently working with FFC on *The Burning Season*.

Nick Fraser BBC Storyville (www.bbc.co.uk)

Nick was in fine form at the TDF this year as he was the recipient of the Doc Mogul Award. *Storyville* has a reputation of excellence in bringing the best documentaries in the world from anywhere, about anything, by anyone, to a British audience. They show 25 or so films a year which are funded by means of shifting partnerships linking the BBC with European, North American, Asian, African and Australian broadcasters and financing bodies. Currently working with FFC on *The Burning Season*. They had a number of projects in the Forum, one *The Director* about Prince Sianhouk from director Norma Meyer and another from festival favourite Eugene Jarecki *Informant T-10: Rogue Actor* who gave a very slick presentation on a project that uses an American Icon – Ronald Reagan, as the way to explore the American dream.

Sara Bernstein, Director Documentary Programming (www.hbo.com) Sara, along with **Lisa Heller**, Vice President HBO Documentary Films, works with the legendary **Sheila Nevins**, President of Documentary and Family Programming for HBO. Sheila has worked with HBO since 1979 when she was hired to produce documentaries. "What's the attraction of putting your film on in a theatre with three guys in raincoats watching it? What's so terrible about television?" says Sheila. HBO has some big documentary films scheduled for broadcast this year in their season of twelve films – probably the biggest is Marina Zenovich's *Roman Polanski: Wanted and Desired*, which is airing 9 June and then having a limited theatrical season to allow for Oscar possibilities. Included in this summer series of event documentaries is a film by Australia's Janine Hosking – *The Gunja Queen*. HBO will look at films seeking finishing funds but please be aware that because it is event television there is the need for a long lead time. Projects they have screened include *Murder on a Sunday Morning*, *Without Pity*, *The Celluloid Closet*, *Harlan County*. Provocative and pioneering work that gets to the heart of what 'real' people are saying is what they are after.

Helene Coldefy – Director Specialist Factual Arte (www.artefrance.fr) Helene's department looks for projects with 'strong knowledge content', on a variety of subjects such as the environment, fauna, flora, space, health, prehistory, archaeology and technology through the Decouverte series which is aimed at a wide audience. In addition the Adventure Humaine slot focuses on important historical events and scientific discoveries that have shaped history. Helene's final slot is the Thema Evening on Sunday and they want to develop documentaries for 90 minutes prime time with strong narrative structure. Helene has established a strong working relationship with Australia and is a constant supporter of work by Australian filmmakers.

Ann Rose, Sundance Channel Supervising Producer (www.sundancechannel.com) Ann is looking for original programming. She commissions 6 to 8 documentaries series a year (6 – 10 episodes each), and approximately 8 feature documentaries. The programming department acquires up to 70 completed documentary features per year. They are looking for impactful, untold stories with unique vision and voice, a strong narrative arc, and 'iconoclastic' characters. Keen to look at feature documentaries at rough cut stage which are seeking final funding and US broadcast. Must have contemporary element, very keen on first person story telling, does not like narration.

Adam Kemp, Commissioning Editor; Arts, Music, Performance and Religion BBC (www.bbc.co.uk) Adam is responsible for programming and commissioning these genres on all four BBC television networks and as such is always looking for ways to work with any number of producers/production houses. Recent commissions include *Seven Ages of Rock* and *Manchester Passion*.

Claire Aguilar, Vice President Programming, ITVS (www.itvs.org) ITVS has been a co investor in a number of films such as *The First Australians*, *End of the Rainbow*, *The Siege* and *4*. She is keen to continue and expand these relationships in Australia. Australian producers are most likely to deal, in the first instance with either **Cynthia Kane** and **Klara Gunning Harris** via their International Call, or **Lois Vossion** for acquisitions. Deadline for next round with Lois is September 26. Deadline for next round with International Call is Feb 2009.

