

**Sue Maslin**

Ray Argall interviewed Sue Maslin for australianscreen on 10 June 2009

**Q: I'd like to start by talking about the clips on the site.**

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SUE: The clip on the site that I remember most fondly and it brings back in a rush I suppose the experience of what it's like being out there filming in the Pilbara, is the clip where Sandy and Hiro get bogged in the red dirt. And this was filmed just north of Port Hedland in the Pilbara regions where it's pretty isolated. You know, getting a crew and trucks and all the rest of the business that goes with shooting a feature film. Thousands of miles ended up being quite an odyssey for all of us. But that particular scene --- In fact I managed to recreate in pre-production and location -- - I actually got bogged in that very spot one day when we were --- when the crew had gone out on a road to sort of check various vantage points and so on. And I was coming up the rear, and --- on my own, in a 4WD, and sure enough went shonk straight down into that red dirt and actually had to dig myself out. And partly to save face because I knew that they'd be returning from the location recce not long afterwards, that I didn't want to be the producer stuck in the sand.

But one of the things I'm actually most proud of, in that the filming in the Pilbara that Sue, Alison and I did over the course of a number of months, is to develop a relationship with the Indigenous traditional owners of that land. And it was a sort of unusual --- not an unusual thing to do but at the time I remember we were strongly advised against it because it would just create a lot of difficulty probably. There was no legal need to do it. There was no council need. We were supposedly on council roads. Even going back to Perth and the sort of location advice we were getting was, you don't really need to talk to the Aboriginal elders on that land. But it was important to Sue and Alison and I, and over the course of a number of months we did spend time with the local elders and talking through --- being able to film in that very spot -- because we were there for a number of weeks, around three weeks in that particular location. And at the completion of that really was when Day 1 of the filming the Indigenous community and some of the elders came out and welcomed us onto country. And that was really really special. And again when we finished filming there they actually put together a corroboree ceremony for us, some dance, which was

sort of under the stars and around bonfires and it was a kind of farewell to country. So whenever I look at that scene and think the stories that go behind, the filming can be every bit as interesting as what we're hopefully trying to achieve on the film itself.

**Q: And how many of you were there?**

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SUE: Well we took a crew of around 50 up to the Pilbara. And it's a very very remote location. And it's also a dangerous location. And one of the things that we did was on the day where everybody finally arrived, the final day of pre-production before we started shooting the next day, we brought in the local copper who basically read the riot act. And forget about the odd kangaroo. I mean that was the least of your problems. You could run into a camel, into bullocks, and dehydration was a really big issue and long distances. I mean we were driving anywhere up to three, four, five hours in between locations at times.

So once the copper had finished going through all the possible ways that you could come to grief in Pilbara, at that point the makeup wardrobe department said, that's it, we're not driving anywhere. We had to bring in extra drivers to ferry them to location, which is perfectly reasonable because they were having to get there very early in the morning and so on.

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But it was a long way away. It was very beautiful. It challenged people to their limits in all sorts of ways. It challenged the actors, it challenged the crews. But we --- And there's very good reasons why there haven't been feature films, more feature films made up in the Pilbara. And most of them settle on the desert around the Flinders Ranges and around Coober Pedy and Broken Hill. It's very very taxing and not for the light-hearted. But it was the right location for Alison's script, and for the story, the Japanese stories that unfolded. It really needed to be in that very elemental landscape. And it was beautiful.

**Q: Can you talk about choosing the landscape?**

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SUE: In fact when Alison had originally written the script, we had --- It was set around Whyalla and the mining precinct around the town and the port and so on, in

that area of South Australia. And we did do a location recce there. We looked very closely at that and the film I think could have – from a production point of view – it would have made much more sense to have filmed there and had access to Adelaide, rather than to be so remote. However separately we did trips where we drove literally from Perth all the way up to Port Hedland and then inland to Newman and right in the heart of the Pilbara region. And as soon as you've had that experience, as soon as you've been driving for seven hours across that landscape and you arrive in this place usually towards sunset and you see this landscape transfigured. The red of the earth and the iron ore that's just in all the rock ranges around you, against that deep blue sky. At that point you think, this is cinema. You just have to capture this. It's extraordinary to experience it. And of course the challenge is then how do you put that on a piece of 35mm film which of course we were very fortunate to be working with an experienced cinematographer like Ian Baker who could help translate that. And even more fortunate to be working with an experienced editor like Jill Bilcock who didn't let us indulge in that landscape, and just always kept it to what was required to service the story, which I think is a failing of many films that fall in love with the landscape, but don't know when to cut.

**Q: For you as the producer what are the challenges? Once you've made that decision, how do you bring people along?**

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SUE: The biggest challenge of filming somewhere like the Pilbara is its remoteness. So there is no backup. If something goes wrong you have to be left to your own resources and the preparation you've put in place to deal with whatever problem might emerge. So it meant literally taking three camera bodies. Taking three of everything. So there was always one backup and another if that failed. So then how do you physically transport all that around, because it's literally about 9000 kilometres away from here in Melbourne where our base was. So we actually got a shipping company to load the trucks down the docks here on ships and ship all the way around to Perth, and then we had to set up a crew or we had drivers drive the vehicles the two or three days it took to get up to the far north of Western Australia.

There's --- Probably safety was the number one issue for us. We wanted to bring everybody back in good shape and we did, touch wood. We managed to do that. And

then it was really the logistics around the distances because we were filming over an area that was actually bigger than Victoria. And we needed to have very sort of specific look which ranged from the flat open country where they get bogged, through to that magnificent waterhole. And that presented its own set of issues from a producing point of view because we actually had to build a road to get into that water hole. It gets flooded out every year. In fact the day we did a location recce in trying to find that waterhole we were having to drive through river beds in 4WDs and you know perfectly well that you can't have catering trucks for instances lumbering along going through running river beds. So that was something we needed to negotiate with the local council, and that is actually grade a road to get to that beautiful waterhole.

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So if you take that kind of scale of problem and multiple it across a five-six week shoot in that location, and then another two weeks in Perth, then you can get a sense of the scale of what we were up against. And we didn't have a particularly big budget by the way.

**Q: Was it a matter of fitting the budget to the location?**

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SUE: We did have a budget and often your budget hits a limit around what you can raise in terms of finance. So we knew that we were going into a situation with a very very tight budget. And we ended up going a bit over budget, not very much in the scale of things, but we did go over budget. It meant that we had to be really vigilant to not then cut back on those things that would get in the way of telling that story.

