

Tom Zubrycki

Damien Parer interviewed Tom Zubrycki for australianscreen online in 2006

Q What attracted you to the subject matter of *Exile in Sarajevo*?

00:30

Tom What attracted me to the subject matter was the filmmaker. He had this extraordinary resilience and desperate desire to tell the story, nothing would get in his way. But I had this instinct this would be a good film, even though he had no training in film himself. But at the same time I knew it would be very tough as well, to give him some training and um, surround him with people who could assist him to realise his vision. When he got going, when he left Australia he left with cameramen, we had two cameras on board, sort of a large video camera, small video camera, and that he took with him, it was just the two of them, the cinematographer and himself. Got to Sarajevo and they somehow got inside the city at night because it was highly, very risky actually getting in, you had to travel at night, no lights on in the car, it was a hair-raising experience I think for them to do it. I didn't go as producer, I stayed behind. I wanted to keep in touch with them as much as I could. They had somewhere to stay, but that's all I knew. And then they had ration packs with them, there wasn't a lot of food in the city, although that's what we were led to believe but they were able to find the food. They had some flak jackets, you know, it was a highly dangerous operation because he was going to be there for a few months. And he ended up being there for a good eight or nine in the end. After about, an initial contact, I didn't hear from him for about two months and I got quite worried, I didn't know whether he was still going or what was happening. And then the cinematographer advised me that yes, everything was fine except Tahir hadn't found his subject yet and they were still researching the story, I knew I had to make some allowance for that. Because we went in there with um, a few initial contacts and that was it, they had to find their story, and the story was predicated on finding

actual characters. And then a couple of weeks after that point, they found their main character.

Probably about two months into the film Tahir found his main character who was a young girl, a young girl's mother rather, the young girl had died after the place where she lived had been bombed. This was tragic. But um, she um, was a victim like so many young girls, boys were victims of you know bombs coming across from the Serb lines. It's almost impossible to avoid. In fact, Tahir and Roman were kind of playing with fire themselves.

04:08

Tom After about three months the cinematographer said that he had had enough, that he had family and kids in Sydney and he was concerned that he was actually going to make it through alive. The intensity of the, from the Serb lines was increasing, they had just filmed a massacre in the market place, it was shocking really and he wanted out. I said, can you stay another month, and he said, only if I get paid more, which I did, and then he left after that. And then Tahir took over as the cinematographer. Now he had only a small camera with him, the big camera came back to Australia, back to Sydney, and he had no camera skills at all, that's reflected in the first few rolls of film he shot which were just about out of focus. But because the material was so emotional and so strong we ended up using some of that in the film. So he found, he continued working, so he continued working with the main character he found who was, the mother of the little girl who died. And he found other characters as well to tell the story, he became quite confident really as the time progressed. We had a sound recordist with us, Alma, and she came on the scene quite early in fact she was somebody that I'd set up as a liaison person, and I didn't know that she was going to turn out to be a sound recordist but I think it certainly helped assist Tahir and Roman. In fact, Alma became Tahir's lover and the two of them basically made the film together from that point onwards. Tahir brought her back to Australia, and they remained here for a few months and then they actually returned to

Sarajevo to film the um, the liberation of the city, after the intervention of NATO.

Q As a producer you were encouraging them to go into a dangerous situation. How do you justify that position?

06:26

Tom Tahir wanted to go into a dangerous situation, he had made no qualms, he wanted to be right in the middle of the action, and he was prepared to take those risks. Finding a cinematographer to share those risks was difficult. We met a number of people, we had many, many coffees around Darlington and the Cross, people were excited by the project and eventually turned us down. And then one person didn't turn us down, in fact he was desperate to come on board, and pleaded could he come, could he do it, could he come on the film. And yeah we agreed. And you know, he knew the risks, they were made quite clear to him. All I could do was take out insurance against his life essentially. And for that paying the premium blew most of the contingency in the budget. Look, it's a risk that the two of them were prepared to take that I wasn't prepared to take as producer. So and when Roman said, look I want to come back, I respected his wish. You know, what ended up happening in fact is that Tahir sold Roman's flak jacket on the black market and his own, and that gave him enough money to continue being in Sarajevo and just paying his way for the next few months.

Q What's the editing process?