Sean McKnight Director, Program Development Science Channel (Discovery Communications) (www.discoverychannel.ca) is working with Australian producers on a number of projects, will do one offs or series and will also come in for post production. His central premise is 'How.....works'. Particularly keen on series, and those that are presenter driven, projects that talk about science and how it is applied to every facet of the world – and make it fun.

A number of Canadian producers are keen to establish relationships with Australian producers. Producers such as Barbara Bade and Anne Pick, both of whom are experienced in co producing with Australia. Michael McMahon of Primitive Films and Emanuel Laurent and Sally Blake of Films a Trois, The funding mechanisms are similar and this leads to useful partnerships

There are numerous sales agents and distributors who maintain a high profile at Hot Docs. Meetings were held with the following:

Jan Rofekamp and Diana Holtzberg of Films Transit – (www.filmstransit.com) Films Transit has had a long association with Australia. A representative of Films Transit will be at AIDC next February in Adelaide, either Jan himself or his Vice President Diana Holtzberg. Films Transit represents the work of many established Australian filmmakers such as Nick Torrens, Curtis Levy, Tom Zubrycki and Simon Nasht. They specialize in the worldwide release and marketing of high profile, theatrical and TV documentaries in two specific genres: Arts & Culture, and Society & Politics. Films Transit strongly believes that major festival exposure adds prestige to a film's international career. Many of their films are selected for the major film festivals, such as IDFA, Sundance, Berlin and Toronto and win awards. They will only take on a small number of new films each year and will work hard with them. They will take on a number of films that will not require a huge amount of work (ie major territories already taken). They represent a total of around 160 titles and try to keep the catalogue to this size, to keep it active, stay focused and give the films a serious shelf life. This year at Hot Docs films include *Shadow of the Holy Book*, *Letter to Anna*, *Full Battle Rattle* and *La Corona*,

Ayse Poffet of First Hand Films (www.firsthandfilms.com) First Hand is run by Esther van Messel with Ayse representing the organisation at Hot Docs. They have an impressive catalogue including films that do well on the festival circuit and films that do well when they are broadcast. Projects screening at Hot Docs include *To See If I'm Smiling* and *Corridor # 8*. First Hand is prepared to put up a DG and will do more than a presale. They are interested in director driven stories, usually from more experienced directors and will support series as well as one offs. They are interested in political projects and those on people and society. They would prefer to have around 50% of the budget in place before committing. Very keen on establishing relationships in Australia either as sales agent, executive producer or co producer, depending on what is the perceived need by themselves and the filmmaker.

Anais Clanet – Wide Management (www.widemanagement.com) Sales agent based in Paris. They have not yet worked with any Australian filmmakers and are keen to do so. They will rep all rights, world wide, and have had ten years experience in the area. Keen to expand and are moving into co-productions. They will work with producers and production companies to assist in fund raising and will support a limited theatrical

release of a documentary if they feel it is beneficial. Interested in political or politically incorrect projects. Current slate includes *May 68* and *Four Wings and a Prayer* (a film about the Monarch butterfly) and the Hot Docs features *Her Name is Sabine*, *Victoire Terminus* and *Recycle*.

Laird Adamson (www.hdnetfilms.com) and **Tom Quinn – Magnolia Pictures** (www.magnoliapictures.com.) They have invested in the FFC funded theatrical documentary *Not Quite Hollywood*. Want to become more involved in international feature length projects. Have an interesting documentary catalogue including the Oscar nominated *Jesus Camp*. Are always looking for documentaries that can break out. Have been involved in the distribution of Australian films, both documentary and drama, for some years. Looking for projects that have a wide focus and relate to bringing the world to America. Films at Hot Docs include *Bigger Stronger Faster*, about the culture of drugs in sport and *Man on Wire*.