As soon as you get --- look like you're going over budget, and we were looking like that within about week 2 of filming, the pressure is enormous. The pressure to cut pages from the script. The pressure to cut back on scenes, to remove locations, to get rid of cranes or --- The biggest pressure we were under was to get rid of a vehicle that --- a tracking vehicle which would enable us to put the car or the 4WD that the two lead characters spend an awful lot of time in the film in, on a rig so you can then put the lighting gear around and get a range of different camera moves and different looks. And in a low budget film you don't have that luxury, you just ditch all of that and just mount cameras on vehicles and you only get one, two, maybe three shots.

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Now, that might be fine when you have a travelling sequence which is only a small part of the film, but for anyone who's seen *Japanese Story*, it's the relationship of those characters to the landscape and the distance that they travel. This particular journey that's central to their character journey and the metaphorical journey in the story. It was a really important part of telling the story. So we had to fight really really hard to keep those things and not throw the baby out with the bathwater as some of the people back in Melbourne and Sydney who were obviously biting their nails looking at what we were doing, may have preferred us do.

**Q: Let's go back to when you decided on this career path?**

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SUE: I got into media in a very strange way. In fact I sort of think it almost found me as opposed to me having any particular epiphany that I want to be a filmmaker. I was in Canberra. I was at the ANU and studying science at the time, and I'd just completed my Bachelor of Science degree. And I had started a year in Honours in Zoology and I loved it and I was doing a lot of field trips. I was interested in animal ecology of a particular species that lived in the Kosciusko National Park. And I realised that I could see this career that was telescoping in the future to one of greater and greater specialisation. So the more that I got into my career the more expert I become at telling the story and the biology and the ecology of a particular species that might be of interest to six people in the entire world. And it was the kind of antithesis of who I was and what I wanted to do with my life. And at the time I had no media background other than the fact that I was working in community radio at 2XX, and was part of a women's broadcasting collective there. And I was also playing music. I was a bass player in a rock band at the time called Domestic Dirt.

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So I knew that I couldn't just drop out of an Honours year. I seriously had to have some other alternative because my mum would just kill me. So I drove out to Canberra CAE as it was then, Canberra University now, and parked the car in car park number 9, which happens to be next to building number 9 which happened to be the Media Studies building. I was just literally going to wander around the college and see what kind of courses were on offer. And I wandered into this corridor and there were film posters and photography courses and it looked interesting. I was reading

this and out comes this guy from one of the offices who turned out to be John Scott who is a poet and a writer with a big afro and glasses and the whole bit. And he starts talking to me. We just got into a rave about film. I don't know how. I thought this sounds interesting. I could do this. And then I discovered they only took four students. But by then I thought I'd really like to give this a go and I applied and thankfully I did get in, and it was at that point this thing that just completely changed my life. It was film, television, radio, photography. It was like 24 hours a day, seven days a week. And I had met Daryl Dellora there who I continued to work with and also Ian Wansbrough, and the three of us were just --- we were just making work. We were talking. It was theory. It was practice. It was absolutely one of those life changing experiences that I just fell in love with storytelling and working with people in order to make photography, sound, film. And from there I've been working ever since.

**Q:           When was the first time you ended up producing a film?**

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SUE:       Right from the beginning I was trained to see film theory and learn about how aesthetics in film were articulated through a whole range of filmmakers and genres and so on. And that was every bit as important as the actual practice of making film and video. So the two were enmeshed. And I'm really really glad that I had that grounding, because it's actually really served me well to have a common language with the filmmakers I've worked with ever since.

But from the beginning I was writing, producing and directing. And after that year finished I stayed in Canberra and over the next two years probably made about 17 or 18 programs where I was writing, producing and directing. And they ranged from rock clips through to corporate videos about heavy-trailer braking systems, through to an information documentary about Woden Valley Hospital. There were art installations. There were political films. It didn't matter. It was just that desire to use the media to say something and reach people in what you're saying. And that really -- - This was in the days of course when there was no such thing as mini DVD cameras or Final Cut Pro editing that was accessible on laptops or anything like that. We were using old  $\frac{3}{4}$  U-matic cameras and you couldn't make anything unless you had access to the editing equipment which again was very expensive and usually locked up inside

institutions or corporate companies and so on. So you had to negotiate access to everything in order to do any kind of film and television making.

But I often talk to young people now and just say, it's just that process. Just get out there and do it. Make the work. Get access to whatever camera you can, whatever editing facilities you can, and just learn the craft by actually getting out there and doing it. And I'm really glad I had that sort of grounding of about two years of solid work before embarking on the first film.

**Q: How do you see yourself working in the new digital technology world?**

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SUE: It's interesting to see over the course of 27 years or so that I've been making screen content, so initially video and film, and now moving more and more into digital media, how much the tools have changed. And every time the tools changed it actually opens up opportunities for thinking about the form of what you're making, and also the content that it might make accessible.

So I've always been really really interested in using new tools, and that really in the last six or seven years has been tied up now with the advent of working in a digital media environment which of course takes you out of the traditional linear form of storytelling into a non-linear form. So I found it really really exciting to work on projects initially like the *William Bligh* project which was an interactive graphic novel. So using a kind of very funky visual style that would tell the history of William Bligh, but to a younger audience, and make it relevant for them, and in a language that they could understand. So having it as a very visual experience, through to now working in a very cross platform way on a digital media project called *Re-enchantment* which is an adult project, but it's about fairytales. And this is a project that embodies --- It's an interactive documentary so it's got documentary elements in the way that we might understand. You know just traditional filmed on camera and cut together, through to documentary animation where we are working with visual designers who are using digital animation techniques that we then create a series of 10 x 3-minute animations, documentary animations that will go on television, through to the main body which is actually an interactive website. And we're looking at the hidden meanings of fairytales and how they get reimagined in everything from

popular culture through to advertising, feature films, through to how visual artists work with themes that are in fairytales. And then how they've survived over time, for centuries, and looking at the history of fairytales and then how they spread across culturally.

So it's a very non linear task that --- working with Sarah Gibson, that we've set for ourselves, and working in digital media is a perfect way to express thematically this idea of fairytales having something about them that's very powerful and that persists across time and across cultures, that can be explored in a myriad of ways.

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So yeah, I love the fact that the technologies keep changing because every time they do, even to the extent of working with different cameras. Now light weight HD cameras as a documentary filmmaker can get you into places much more easily than the old days when we were having to cart around really big DVC Pro or digital Beta cameras. You get access and documentaries are about access.

And then when you move into feature films the impact of digital technology on film has just been enormous. It's given us access to not only CGI based effects, but our editing processes and post production processes have been completely transformed. And I love 35mm. I love the tactility of it, but increasingly I'm recognising that as we move into feature films in the future we'll probably be shooting digitally, particularly if we've got a very strong digital post production pathway.