08:16

Tom The editing of the film was actually quite fraught, quite difficult. The person we got on board was a feature film editor, not a documentary editor, but he was very sympathetic to the project. He, Tahir tried to do a lot of quite unorthodox things in the way he um, used the raw material. You know, he, not often in the film is you know, actual 25 frames per

second actuality presented. Often there are little bits of film here and there you know, within a sequence he would advise the editor to take this, put it together with that, they would montage a lot and use music as a way of smoothing the montage, making it work, integrating it. And I found that ah, he was creative with some of his decisions, but overall the film was still a bit of a mess. And I advised him, look the only way of really putting this together is having your narration across it. He was a bit resistant to that at the beginning but eventually came around to thinking that yes, this was a good idea. He and Alma, his partner worked quite intensely on the narration. I think it was in the end one of the best elements in the film, it was very poetic, really I think conveys a sense, not only of place but of his own inner feelings towards his city, his old city and the people he met there. The narration is extremely personal. The more he wrote the narration, the more it became his own personal story. And that paralleled the filming process because the longer he was there the more he was you know, discovering himself through his increasingly dangerous expeditions, particularly his trip to Gerayshta (sp?) in a UN convoy.

Q How do you survive financially as a documentary maker?

10:33

Tom As a documentary maker you can't just pretend that you are going to make film after film after film. Although I was lucky and was able pretty much to do that you know for 15 years or so from the first I made called, *Waterloo* right through to *Billal*, and after *Billal* it's, I became increasingly aware that it's, you know, money was scarcer, the funding environment had become quite tight. And I realised I had to move into producing work. And *Exile in Sarajevo* was the first film I produced. Since then I've produced many films and I find that I can move from producing to directing and often I produce as well as direct simultaneously, but it's usually, I produce in between films that I myself direct. And when I direct I produce those films mostly myself but not all

the time. When I made *The Diplomat* for instance, that was produced by Film Australia.

Q What was the initial brief for this documentary?

12:02

Tom The initial brief for the documentary was to make a film about the history of the trade union movement in Australia. It was an idea that I took to the bicentennial authority and the ACTU and then Film Australia became involved, and in turn Film Australia became the producers but the ACTU were the sponsors and had a very key role to play, because they approved the script and approved the final cut. And they approved the script, but they didn't approve the final cut.

12:46

Tom After nine months I became really frustrated and I realised the film would just sit on the shelf. So I decided I would release it anyway, even though I was sort of breaking copyright in the process. And in, after I released the film it became a bit of a cause célèbre, you know, everyone wanted copies. And I managed to get page three of *The Sydney Morning Herald*, I primed the journalists and I think I was only pushed off by the first Iraq war, but that's history. Anyway, I was assailed by journalists around the country to you know explain my position, you know, why was I releasing this film without the approval of the ACTU. And I explained to them the situation that I felt that the ACTU was trying to get me to rewrite history, to you know, basically come up with a version of history which was in accord with what they thought was palatable to them.

Q So there was a hidden agenda from the ACTU?

14:07

Tom They wanted a hagiography, basically they wanted a film which highlighted the process of, I guess, arbitration and conciliation, which was

an element I thought was very important, when you look back at the history of trade unions in Australia, the *Harvester* judgment plays a very important role, the conciliation process is absolutely integral. But many of the key moments of the last 150 years or so when you're looking at how unions have progressed, how they have managed to achieve you know improvements in wages and conditions over time, they've been achieved through struggle - through conflict and the result of quite bitter engagement in fact with employers. And that was the way historians in Australia saw it too. And my um, key historian, the one I relied on mostly was Jim Hagan who actually wrote the history of the ACTU. And I thought, well he's a reasonably moderate, even conservative you could say, historian. And I imagined that if I wrote my script and put it to him, and worked with him on it that he would then also give his blessing to the final film. But the ACTU did not. By that stage, back in the '80s, the stage where I was wrangling with the ACTU, Bob Hawke had introduced the Union Accord, union-company Accord. And it was something that the union movement was trying to really highlight at the time, that was their main agenda really. You know, let's put conflict to one side, let's put the last 120, 130 years of industrial you know, conflict aside and just focus on building a kind of harmonious relationship, you know to achieve the end goal. But that was just a moment in time, that's what I thought .

Q You have a commitment to the union movement. How did you deal when this was rejected by the ACTU?