Michael Baker ThinkFilm (www.filmthinkcompany.com) ThinkFilm's documentary division has some 100 titles in the portfolio. They can get involved in a project as a pre-buy, distributor or foreign sales agent and will put up cash advances or guarantees for the right title. Their documentary titles include *Murderball*, *Ghosts of Cite Soleil*, and that little jewel, Oscar winner Alex Gibney's *Taxi to the Dark Side*. They are interested in documentaries that engage the public and will interest wide theatrical audiences.

Jonathan Miller, President Icarus Films. (www.frif.com) A distribution company only. Looking for provocative, innovative and engaging documentaries. Currently distribute some 875 titles. His recent titles include Nina Davenport's *Operation Filmmaker*, Hartmut Bitomsky's *Dust* and Aaron Matthew's *The Paper*. They represent a number of Australian films and are always keen to watch films, meet producers and keep up with what's going on.

Tim Sparke, Mercury Media. (www.mercurymedia.org) Mercury Media was set up eight years ago to develop and distribute documentaries for the international television market. They are recognised as one of the most innovative multi-platform distributors working in the industry today. joiningthedots.tv, their on-line VOD documentary channel has just launched in partnership with The Independent Newspaper and we are working across the TV, theatrical, DVD, in-flight and educational markets with their films. They have already added seven new documentaries to their catalogue this year and they are actively looking for more producers to work with. Very energetic company, taken on board the international sales agent role on the latest Sue Maslin project *Celebrity; The Dominic Dunne Story*.

Charlotte Mickie, Maximum Films (www.maximumfilms.ca) theatrical sales agent representing a number of high profile documentary films such as the Julien Temple film *Joe Strummer, The Future is Unwritten* and *Green Porno*, the series of shorts from Isabel Rossellini. Also represent films by filmmakers such as Atom Egoyan, Gus van Sant and Guy Maddin, the 'edgier' filmmakers one might say. Working with Michael Wrenn and Australian filmmakers should contact Michael in the first instance on **email:** michaelwrenn@firesign.co.nz

Andrew Herwitz, The Film Sales Company. (www.filmsalescorp.com) A well respected company that recently picked up the Australian project *Donkey in Lahore* (IDFA, Tribeca) and the Scott Hicks documentary on Philip Glass – *Glass: A Portrait of Philip in Twelve Parts*. This company has raised financing for numerous fiction and documentary projects. They specialize in both highly commercial movies and critically acclaimed, award-winning films and their list is impressive. They will assist in raising finance.

Elizabeth Radshaw TVF (www.tvfinternational.com) One of three people in acquisitions and Elizabeth has the responsibility for North America. TVF is a sales agent that is known to many in Australia. They aspire to a slate that is 50% series and 50% one offs.

Finally in Toronto I met with Toronto Film Festival Documentary Programmer **Thom Powers, (www.tiffq.ca)** who is always keen to view as many Australian feature length documentaries as possible for festival consideration. Official closing date for applications around 6 June but will consider screeners until end June.

Many ideas to pursue from this Forum and Festival regarding increasing the profile of Australian documentary makers in North America and therefore increasing the possibility of further co production activity for filmmakers. Hot Docs runs a co production forum each year and it would be a step forward to see Australia involved as a partner in one of these forums. This year the co production delegations came from Norway, Italy, South Korea, Catalan and Brazil.

Enroute to Input meetings were held in Paris and London with a number of key players who were not in attendance at either conference.

Paris

Catherine le Clef, Fortissimo. (www.fortissimofilms.com) Catherine is the contact for the expanding documentary and TV side of this celebrated sales agent. Recent docs from this respected company include the new Alex Gibney film *Magic Bus*, Scorsese's *Shine A Light* and films about Nanking and Anne Liebowitz.

Fabrice Esteve (www.docsideproduction.fr) who has been working as the producer, with Andrew Ogilvie, on the series *Colours*. Fabrice has joined forces with Sylvie Barbe and Jean Marc Robert in a new company called Docside Production. All three producers have been involved in substantial co productions with Australia and are most experienced in big budget productions with substantial CGI components. They are, as ever, keen to do business with Australian producers.