**Q: Has it allowed you to be more hands on with the equipment?**

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SUE: Having now the portability that is available in cameras, the HD and broadcast quality, is extraordinary. It's meant we've kind of gone from a phase where we used to always carry and have access to the cameras because they were pretty basic. Anybody could use a Bolex 16mm camera or a VHS camera, through to where it became increasingly technical and complicated, to now I think going back into the realm of anybody can have access now to really high quality equipment, that equally is at home on a home video platform or is acceptable now at international broadcast standards.

So it's made it accessible. From a producing point of view where it's very exciting now is that we don't have the delay necessarily in waiting to look at rushes. It's immediate. We can download files. I can be looking at rushes or getting transcripts done of sound files literally on the day. Whereas in the past I might be waiting a couple of days for that to happen.

**Q: Is there a way you can use the new efficiency to your advantage?**

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SUE: I've never changed the post production schedules. There was a bit of pressure when digital editing first came in through the Lightworks and the Avid systems, that, oh great. This will reduce our editing schedules considerably because you can make changes and review those changes so much more quickly. But it's --- There still is the time, the thinking time that is required I think in order to properly do the job of editing and compiling. And having the digital technology enables you to make changes more quickly of course and gives you more options and more choices for review. So you're starting to try things out. You know, one, two, three, four different ways in order to make a final decision, rather than going through the discipline of actually thinking it through from the storytelling point of view, perhaps plotting it out whether it's on a paper cut on an index card cut, in order to get to the right solution. I don't see it as a means for speeding up the actual cutting period. I think it certainly has speeded up the period that it takes in order to then go through all the final lab stages and so on. And perhaps to a certain extent, sound.

But no, in my mind a documentary edit is still always around ten weeks, to get to a fine cut. And a feature edit should still be around 15-20 weeks.

**Q: I'm interested in your collaborations. You mentioned Daryl. What's special about that?**

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SUE: I think I've been really blessed to have some long term collaborations in my working life. And I've actually sought those out to a certain extent because I am a firm believer that if you find the right people to collaborate with then the projects will follow. If you find people that you have a shared language with, that you respect, that

you have a shared vision of the kind of films that you want to make happen, then you'll hopefully do good work but you'll want to keep doing good work together.

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So I think that the 27 years or so that I've been working with Daryl has been a hugely successful collaboration because we've made a number of films together that have spanned that time. And they tended to be films that are documentary films that focus on historical, political, social issues often that are looking at challenging the mythologies that build up around well known Australian stories or public figures. Say for instance films like *Mr Neal is Entitled to be an Agitator* which sought to take a look again at the story of Lionel Murphy, or revisit revisionist histories like conspiracy about the Sydney Hilton Bombing. We're interested in pulling apart the mythologies that build up around those so called infamous stories and try to get to the heart of what really may have been played out. And often they're stories that may have been well covered in current affairs. The difference with documentary is that you've got the time that journalists don't have to actually really properly go back and interrogate, you know, the primary source material, instead of just always relying on secondary or tertiary sources which journalists often have to do where of course they get into the trap of repeating the same kind of half truths over and over again.

So again, we did that with the story Jørn Utzon and the Sydney Opera House in the film, *The Edge of the Possible* and relooked at some of the misconceptions around that, notably that Utzon had to leave the project because he'd never solved the problem of the interiors which was an absolute pack of lies. And we were able to demonstrate that in the film. But also in the end be able to film Utzon who at that point, and up until his death early last year had never returned to Australia following the day when he was pushed from that job. And it was the first time he had talked to the Australia media in 25 years when we made that film.

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So I feel really very proud of the kind of work that Daryl and I have done over the years, but I feel even more proud that we've stuck it out and that we've managed to survive as a business and as filmmakers. And not only survived, that we've kind of got really excited about the possibilities of the new technologies in relation to distribution and started to look at how we can not only just make films, but also work more closely in reaching our audiences and actually managing the marketing and

distribution of the films as well. So we've --- That's been a collaboration that's been very important to me.

I've also had another collaboration that's been very important to me and that was with Sue Brooks and Alison Tilson, and we made the feature films *Road to Nhill* and *Japanese Story* together. And again that was a working relationship. I'm really proud of what we've done together because we really did take on fairly ambitious projects and wanted to tell stories, not in traditional genre expectations, like try and do something different with the form of the storytelling itself. And in both cases we found our audiences. In both cases we were told there was no audience.

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In the case of *Road to Nhill* it was like here's a bunch of bowling ladies. There's no particular romantic interest in the film. There's no particular young characters. Nothing much ever happens. It might appeal to women of a certain age and that would be it. Well that film on less than 20 screens ended up grossing nearly a million dollars, and this is funds in the '90s terms I might add. There's many Australian feature films that don't do that now.

And then *Japanese Story*, again we were told well there's not much audience. This is an art house film that will appeal primarily to women, 35+ and perhaps a bit of festival exposure. And like *Road to Nhill*, we were convinced --- we were convinced that story would have an audience, and it did find its audience and it did end up grossing over four and a half million dollars, and ran for months, as indeed *Road to Nhill* did. So it was good to prove the pundits wrong in both cases.

**Q: How do you identify audience?**

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SUE: I think if you go about making films and television and screen content where you're trying to pre-empt an audience and you're setting out to find an audience then I think you fail every time. Nobody can ever second guess audiences. The one thing I know about audiences is that audiences love to be surprised with something that they can discover and then tell their friends about. And secondly audiences know bullshit. They know when something's authentic and when it's not. So rather than going out and seeking to make work that you're imagining who that

audience is and trying to fill a particular market or slot, I think the way I've been interested in working, and certainly I hope it's reflected in the work, is that you come from --- The starting point is the story you really believe in and you want to tell. So I love spending time with writers and when I'm talking with the people that I'm collaborating with, and there's a story and that's --- we decide, yeah, this is something we'd like to explore, and then there's a script that I connect with, and completely fall in love with, and it's real. You know that it's there. It's not, oh, I like the idea or this is a good script. Like it has to be something that you're really really excited about and it's so much so that it's going to carry you through the next seven years of your life because --- And that's just the time that it gets the film made. There's also the 15 years that follow as a producer that you're carrying that film and reporting back. So it has to be a pretty strong connection. And that's actually more important because if that rings true and it's real and it's something that you fall in love with, then chances are there's going to be other people who feel about it the same way.

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So in many ways and thinking about audience, it's about thinking, well what is the thing that I fell in love with in this story? What is the thing that connects me to it? And then it becomes a job of marketing that. And you're thinking, well how can I communicate that? And starting right from the beginning. So I start thinking marketing and how we're going to reach the audience with those ideas from the script stage. And it's there right through the financing because of course I've got to sell the idea in the first instance to the investors, to the market, the distributors, sales agents. That's the first hurdle. And then once the film is made then with marketing people and publicists and so on, we're doing it all over again. And the earlier you can start thinking about the means by which you can market, the better. But I certainly would never start from a point of identifying there's a gap in the market here, let's go and do something to fill it; (a) because you'll be completely out of date by the time that happens, (b) because audiences don't work in that way. It's always the project from left field that captures audiences by surprise, that often ends up being the most successful. And they come from a real place. They come from a place where somebody's got something they care passionately about, that they want to say, and that they're saying it with conviction.