16:52

Tom Well I didn't really understand why they were rejecting it. And I decided to pursue a course of action which I know would get them totally offside. But that's not the first time I've got trade unions offside, I did that in an earlier film, *Friends and Enemies*. So in the sense um, I was kind of anticipating a very volatile response which is what I got. So it was really me against them, I got much support from filmmakers in Sydney, everybody rallied to the cause. We screened the film at the Paddington

Town Hall, there were queues around the corner. We had several screenings over one weekend, we had forums about the film, historians spoke. Even the ACTU sent their own media officer to give their side of the story. The ACTU actually brought me down to Melbourne to try and resolve the issue but to no avail. About eight years after this event, Ann Briton, a colleague, a unionist, and Mia finally resolved the conflict. And now the film is available to the general public.

Q How do you feel about the union movement 20 years on from that?

18:38

Tom Look I'm in a union myself, an association called the Australian Screen Directors' Association, I believe in people getting together to advance their cause. But with every organisation you know, they become ossified over time. And sometimes the union you know, the peak bodies often don't necessarily um, reflect the um, feelings of the members, the rank and file. I certainly found that in *Friends and Enemies*.

Q Changing films *Kemira: Diary of a Strike*. It's an intimate documentary about the effects of the strike on people. How did you get such a level of access and trust?

19:35

Tom I made, sorry, I started to make *Kemira: Diary of a Strike* about eight months after I made a film called *Waterloo*. Which was my first film about residents taking action to defend their houses from being bulldozed by you know the housing authorities in Sydney and that film I suppose, many people got to watch it, or at least hear about it. And when I decided to make a film about the Kemira Strike, I saw some of the trade union officials and said, look I've made this previous film. And they said, okay we can trust you. I had to do all this in a huge hurry because really, the strike had just got underway, I rallied together some filmmakers to help me do it, some colleagues, a cinematographer, Fabio Cavadini and a

sound recordist, Russ Herman. I said, look I've gotten very little money, can you work on deferments, deferred wages, and they agreed. And I rang around Sydney and got film stock from people, you know often, the film stock was dated, so I was taking a little bit of a risk on it, but I managed to accumulate several hours of film stock that way, which was essentially donated to me for the film. And I managed to shoot the 16 day sit-in strike, which was quite a dramatic, you know, in its own right. All up I had about 25 rolls of film, that wasn't a lot, 25 times 10 minutes. And I didn't know how long the binders had been sitting underground for. But on the third day of shooting, they all decided to go to Canberra. And hop on a train and I thought I would go along with them and see what happens, because there was a big demo at Parliament House. Well the outcome was that you know, they felt so incensed by what was going on in the whole region of Wollongong, unemployment was going through the roof, that they had to make a stand and an impression on the Prime Minister and they crashed right through the front doors of Parliament House to make their point. This was quite historic, and we were right inside there with my cameras. And I knew at that point that there was no turning back, that it just had to be made, and that I could probably raise interest from a funding body, which I did straightaway. I continued there for, so after the sit-in strike, after the 16-day sit-in strike, I was interested in finding out the aftermath, I didn't want to stop at the end of those 16 days. Well for a start you know, the people who were underground, I was really only getting to know them, I got to know their families, their wives certainly, and they're, the women they were at the pit top. Talking about their husbands being underground and their husbands came up and those guys were the second after the film really. I was interested in finding out the long term impact, the lives of those families. And it turned out that the person I was following, Nari, you know separated from her husband. I don't know, I think something happened to her during the process of the strike which maybe just gave her that confidence that she could you know live a life, you know, that she chose, and she could cope.

Q *Homelands*. When it was discovered that Carlos was having an affair, how did you react?

23:59

Tom What got me interested in making *Homelands* was that I was interested in the effect of being a torture and trauma survivor in a new country. How you could cope with having had this unbelievable experience. And living in another country and coping with that pain. How can you kind of resolve that and reconcile that with your everyday life.