Christine Le Gof and Yves Jeanneau (www.free.fr and www.studiointernational.fr) who both have an established relationship with Australia, she with the series *Museum of the World* which was completed with Essential Viewing, and Yves through his work as director of the Sunnyside of the Doc market held at the end of June in La Rochelle on the west coast of France. They have a number of projects in active development with Australian co producers and are keen to find more projects.

Cristina Moya Doc & Co. (www.doc-co.com)

This sales agent has had a long relationship with Australia and this is continuing with films such as *End of the Rainbow* – director Robert Nugent, producers Jean Pierre Gibrat, Mitzi Goldman, Michel Zwecker, as well as many of the films of Janine Hosking. Keen to continue relationship with Australia. Will hopefully come to AIDC 2009.

Jean Pierre Gibrat and Nathalie Ceyn. (www.transeuropefilm.com) This duo from Trans Europe Films have just completed a very successful working relationship on the multi award winning project *End of the Rainbow* and would be interested in further co productions with Australian companies.

Laurent Cornier – CNC – a representative of the government organisation responsible for co production applications. A courtesy call as there are a number of projects that are French/Australian co productions in train at the moment, - and there are cultural and practical differences in the methodology – anything which can be done to simplify this process is to be encouraged.

London

Ian Jones and Georgina Eyre, Target Entertainment (www.target-tv.com) Target is one of the top five most used distributors and rights managements groups in Europe and it manages global rights and brands across all platforms and media. Last year Target acquired Minotaur International and this year the drama producer Greenlit Rights. It is a distribution and acquisitions group with a huge reach in drama, entertainment, documentary, comedy and children's programming. From a documentary and factual perspective people should talk to Georgina who is developing the factual side of the company. Their catalogue is diverse, and the documentary area is a mixture of one offs and series, but their acquisitions amount to around 500 hours, of which half they have invested in and half are acquired. Ian comes to the company after many years at National Geographic and Georgina has come via BBC and Off The Fence.

Rachel Wexler – Bungalow Productions (www.bungalow-town.com) Independent producer and distributor whose work includes *The English Surgeon* and *The Lie of the Land* two of the most successful and lauded films this year on the documentary circuit. For anyone interesting in looking for a co production partner in UK who has rigour, contacts and ethics,

Allan Hayling and Alex Cooke Renegade Films (www.renegadepictures.co.uk) A successful production company in UK, started when Allan left BBC some eighteen months ago, now a company with 52 employees working with companies such as Discovery and BBC creating a mixture of series and high end documentaries. Allan runs the development side of things and Alex the production side. They run a company which is a fine mix of series and one offs – from a Michael Winterbottom project on Naomi Klein's *The Shock Doctrine* to a science series. Always interested in co productions.

Roger Graef Films of Record (www.filmsofrecord.com) has a long established relationship with Australia. This most experienced filmmaker and founder of Films of Record is developing several projects here and is EP on a number of FFC funded

projects including the recently completed *Burning Season*. Developing a number of projects with Australian producers.

Phil Craig - Furnace another Anglo Australian stalwart who has established relationships with many Australian producers, particularly Andrew Ogilvie of Electric Pictures. As well as working with Brooke Lapping Phil has recently established his own company with the respected science producer Paul Sen (*Atom*). The company is called Furnace and they will be looking at ways to continue working with co production partners in Australia.

John Smithson (www.darlowsmithson.com) of Darlow Smithson whose probably proudest achievement is the docudrama *Touching The Void*, but who has established one of the most successful 'super indies' whose most recent commission is a four part series from National Geographic Channels International called *Engineered Connections* which will look at four of the worlds most advanced engineering projects.