**Q: There's obviously a lot of special people that you've come across, actors and subjects of documentaries.**

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SUE: One of the great things about working in film media is the people you come across. And the joy of being able to work across documentary, feature film, digital media, is that you're coming in contact with people in very different ways. From real life stories where you're talking to actual people whose lives have been depicted, through to working with performers and actors, through to now working with digital designers and crews on abstract ideas that don't even go anywhere near performance or real people because they end up being animations.

But the real highlights for me would have to be having a year on the road with William Deane, the former Governor-General. Daryl and I made a film called *A Mirror to the People* where on and off over a period of 12 months we got to travel with William Deane here in Australia, to remote Indigenous communities and then overseas when he presided over an ANZAC day ceremony at Gallipoli before then going on to meet the Queen, which we filmed at Windsor Castle. And the thing that was so special about that was Deane himself. The humility of this person and his --- the way that he could use his office which is the most senior office here in Australia as Governor-General, to somehow link the most disparate members of the Australian community together. And he just did it so eloquently.

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The other really wonderful experience was spending a day with Jørn Utzon. And that came about in the most bizarre unimaginable way because Daryl and I had been trying for many many years over the two year period that the *Edge of the Possible* was developed to get in touch with Utzon. But of course he was a recluse and he'd had no contact with Australian media. And so of course none of our correspondence was ever replied to. But over that period we had started to build a network with the architects that Utzon had worked with on the Opera House. And they were obviously feeding information back to him because he'd been tracking exactly where we were up to. And the ABC in its wisdom, when we were initially developing the film said, 'Well, we're not putting any money into it unless you can get Utzon.' Well that's great. I mean they had all the resources in the world and they couldn't get Utzon, but there was no money for our film unless we could actually deliver an interview with Utzon.

And we said, well that's just not going to be a condition, a possible condition for us. That's not something that we're not going to put Utzon in a position, you know, this person we haven't even made contact with. We must have you in our film otherwise we don't have a film. I mean, get real.

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Maslin So sadly for us we didn't have our film, or get the green light at the ABC because we couldn't deliver Jørn Utzon to the ABC for an interview. So the project sat in the bottom drawer for about a year and we, as often happens you just wait for the commissioning editing policy to change, a new power to come and assume the head of documentary at the ABC and the inevitable happened, we get a phone call out of the blue saying, look it's 1988 we realise this year in October is the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Opera House opening. You still have that Utzon Sydney Opera House project, do you think you could turn it around in six months? What do you do, you just say yes, of course we can, we're going to make a documentary in six months.

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Maslin At that point we then went back to the various architects and the interviewees and the various people that had been involved in the research period, and in all the documentaries we've done, they've always had a substantial period of research, twelve months minimum, it's a luxury unfortunately a lot of people seem to think they can't afford these days, but I still think you know, to do a good documentary the research is imperative. It put us in good stead because over the period of time that we'd spent on the Utzon documentary, unbeknownst to us Utzon had in fact been following what we were doing. And one particular architect in France, Mons prôt Busse, had kept him in touch when the project was going ahead. We'd written to Utzon but of course we didn't hear anything back from him. I managed to convince the ABC to give another \$20,000 to go overseas and see if we could find Utzon, we didn't know where he was, we knew that he spent some time in Denmark at his home in Hellebaek. We also knew he spent some time every year in Majorca in

Spain. So basically I just booked the four of us - sound, camera, Daryl, myself - on an itinerary that got us to Denmark as well as Majorca. And um, the ABC thankfully agreed to give us the \$20,000 on spec and not knowing whether we'd ever be able to find him or not. Well we flew across to Copenhagen and we arrived at 11 o'clock at night. And the travel booking agency had actually booked us into the red light district of Copenhagen. So we were in a pretty seedy looking hotel, and you know, there were people on the street corners doing drug deals and so on. I thought, 'Oh god we've got to get out of here the next morning'. So I took off locally to try and source a more upmarket motel. And I was coming back to the hotel where we were based, and the concierge came out and said, 'there's a phone call - a phone call for you, you just must come to the desk. It's Mr Utzon on the phone.' And I just naturally assumed it was his son, either Kim or Jan Utzon who we'd also been in touch with. And he said, no, no, it's the maestro. And all of a sudden having travelled thousands of miles over he managed to track down our hotel and he's on the end of the phone. And he said to me, 'welcome to Copenhagen, to my beautiful country, I think we should meet today if you have time'. And of course, we made an arrangement, said 'yes of course we'd love to meet with you'. So Daryl and I got into the hire car and we drove about 40 kilometres north of Copenhagen to the assigned spot, which was this little taverna on the side of the road. Well it was in the off season, and the taverna was closed and we pulled in and there were no vehicles, there was nobody there. It was on the edge of forest, and I'm just thinking, 'oh god I've blown it, completely blown it. I've got no way of getting in touch with Utzon', we're just sort of sitting there in the car thinking, 'what on earth are we going to do now?'

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And then the next minute this figure walks out from the trees, you know, down through the forest towards us. And it's Utzon and he said, 'oh look I'll just hop in the back and direct you up to, along this little dirt track up to the house'. And so we drove up to his house which was this really beautiful, very minimal house that he had designed and built that just sits literally in the middle of the forest, surrounded by glass windows and so

on. And just at one with this forest. And after ten minutes or so he said, 'well we should do an interview, where's your crew?' And I said, 'hold that thought', and left Daryl there so he couldn't change his mind and raced back into Copenhagen, picked up the camera and sound guys, loaded up the gear and we went straight back out again. And we ended up spending the most delightful day with Utzon. And we started filming in the morning, and then he said, 'oh we'll have a break now because I'd like to take you to lunch'. And have a traditional Danish meal which involved lots of pickled herrings and things like that I seem to recall. And then we went back and continued filming in the afternoon. And I was so struck by him because this was a man who had really given an extraordinary gift to us as Australians, and had a vision but as Australians we didn't back and see that vision through. And he never got to complete it, and he could have been a very broken very bitter man. And he was the complete opposite. He knew he had made a film – sorry, he knew he'd made a building that was really loved by Australians and was iconic and recognisable symbol of Australia around the world and he was very proud of that building and he had no desire to, even if he wanted to, but by that stage he just wasn't able to physically travel back to Australia. But he was not bitter. And again it was being in the presence of somebody who has done something really brilliant and creatively, you know, the best of his life yet was unable to finish it. Who had nothing to prove and it was – it was that gentleness, that humility and that generosity of spirit that really struck me. And he quoted Goethe at the time, which we put actually at the beginning of the film. Where Goethe says, 'give me a job that I can give myself a hundred percent with love, and it no longer becomes a job, it becomes an act of love in making that work'. And to me that still stands as a wonderful measure of when we start to question why we do what we do is to remember that, that – what is it that makes us care so much about the work that we do and if you don't care about it then you shouldn't be doing it.