25:01

Tom I found Maria and Carlos when I was making a film about trauma and torture survivors. And it became a film about their marriage. When I started filming with them, the situation back in El Salvador had changed. And it was possible for people to go back if they wanted to. In this particular family, what made me interested in them was the fact that Carlos wanted to return immediately, just for a visit. But Maria was really settled in Australia. And I immediately knew that something could happen to them, perhaps to their relationship. Carlos knew very little English, Maria had a good job, her kids wanted to stay. So I, after several months of filming with Maria, it became clear that the marriage had severe problems and Maria wanted desperately to find out what Carlos was up to. And she and I went off together and went to El Salvador to track him down. And it wasn't completely apparent straightaway but after about a week and a half when I was with them in a small little rural settlement, we got up one morning and Maria told me that she had discovered Carlos's infidelity, she was desperate to tell me. At that stage she had already taken over, monopolised my little video camera, because we were shooting in film and had a little camera on standby. And she wanted to make her own film, to show the kids and the community back in Melbourne. So she made like her little film within mine. And you can see that in *Homelands*, the little bits of black-and-white is all her footage, and we can see her with that little video camera. And she and I had a very close relationship, she would confide all sorts of things about her marriage to Carlos, how she felt coming back to El Salvador, how out of place she felt. You know,

even after six years, she felt her home was really Australia. But that morning she said look I've got to tell you this story, I've got to tell you what I've found. I said, wait till dawn breaks, and dawn broke and she told me this story that I filmed for her on her video camera, my cinematographer filmed her telling me what was really going on, how she had discovered her husband's infidelity. The hard part then was trying to get Carlos's part of the story. And he was very circumspect but I managed to get his story as well. And then, knock me out, but they were holding hands together on the beach and perhaps they've made up. So you know I had to keep filming, I had to keep filming until that was resolved, that meant coming back to Australia. And um, after I came back to Australia, Carlos and Maria tried to patch up their relationship, but it was clear it wasn't going too well. And there was a point really at the end where she felt, I felt that the film was over, marriage was unresolved but as far as we were concerned we should part and go our separate ways. And the story of, the arc of the film had been resolved anyway. But unfortunately I discovered six months later that they had separated, maybe it was for the good.

Q Were there sequences you excluded because they were too intrusive?

28:58

Tom Um, there were no sequences that I excluded in the documentary, I mean there were times when I thought, god, what they are telling me they will never use. Like that scene where the kids saw the tape that Maria had shot where she tells me about, you know, their father's infidelity and I thought, but Maria wanted me to be in there with the camera filming their kids reaction which was bizarre. But I still thought okay, I'll film that and it ended up in the film. But all the subjects of my films I show them the film prior to locking the film off. So they saw the film and could suggest changes. And Maria and Carlos saw the film together, it was a very awkward occasion. They were very nervous, I was nervous and you know in the end they said, no that's it, that's fine. That's the way we thought

about each other and how things kind of unfolded. So yes, there were sensitive scenes, there were sensitive scenes and it's absolutely imperative for any filmmaker to make sure that people filmed feel comfortable with that. But they've got your trust and you've got theirs. So it's pretty unlikely that they will say no, but there's always a chance, but it's never happened to me yet in many films.

Q How much of your own personal experience influences the making of a documentary?

30:42

Tom In *Homelands* and with *Billal*, my parents were migrants which influenced me to look you know, closely at the experience of you know, the contemporary situation, or at that particular time. I thought I could bring some of what I'd experienced, what I saw, and I could certainly identify. But I also felt that I was carving out new territory that nobody had really, in a really intense way, closely observed, you know, lives of immigrants, refugees. This was something that hadn't been explored before in this country, except perhaps superficially. And I guess that's also why I made films about unions early on because that was subject matter that wasn't ever a subject of documentaries.

Q How do you come down after the intense situation of making documentaries?

31:56

Tom Coming down after a film like that is difficult. Essentially you quickly go into the editing room and finding you know segues into editing and the toughest part is after the film is finally released and it's finished and it's over and um, you're aware that there is a few things you could have changed, and you know you try not to worry about what the critics might say or have said with a straight face and believe in the film. And then often you get invited to international film festivals which is always you

know an enjoyable experience. And um, you know you get to discuss the film with your peers in a different country. And that often brings revelations to you that were, might be surprising. No coming down off a film is difficult and you think to yourself, how am I ever going to get as intensely involved in another, with another group of subjects again. But inevitably it happens, it might not happen until a year down the track but it happens eventually. And you suddenly think, god you know here are these people trusting you, and you've got a responsibility to them. and you know how far can you take this, how much further can you go into their lives. And you know, that's always always something that you want to do more and more and more and you think, oh maybe there is another layer that you can uncover, unpeel. And often you do, sometimes you don't though. And sometimes it's irrelevant, often you've got the story.