Alex Graham Wall to Wall (www.walltowall.co.uk) Another of the super indies. We met at a screening of their BAFTA Award Winning Documentary *Man on Wire*. Wall to Wall is, along with Darlow Smithson, one of the most established and respected super indies and a company with which the Australian sector has a number of dealings, most recently with the series *Who Do You Think You Are* and the one off *Not Forgotten*. Wall to Wall has recently become part of the Shed Media Group, with Alex joining their board. Also part of the Shed Media Group is Outright Distribution, a global distribution company which, as a result of the merger, has taken on the distribution of all Wall to Wall projects.

Richard Bradley, Lion Television (www.liontv.co.uk) works across a number of genres but is particularly interested in history projects and works with Mark Lewis (not the Cane Toads filmmaker!) on any number of films that can be made collaboratively between Australia and England, and any other necessary co production partners. Is developing projects with a three way split, as he put it - pre transatlantic/production international/post Australia. He is very impressed with the post houses in Australia. Lion makes 250 hours of television a year, with offices in NY, LA, Glasgow and London. They are one of the production houses that consciously go for a long running series to keep the company going, whilst having a passion project or two in development/production at the same time.

Zecki Gerloff and Amy Nelson TVF (www.tvf.co.uk)

This sales agent is expanding. Whilst meeting the North American representative, Elizabeth Radshaw, whilst in Toronto, I had a chance to catch up with two more of their number in London. Amy represents the UK, South Africa, and Scandinavia. Zecki is very definitely the representative for Australasia and will be attending AIDC next year. They are very energetic and aware of the production sector in Australia.

Greg Sanderson BBC Storyville (www.bbc.co.uk) As ever Storyville is oversubscribed and underfunded, but there is, paradoxically, because of this, the need to look at more co productions. The FFC is currently working with Storyville on the Cathy Henkel project *The Burning Season*. In addition they are keen to look at acquisitions or post production funding. They were involved in a number of projects pitching in the Toronto Documentary Forum including a fascinating project on Prince Sihanouk *The Director*.

Janet Lee BBC 1 – Commissioning Editor Imagine (www.bbc.co.uk) This is a 50 minute slot on the primary channel for high end arts programming, they fund thirteen programmes a year, presenter driven on the whole, but are prepared to be flexible. The slot is very mainstream and although it is art based when asked what they would be prepared to commission from Australia the response was projects on Peter Carey, Nicole Kidman, Cate Blanchett, Russel Crowe. Having said that they are doing some very interesting art projects involving artists such as James Turrell and Tim Kirby, but it would be hard for an Australian project to crack this slot.

Hilary Davis – Bankside Films (www.bankside-films.com) Hilary will be familiar to many Australian filmmakers with Bankside investing in four of the FFC's current slate of feature projects – *Bran Nue Day*, *Coffin Rock*, *Blessed* and *Accidents Happen*. Hilary will be in Australia in July, doing meetings in both Sydney and Melbourne. Since their amalgamation with Phil Hunt of Head Gear this company has been able to increase their involvement with Australian film. Hilary has a longstanding relationship with Australia and is a regular visitor to the country.

Katie Vogel Channel 4 (www.channel4.co.uk) Commissioning work for 10 – 16 year olds, an area where there is a huge gap. Channel 4 has a £3 million fund to develop factual material for this group. This of course includes material on line. One of the most successful projects to date is *Skins*, a BAFTA award winning teen drama. They have a first look deal with the UK festival Brit Doc for any of the material that is produced. A great idea and one that should be encouraged in Australia.

Tom McClelland, Outright (www.outrightdistribution.com) As mentioned above Outright Distribution is a distribution company, now part of the Shed Media Group along with Wall to Wall. Tom is their Sales Director and in the short time we have known each other he and I have had a number of robust conversations, and I expect we will continue to do so. Outright is a very focused on global coverage in order to maximise the potential on any particular project

David Lawley Indigo Film & TV (www.indigofilm.com) is an independent distributor, co-producer and acquirer of films, drama series, documentaries, entertainment series and children's programming for the international market. Indigo primarily exploits TV, video, DVD and non-theatrical rights and has a diverse client portfolio made up of independents, blue-chip companies and film libraries. Working with a number of Australian producers on a number of projects and has a strong relationship with both ABC and SBS. Will put up an MG if needed.