Q Do you have ongoing contact with the family there?

00:08:57

Maslin The connection with Utzon's family has continued since we completed the film in '98 right through to the present day. And in fact we were very sad to learn of Jørn's death at the end of last year, 2008, and were members at a memorial that was held for him earlier this year, where his daughter Lynn was present and his son Jan. And they, they remember very, very clearly when we sent Utzon the documentary because he gathered his family together and screened the film as a family screening and he was, he was very proud to have been involved and to have finally told his story on film. He regarded it as a unfinished letter that had sat for too long to the Australian people and now it was his chance to finish that letter. And that's what the film was to him. So we're, we've remained in touch. It's an interesting question of the relationship that you build as a filmmaker, documentary filmmaker with the subjects of your film because it can be very intense. And what happens when the film is completed because lives are still lived. And it – and relationships that mattered then may not be able to continue with the same kind of intensity, but the interest always remains. So I struck this actually on the very first film that I was ever involved in making as a co-director and writer and producer of a film documentary called *Thanks Girls and Goodbye*. This was a film that took around five years to make, three of which were the research and getting in touch with a group of women who during the Second World War had worked on the farms to replace the manpower that had left to fight in the forces, these women went and filled their jobs and worked right across Australia in many ways, and they were part of this thing called the Women's Land Army. Well the day that Sue Hardisty, my collaborator and I went to the war memorial and said, 'we'd like to make a film about the land army, can we please look at your collection', and they brought out a single cardboard box and that was it, we realised we had big job ahead of us. And they in fact were very keen to work with us over the next two years, we travelled around Australia and we met thousands of land army women and we interviewed probably well over a hundred but recorded oral history interviews with 99 of those women and they to this day are still located in the war memorial collection and that process over a

couple of years when we were asking women to describe a period of their life that no one had ever taken interest in before, the history had never been recorded, they were not invited to participate in Anzac days because even though they were called the Women's Land Army they weren't a service. And it was a very cathartic experience. So often over the course of a three hour interview by the end of a couple of years of doing this, consistently women would be opening up and would be in tears and it would be a very emotional experience, and then I started becoming very involved in all that too and I realised I was blurring the boundaries and probably just taking on too much of the empathy for the stories and ending up in tears myself, which is not a particularly useful thing to do when you're a documentary interviewer. But um, you forge very close relationships with the subjects of your film. And yet as a filmmaker you also need to be able to step back from that so that you can frame the story and tell the story and give it shape that in a way if you're too deeply involved it doesn't really serve anybody particularly well. So over, you know, that was a five year project and for many years we did keep up with a number of those land army women. I think a number of them have passed away now and I don't keep in regular, and haven't done for a number of years. But I still -- I do think about them and it did teach me a very great lesson of -- as a documentary filmmaker that when you're working with real people, it's um, it's not enough just to be curious about their story, there is also another layer that is about caring enough about their story to hopefully peel away the mythologies and the surface memories and so on to really get to below the surface about what it is that actually really happened and you know, tap into why they now want to tell you that story. And why you've been given the privilege of being able to communicate that story to others.

Q What is the allure of putting people's stories on screen?

00:15:47

Maslin I think the very act of putting people's stories on screen is an important one and it's something actually came up again right at the very beginning

when I first got into documentary. And that is, we were thinking about, it was very important to be filling in this missing gap of Australian history and telling the story of the Women's Land Army because it had not been told prior to this. And we were thinking about, and I was talking with Sue Hardisty because at that stage she was thinking about writing a book and you know, collecting the oral history interviews and photographs and so on with a view to put it in a book. Now in a non fiction book you'd be pretty happy if you perhaps had a run of 5,000 copies maybe if you got to 10,000 you'd be absolutely over the moon. Well, that's a very, very small audience, the very act of putting something on the screen gives you the potential then to go out to a much, much broader audience and one that will have a very long shelf life. So a typical documentary that might end up on ABC television at the most modest level would probably have an audience of around 400,000 people, and then at a more successful level, anywhere between 700,000 and a million people would be looking at that those stories. So screen it is, it's the medium that best reflects our era of communications and the 21<sup>st</sup> century and it's one that has extraordinary reach, it does have extraordinary power and with that comes a responsibility as a filmmaker to recognise that power and understand what you're doing with it. But it also has longevity, because once you've made a film and it gets used in educational contexts and it's been thoroughly researched so it's not an ephemeral piece, it's something that can continue to have currency over a long period of time, then you're also looking at a reach that's generational, that's crossing many generations. And um, that is what makes screen work so exciting.

Q Is there an importance of archiving stories on screen as opposed to other mediums?

00:18:07

Maslin I think it is really important to archive stories on screen. And that has to be taken in the context of the capacity for the archive media to sustain over periods of time because again, as the technologies have changed, I think we're going to be quite challenged with how something – we know

pretty well that anything that's put down on celluloid has pretty good longevity and seems to have lasted you know, anywhere up to a hundred years plus. But already the archival work and the interviews and so on that I might have done on U-matic and VHS is already completely redundant and also the quality is very, very poor by today's standards. And then as you move into digital, we've had many formats that now in very short turnaround become increasingly redundant. And you also don't know how long (a), they will survive, and then (b), whether there will be the technology in the future that will easily read these older redundant forms that you've recorded on. So it's an ongoing problem of migration across archival forms but the fact that something is put down, you've still got picture, you've still got voice, and that gives a whole layer of context, interpretation and meaning over and above what you can record on paper and keep on paper.

Q How has your work in documentary informed your work in drama?

00:20:07

Maslin As a producer and I call myself a screen producer and always use that in a quite deliberate way because I work across all screens, documentary, television, increasingly computer screens, digital media and so on. And in my mind the process of storytelling essentially remains the same, it's just the formats that change but you think, well I'm thinking constantly, what is the best way in which to tell a particular story. But having now had the experience of working across the different formats, from documentary for instance to feature film you also carry things across with you. And I think your film practice can be informed. So for instance, in a film like *Hunt Angels*, which is a hybrid, hybrid drama and documentary, we in fact called it a non fiction feature film because it's using the storytelling techniques and so on of drama in a feature film sense, it has Ben Mendelsohn in the lead role together with Victoria Hill. It draws very deliberately from the style of black-and-white movies of the '30s and '40s, it's art directed, it has the music and so on that carries an atmosphere, and then deliberately inserts that dramatised world into the

real world of Sydney in the 1930s and '40s as constructed from archival photographs and archival footage. That then in turn use another technology which is the digital media world of CGI to actually meld the two hopefully in a seamless way. So I don't believe *Hunt Angels* would have come together in the way that it did without having been able to bring as producer, the experience I had with the feature films and working with actors with feature crews and to augment the very considerable research and storytelling skills that Alec Morgan, writer/director, brought in wanting to tell the story of a hitherto unknown Australian filmmaker Rupert Kathner. Equally I think when you're making feature films, having worked in documentary, there's an immediacy that comes with the simplicity I think with working very close to your subject and hopefully getting to the heart of what the story is and what the person in front of the camera has got to contribute to that story. That you can translate across into feature films and scripts as well. So there's no coincidence that in working together with Sue Brooks and Alison Tilson, the three of us had done a lot of documentary work. We're very interested in documentary techniques and how they, this quest to get authenticity on screen and authenticity in the small moments as well as the grand gestures, but it's the detailed observation that I think comes from a documentary sensibility that plays out in *Japanese Story* and *Road to Nhill*, that informs films and makes those films stronger as a dramatic piece of work.

00:23:32

Maslin I think one of the greatest measures of success in being able to carry over the documentary technique of seeking really authentic performances from actors was in a short film that Sue and Alison and I worked on called *An Ordinary Woman*, which was a fictitious piece, it was a short film that was drama and yet it was programmed in documentary festivals because it was so, it was done in a documentary technique but it was so um, true to the – or people read the relationship with the performers that they were real people. I mean to me that's an enormous compliment, that a piece of drama gets programmed in a documentary festival.

Q Can you talk about the preparation that the actors had to go through?

00:24:27

Maslin In a film like *Hunt Angels* where you're asking actors to embody real people, so in this case Rupert Kathner and Alma Brooks, we – Alec Morgan, who was the director spent a lot of time with the actors, Ben Mendelsohn and Victoria Hill, going through the surviving footage we had of the actual people, but fortunately Rupert had written a book and he'd written it in first person, so it was like a voice. And Ben read the book and really managed to just step inside the vernacular and the expression and the kind of idiosyncrasies that made up Rupert Kathner, who let's face it, was this – he was a con artist who managed to turn to film really to express his greatest dreams and visions and scammed his way all the way through. But people forgave him because he just had this belief that it should be possible to have Australian stories on our screen. And played out to Australian audiences, and of course this was at a time when Hollywood dominated the Australian film industry and there was no Australian films. It was drummed out after the end of the silent era, it wasn't really until the late '60s that there was any push again to get Australian people to tell our own stories on the screen. But these two filmmakers, Rupert Kathner and Alma Brooks, managed to keep going, and over a period of fifteen years made over twenty movies together, all of which disappeared, got lost. But Alec Morgan managed to find and through this hybrid of working in fiction and non fiction techniques, you know bring to the screen as *Hunt Angels*. I think the fiction/non fiction theme – I think the idea of playing with the fiction and non fiction forms - is something I've been fascinated with for a long, long time. Like it's just about in all the films, right through to using fiction techniques in films like *Conspiracy* about the Sydney Hilton bombing, *Mr Neal is Entitled to be an Agitator*, *Hunt Angels*. On the one hand using those fiction techniques in order to give a way of understanding actual events. And then conversely using non fiction techniques in the feature films in order to try and take the film to a level of authenticity or reality and connectedness with the audience. And to strip away artifice. So you know,

there's – playing in the kind of hybrid region can be a lot of fun, I've always been interested in that.

Q Discuss how you work with the bureaucracies and policy?

00:27:50

Maslin I've always been really interested in film policy and in film culture. And I'm of the belief that you cannot have good policy without doing research. So that's been an area that has particularly interested me. So if it's policy for instance in relation to the position of women in the film industry which is something that I did get involved with for a very long time, and have always kept an interest in. But really in the late '80s, early '90s I was actively involved in setting Women in Film and Television here in Melbourne and then Women in Film and Television Australia wide. Part of the job there was not only one of networking and providing opportunities for women through job referral services or through a newsletter and networking events, to sort of come together. It was very much a policy directed one. That is working with the agencies to in the first instance ask the questions, well what is the representation of women both in front of the camera and behind the camera and once we know the story there then what are the gaps and what can we do in order to address those gaps. So that solid policy research and I was particularly interested in the roles of women in front of the camera, I still remain to this day – track that. That policy research has then subsequently fed into the agencies through a range of programs that directly addressed gaps. So for instance we set up a Women Applying to Film School course that ran over a number of years and it acknowledged that there were far fewer women who were getting into Swinburne and AFTRS and the various film schools. And moving to positions of key creative control. So as writer-directors and so on in particular but also in crewing positions.

00:29:49

And in more recent times the policy interest that I've had has probably been around looking at how the – and where I've been asked by agencies

to get involved in how changes, so broader policy changes that are being made at a level like for instance the producer offset might be one, where they're interested to know the impact on filmmaking practices and producing methodologies, budgeting, finance raising and so on. And again my interest is not so much in sort of sitting down and writing papers and talking about that stuff, I'm more interested in the research that goes into trying to look at real scenarios then. When you change the levers in this way, ie bring in something like a producer offset, which is a tax rebate on qualifying Australian feature films and television documentaries, then doing scenarios that help understand what it would actually mean as documentary filmmakers but also as producers. And I really enjoyed the process of being able to do the research and do the real case scenarios to say, well if you change things in this way then this is the potential impact it will have about how we will go about making our films. I'm just trying to think ... I work, I work closely with educational institutions and have sat on the advisory board at the Victorian College of the Arts Film and TV School as well as more recently have just taken up the position of Adjunct Professor of Communications at RMIT. And I really enjoy being involved in thinking about how educational film training schools are shaping the students and the practitioners for the future and what the priorities and emphasis might be. Because we're in a very odd situation now unlike when I first got into the industry where there – there were not a lot of people moving into media because it wasn't really a viable career option, and there were certainly even less women moving in in those days to now we have a situation where ah, there's around, in Victoria alone, seven and a half thousand graduates every year who are studying one form of media studies at the moment. Whether it's a university or a TAFE or a CAE or whatever, they're doing some form of media studies - in any one year, seven thousand four hundred students, it's extraordinary. So in this environment where everybody, I mean you know, I love the quote that film and television and video making is really like the pottery making of the '70s, you know, everybody does it. How you take this kind of mass interest and mass access to the means of production and then still somehow shape a film culture that is viable, that's sustainable, that is

exciting, that's relevant to audiences and that is um, an option for people to devote their life's work to. That really interests me, to make that connect.

Q Do you think that work is contributing to how the film industry evolves?