Input 2008 Johannesburg

Input is an annual screening event. Each year, in a different city, an estimated 1,400 television professionals from 60 countries gather for a week in May to screen 80 hours of the world's best TV programming across all genres. Very importantly the producers and directors who made these programmes are in attendance, to discuss and debate their work. The conference is an opportunity to see and question what colleagues from other cultures are doing and to explore methods and techniques with commissioning editors and filmmakers from these other countries and cultures. Input is not actually a

professional TV market, it is a screening conference, and as such it is unique, it is about ideas rather than formal meetings which is a refreshing change. It is still a great conference for providing a prime opportunity for networking and commercial opportunities based on the shared interest of filmmakers and broadcasters. Sometimes this forum is better than standing around trying to find someone at a market who will talk to you.

There are three big screenings rooms each running a separate programme – one that has a thematic link – this link could be stylistic – for example “Art Attack” which looked at the way in which art programmes are made accessible – or subject matter – “Beyond Correct” which looked at four completely different interpretations of what it was that was pushing the boundaries, and how each country addresses this. When each film is finished the filmmaker is invited to talk to their film and take part in a debate about the success, or otherwise, of their film. After the screening the delegates have the opportunity to meet with the producers and directors face to face. Ideas for future series and/or collaborations are discussed as well as sales of the screened programmes. As each session is moderated by one of the Input team, someone who has been involved in the selection of the films and the construction of the programme – the debates are lively and constructive. As the independent sector in Australia depends heavily on television (especially public television) for both finance and access to audience the opportunity for this sort of discussion on a national and international level is crucial to us.

After the session is complete the programme is put in the video library for the remainder of the conference so people can screen programmes they missed.

Australian projects included in Input this year were *Summer Heights High (Ep 1)*, *Naked on the Inside*, *Searching 4 Sandeep* and 4. In addition there was a special session entitled *Seizing The Camera: Australian Indigenous Filmmakers Take Control of Their Stories* where the past 15 years of development of indigenous filmmaking was discussed – how it has sprung up as if from nowhere to challenge the way Australians think about their country and its past. How it has produced work that has been winning international awards at major festivals such as Berlin, Cannes and Sundance. It was a way to explore common issues with, in particular, the host nation of the conference, South Africa, the politics of representation, dealing with a contested history, the question of mainstreaming vs servicing minority audiences, and the question of who speaks for whom. This was investigated with regards to the content, aesthetics and narratives of the films. The films screened in this session included Episode 1 *The First Australians*, the documentary *Ngangkari* and the short films *Green Bush* and *My Bed, Your Bed*.

The joy in all these sessions was that the filmmakers were able to speak to their films, mainly in person but, occasionally, via skype. From this came contacts, sales and ideas. Many commissioning editors use this as a forum to discover new ideas to pitch to their own broadcasters on return.

How Input selects the Programmes:

Producers and broadcasters are invited, I should say, encouraged, to submit programmes to the national selection committee. The only criteria for submission is that the programme needs to have been shown on public television to be eligible to screen.

The selection criteria are to find programmes that:

- Are innovative, original, unusual controversial, courageous or experimental in form or content
- Go beyond conventional formulas in order to find new ways to reach the public
- Serve the public interest by addressing the viewer as a citizen, not as a consumer
- Will stimulate debate and discussion during the conference (this last one is really interesting and leads to some controversial choices, especially in the area of ethnographic films!)

Exposure to story telling is such an integral part of a filmmakers tool in trade that I would suggest to filmmakers that they think seriously about submitting a film for consideration for Input 2009 which will be held in Warsaw next May. Even if you don't get a film selected it's well worth attending.