00:33:39

Maslin Look, I have no idea what my particular contribution might be other than anecdotally you know whenever, and I do love teaching and I love getting out and you know talking to film students and so on. But really it's underpinned not so much by some grand desire about how I think the Australian film industry should be, it's just by a very, very simple thing, and that is I actually think it's much more empowering to share information than it is to withhold it. I've always believed in that and it's always served me really well. So I actually have no compunction about sharing information if I feel that it, the people I'm sharing it with are serious and they're focussed and their interested, then I think it's a um, it's a very valuable thing to be doing. And I hope that that in turn the sort of filters out and my interests and passions and experience can somehow just light a fuse or a match or a tiny little flame for somebody else and hopefully set them onto a trajectory that's really empowering for them.

Q With the benefit of hindsight ... do you think we've learnt from the past examples that we've had in a bureaucratic sense?

00:35:20

Maslin I've been in the business long enough to see that essentially it's a very cyclical business, and culturally and that can range from what's on our screens to culturally as an industry and the way that we organise ourselves repeat time and time again and I sometimes think we never learn any lessons, we just have to wait long enough and you'll go back and reinvent exactly the same set of circumstances that you might have left ten years ago. Um, what is clear is that there is a momentum behind it, there is a desire for renewal, constantly. And sometimes we get that right and

sometimes we get it horribly wrong. And I know you know, I've put myself into hot water because every now and then I see something really going horribly wrong and I'll write a letter or write an email and won't necessarily be welcome, but I don't do it very often, but when I do it's because I think it is important that we as practitioners don't just sit back and whinge and be the ah, the kind of passive recipients of whatever policy gears might be changing at the time. We are all of us in a partnership that makes up what we know as Australian screen culture, and we have a responsibility with that. And I'm an eternal optimist so I think ultimately we, we're trying to work in the best interests and the agencies are trying to work in the best interests at any given time, but that doesn't necessarily mean we or the agencies necessarily get it right, often quite the contrary.

Q The 2020 summit – can you talk about that experience?

00:37:14

Maslin I was a participant in the Prime Minister's 2020 Summit at Parliament House in 2008. And it was a very revealing experience because it was a perfect example of tremendous goodwill and optimism and those of us who were invited went there to work and work hard and really, really contribute what we could, because the idea was such a wonderful one, that you could just bring together people from all walks of life, across ten different strands, really without any particular sectarian interest just throw open the questions that drive those particular areas whether it's to do with rural infrastructure, through to creative, through to governance, whatever. And just engage with each other to throw these questions open, and just see what new ideas might emerge. In theory, fantastic, fantastic challenge, in practice it was um it was disillusioning actually. And a little bit disappointing because it was a very mediated process as it turned out. And on the – it was a two day process, and on the first day we were pre-assigned into discussion groups and for most of us we were outside of our areas of expertise. And I was in a group that was specifically interested in education, and while I'm interested in education, of teaching, my real

interest was in screen culture and broadcasting. However we didn't get an opportunity to address that until one morning the following day. But by then all the ideas had been collated and assembled and the policy papers and so on had been written and presented. And um, there – while it would have been a great idea to throw us out of our comfort zones for maybe half a day, for it to actually become the basis in which the you know the key findings and key ideas were going to reported it seemed to be at best possible scenario, a little bit naïve and a possible waste of the best of what we could have contributed. But in a worse case scenario it felt very manipulated and it was a bit disappointing as a result of that. But as an exercise and something that – maybe we just didn't get it quite right that time around, and would it be worth doing it again, yes I think it's a really wonderful thing to take time out and to just be immersed. And as a community because remember it wasn't just what was happening at Parliament House, it extended right around the country as a community to all kind of sign up and take a place and participate in the big questions that involve us all, I think that was a really, really exciting moment in Australian politics.

Q Give us a description of where we are?

00:41:21

Maslin Well we're in my producing office here in Fitzroy. And I get to look over the rooftops of Fitzroy as I kind of ponder with what I'm dealing with at any one particular time, but anyway, pretty much what I do involves a computer, a phone, and a mobile, it kind of just happens here at my desk. So it – this is a highly sophisticated filing system. Which I quite deliberately always don't file immediately into filing cabinets because as soon as you do that it's lost. Take some time to put it into a pile and then file down the track I find is my technique. But I sort of sit here because I also, I do like to be surrounded with the posters and the memories and so on of what I've worked on as well. And it's also to try out marketing ideas. So for instance if I'm doing a new marketing angle for working out how we're going to reach *Hunt Angels*, I tend to be involved in

storyboarding the images, and thinking, ‘well what is it that’s going to be the key image’, usually it’s not something that happens to be in the film it’s something you need to set up. And set up the image and put the log line and the title and so on, so I often use the wall to try out, these are rough – this is a rough of what then eventually became the poster. Bit hard to see probably with the glass, not sure if you can see that. But you know, that was the final poster of *Hunt Angels* where we were trying to get a sort of slight Bonnie and Clyde look, the era and the setting, but also the idea of a kind of a caper movie. And there's nothing on that poster that suggests it might be a documentary , which was quite deliberate.

00:43:12

Oh the other thing I'm sort of involved in as well as making movies I'm also really interested in programming festivals of films and this was something I did for about five years where I put together a program of Australian films that would travel to Israel each year as part of the AICE Australian Film Festival. And this um, was an opportunity not just to show what was the best of you know, feature film making in any particular year, but also to introduce Israeli audiences to aspects of Australian film culture. So for instance, one year Erica Glynn from the Indigenous branch of Screen Australia came with me and we presented a program which introduced Australian Indigenous filmmaking to Israel for the first time. And that was really fantastic to see , to put a context around some aspect of Australian filmmaking and then present it to another culture. That was a really exciting thing to do. And um, I've you know kept my bookshelf which basically has the reference books and so on, and always keep my diaries because it’s amazing how many times you need to go back and check on things that might have happened ten or fifteen years ago, who knows. But yeah, just also having moments from what have been – have kept from when films have been released or you know, location.

00:44:50

Maslin I keep these sort of photographs like this one where Sue and Alison and I are in hard hats sitting on the edge of the giant iron ore mine at Newman in the Pilbara. But um, it reminds me that a producer’s job it never stops,

you can be sitting in the dirt in a hard hat or you can be you know, sort of at a film launch next to a former Prime Minister, in this case, Gough Whitlam. And you know, you're on the job, doesn't matter which part, it's still producing, that's being on the job. You're the first one on and the last one off any particular production I tend to find with producing. This was the year Sue and Alison and I went in drag to the AFI Awards dressed up as bowling ladies which um, I think was probably the first and only time bowling ladies have been to the AFI Awards in such a dress.

00:46:03

Maslin And, you know, obviously keep photographs with some of the work that Daryl and I have done. This is a photograph taken at the time we were filming the William Deane documentary about the governor-general. I tend to usually be in front – sorry, behind - the camera so I don't actually have very many, in fact I can't think of any particular photographs I have standing up next to cast or anything like that because I tend to always be somewhere off or behind the camera in my experience. But um, this – I kept this one here because this is actually some stills from the very, very first film that Daryl and I ever made together called *ETD*. Which was Estimated Time of Departure, and we did a black-and-white noir film and it was so successfully noir because we accidentally underexposed it by two stops, you can see very little going on in it, but um, but a very, very young looking Daryl Dellora there.

00:47:17

Maslin And of course absolutely none of it would happen without a supportive partner and that's my partner, Charlotte Seymour, and so you know the twenty years that we've been together really spans the time that I've been making films. And I um, yeah I know that very little of any of this would have been possible without having that really strong and supportive relationship behind it all. So yeah, so a filmmaker's office.

Q What do you do when you're not in film?

00:47:53

Maslin Well to relax, and it's very hard to switch off because you're usually always you know even at night, 3 o'clock in the morning I'm just constantly writing notes to remind myself of things I have to do the next day. But the things that I do do is underneath the cost reports you will usually find a crossword. So *Age* cryptic crosswords, that's a real distraction, I love doing crosswords. And um, the other thing that I get complete relaxation from, and I don't keep this in my office, I've just brought this up today, but um, I do enjoy playing golf. So yeah get out on the golf course, but I particularly enjoy playing golf with writers. And have been up over many, many years now playing golf with novelists because you get a good sort of two hours, two and a half hours on the golf course where you can talk books and ideas and life and love and, the – it's just this completely relaxing environment but actually talk about things in depth in between trying to get a silly golf ball into a hole. We're terrible at golf but we have good conversations.

Maslin Yeah, I um, I discovered that it was possible to have a game of golf, and I play really early in the mornings on Fridays, maybe once – once a month definitely but if I can possibly in summer maybe once a fortnight, that it was actually a really, really good thing to do, just to step outside of the idea that you often have as a producer, we have a complete sense of responsibility that you're indispensable and that the world will stop if you're not at your desk for two hours. And I started doing this when I broke my arm really badly because it was a part of rehabilitation. And I found as I was doing it, well the films didn't stop getting made, they you know, life went on, it wasn't the end of the world not to be in the office for those couple of hours. So I've kept doing it, and there's actually a really, really good lesson in there, and that is somehow in trying to get that balance which I rarely get right, the work/life balance where you um, usually particularly around productions and development, even marketing, there's never a time that you can take off cos usually you feel guilty for taking it off because you haven't raised the money or you've raised the money, now you're too busy to take it off. So there's just, there's a real

discipline in giving yourself permission to have a bit of time out. And I've learnt that, it's taken a long time, but I've learnt that that's equally important as being on deck and doing your job.

Q What would you say your strongest personality trait was? What makes you good at what you do?

00:50:56

Maslin I'd think, I've been thinking a little bit about this and you know some immediate things come to mind like determination and perseverance, and but, the two things that really, really stick out for me is taking a challenge. Like I love to take a challenge, I like to make any film that hasn't already previously um, been made or that represents a challenge whether it's from the technology we're using or the content, way we want to go about making it. But I love it if it hasn't been done before. Then you know, it's a real challenge and that's when I get really excited. But the other thing that I think - cos anybody can be interested in challenges and take risks and so on, but the – I think the strongest thing that I do bring to projects is belief. Like I – when I fall in love with an idea and a desire to work in a collaborative team, then I will go to any length to back, to back that project, to back that team. And I believe in it, I have enormous self belief and I believe in the people that I'm working with, and if I've got that then I think it's possible to do anything.

Q Can you discuss distribution?

00:52:22

Maslin One of the things that Daryl and I did when we kind of reviewed what we were doing with Film Art Doco, which is our production company, we felt that under the new environment, screen culture environment and with the producer offset where there's now the opportunity for the first time for filmmakers to have an equity in their work, and to start taking a more entrepreneurial approach to our work because we've got a vested interested in seeing how the work performs. That that put us into thinking,

well we probably need to expand our of thinking of ourselves as film producers and a production company and more into rights managers. That is we're developing intellectual property, we're optioning or acquiring or developing original work, and so by definition managing the rights at that point, then we're making the work, well then why shouldn't we be equally involved in then managing the rights after the completion of the film. Which lead us to want to set up a company, Film Art Media, which is not setting out to be a huge distributor, that's not our core business, it is a rights management company of which part of it, which we hope will be the money-making part is um, exploiting the rights on the completion of the film. So to that end what we've been looking at is distributing for the first time and *Celebrity: Dominick Dunne*, which was the first title we executive produced, we also acquired the Australian distribution rights and we oversaw the theatrical release and the subsequent DVD and online marketing and so on. And our second title is this one, *The Edge of the Possible* which is a re-release of a film we made over ten years ago about the Sydney Opera House. And the story of Jørn Utzon and the building and the design. And we've re-authored completely this film, we've added a whole stack of extra features, including the full length interview with Utzon, some previously unseen ah, home movie footage taken at the time. And some really beautiful footage sequences that we filmed of Jørn in his home in Hellebaek. And put this together, completely redesigned it, repackaged it, and now reworking how we're going to market and set up a retail deal with the Sydney Opera House. So that's um, these kind of titles are really the beginning of where we see now just following the trajectory all the way through from development of intellectual property, the manufacture of hopefully quality blue chip films and now the – and particularly accessing cross platform and digital distribution - online distribution means now being involved in the marketing and distribution of audiences.

Q That gives you a greater or closer connection to the audience?

Maslin It—it makes us think more closely about how we'll reach the audience. And we have a vested interest in reaching the audience because if we do it successfully, then we've got a revenue stream, and that's the difference, we've never had that before. We've been making these films for years, and they've made a lot of other people quite wealthy, but we've, as producers, have never seen any returns from any of that work. None of them have gone into profit or returned a – receipts back to the filmmakers, so that's the difference, wanting to now move into a different way of working where we have a direct share of returns and we're driven to really not just making really great work, but also great work that does genuinely get to its intended audience.

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Maslin The upshot of the self distribution path is that you now have a lot of boxes, starting to pile up in your office where you're now starting to dispatch titles. So doing quite a bit of that these days as well. But actually enjoy it, don't mind that at all. And it's um, it's manageable in addition – this is really the online marketing distribution aspect of it, but in addition to this of course is the more lucrative retail sales and doing deals with shops, as well as the airlines, cable television, international specialist – for the kind of work we do, we go off to the niche markets that are non theatrical but they're international, and they're lucrative. So, that's – yeah the producing desk is now morphed across into the distribution despatch department.

END TRANSCRIPT