As well as the opportunity for Australia to participate more fully in Input 2009 it is also planned for a 'mini Input' to be run in Australia. which is, like Input, focussed on discussion and debate with the filmmakers and commissioning editors. Mini Input often results in additional sales for selected programme. This will be run in collaboration with the ADG at the end of September. The entire Input programme for the past two years is available for such a purpose.

Whilst in South Africa I took time to meet a number of local producers and broadcasters who are keen to develop closer ties with Australia including:

Andy Glynne DFG/Mosaic (www.dfglondon.com) Andy is one of the most energetic, passionate and committed practitioners and teachers of documentary. He established the Documentary Film Group in London some years ago and it recently merged with Mosaic Films which has a proud track record in producing award-winning and compelling social documentaries in the UK and overseas. Mosaic have particular expertise in pioneering innovative methods and subject matter in documentary filmmaking and specialises in large international co-productions and in working with filmmakers native to the country in which a particular project is located. Working in partnership with the Documentary Filmmakers Group they are committed to promoting and supporting new and emerging talent whilst continuing also to work with well-established and creative filmmakers, domestically and overseas. Mosaic has a wealth of experience making films in some of the most challenging production environments in the world in Russia, the Middle East, India the Far East and in Africa.

Jane Lipman (www.netactive.co.za) an independent producer keen to forge relationships with Australia, well respected across the board in South Africa.

Tselane Tambo (www.theoestrogenchannel.com) who owns and runs The Oestrogen Channel, a television station committed to telling stories by and about women. Impeccable connections.

David Studer Executive Producer CBC News, Fifth Estate (www.cbc.ca) the Canadian equivalent of Four Corners. Keen to establish relationships with journalists in Australia, they have, like Four Corners, a down time period where they screen acquired programmes.

Don Edkins (www.whydemocracy.net) Don has directed and produced a number of documentaries, including the multi-awarded *Steps for the Future*, a collection of 38 films from Southern Africa about life in the time of HIV/AIDS. Steps for the Future, the first project of the STEPS group of commissioning editors and producers, broadcast around the world and screened at 150 festivals. Don Edkins was one of the driving forces behind the *Democracy* series and was the producer of *Please Vote For Me* which was nominated for an Oscar earlier this year. Keen for forge ties with Australia.

Philip Miller (www.phillipmiller.info) Philip is composing the music for the *First Australians* but is based in South Africa and it was an opportunity for Darren Dale and I to show him the first episode on the big screen. Philip also wrote the music for the Philip Noyce directed *To Catch A Fire*, as well as the animated works of William Ketteridge.

Jenny Westergard, Commissioning Editor YLE (www.yle.fi) Jenny is responsible for documentary and she is looking for interesting, passionate, human stories 'dealing with the basic questions of life'.

Karen Michael – Arte (www.artefrance.fr) Is in charge of *Metropolis*, a cultural slot as well as a biography slot. Always looking for co productions and over the past ten years she has co produced, acquired, and pre bought, many hundreds of hours of documentary film.

Kethiwe Ngcobo – SABC (www.sabc1.co.za) The driving force behind the South African Broadcasting Corporation 'Content Hub' department and developing and forcing through changes in the way that drama content (which is largely documentary in origination) is developed and presented in South Africa.

Because of the connections that Don Edkins has with commissioning editors from Arte, BBC, YLE, ZDF, CBC and all those involved in the *Democracy* and *Steps* projects it meant that there were a huge number of commissioning editors who had made the trip to South Africa and there was a chance for a lot more relaxed and informal discussion about ideas and projects than there usually is at a market place. This is one of the joys of Input and for the Australian filmmakers who had their work shown there the exposure was invaluable.

I am now Co National Co-ordinator for Input, with Graeme Isaac the 'shop steward' and together we will continue to push for an Input to be located in Australia in 2012.

Lots of ideas for discussion here.

A most productive trip.

Julia Overton - June 2008.