Q *Friends and Enemies*. Why did you suspect there would be a big story there?

33:57

Tom Well the reason I thought was because Brisbane was blacked out, about a week. The unions viewed the situation so seriously that you know, there was everybody mobilised together to black out the State. But as it turned out of course Bjelke Peterson the Queensland Premier toughed it out over the next eight months and the whole strike collapsed. But the reason people saw, the reason the workers saw that strike as very, very important was the fact that here was a workforce employed by a you know government body. Workers thought they had jobs for life and they were going to be made contractors. So that you know the situation would be immediately at risk. Be subject to all sorts of factors. So it you know, it was probably the first, *Friends and Enemies* I suppose was a strike about the first kind of instance where um, government tried to break down conditions won by organised labour. That were really at the heart and soul I suppose of trade unionism. That you know, they invited therefore an

incredibly hostile response, since then of course we have all moved on. But back then it was seen in very black-and-white terms.

Q How did you get such good access to the minister?

36:04

Tom I got access to Vince Lester through a journalist friend of mine, Quentin Dempster, who knew Vince and Vince was flattered by the fact that I was following him around. And thought that you know, the film could not fail but essentially justify his position. But I don't think he quite expected the fact that I would want to turn up to National Party cocktail parties and debutante balls and so on, because what I wanted to do is actually present you know the kind of the establishment connection you know with the National Party, and the Bjelke Petersen government and the fact that union movement was taking that on. And that it was very much a process of going therefore between the union office and you know a National Party event and often I would carry a change of clothes in the car, this happened one day in a suit often. And I'd be able to kind of change from being somebody in a T-shirt to somebody wearing a coat and tie. My cinematographer didn't have to go through that process but I thought I did, just to keep in with the group.

Q It's a complicated story, did you try to get too much fact into the documentary?

37:51

Tom Look it was a complicated story. There were a lot of kind of aspects to the strike that were not just the day to day but there were so many characters, rank and file, there's the trade union officials. There was the guy who, Dempsey, who led the Trades and Labour Council. I guess I wanted to get across to an audience the fact that mounting a campaign, a strike is not as simple as workers in a small union office making decisions together, there were like various layers. And in this case there were the rank and filers,

that didn't really have much power, they had to go through their union officials, you know, that was the boss at the top. So the trade union was a hierarchy, it was made up of various layers and all those layers had to pull together. And the very fact that they couldn't pull together was probably the reason the strike collapsed. The very fact that they had to call on the ACTU, the very fact that they tried to come up with some solution acceptable to each side meant that there was no victory in a sense. Because the men who had been out on strike for nine months would not change, any compromise whatsoever. And this was blatantly clear when I catch Simon Crean in the office with one of the workers when he overheard a conversation where Simon Crean was proposing a deal. And that was completely unacceptable to who overheard those conversations. And that summarised to me, that's just the tragedy of the whole thing. And at the end of course the women are the ones who mop up and come in later. I made that on film we had a relatively small ratio. So I also had to be careful not to blow my allocation. When it came to, I had about ten minutes and maybe I could push to 15 to try and encapsulate the essence of a meeting and that was often very difficult. Plus I had to keep in touch with everybody on both sides of the coin. And also not knowing quite how long things would go on for, I had no idea it would drag for months and months and months. I was in Sydney, I had to fly to Melbourne – I was in Sydney, I had to fly to Brisbane with the cinematographer, and I couldn't afford that after a while so I got a Brisbane cinematographer involved and I stayed up in Brisbane for long periods of time. It was hard because my partner, we just had a baby, and it was really tough. And she was left alone in Sydney for long periods of time and I was up there making a film. When the film was released, it caused a big eruption up in Brisbane. It was something that I can sort of you know, shake off and laugh about now. But it left me dazed for weeks if not months. The film doesn't really represent winners or losers as such. You can find fault with virtually everybody in the film. And in a sense it's my take about what happened. You know I presented people with all their foibles and blemishes. And even though supposed heroes, the rank and file, you know they certainly

weren't perfect either. So when the film was first screened in Melbourne, it almost caused a riot, you know after the screening at the Chauvel Theatre we um, retired to an upstairs cafeteria and people essentially just got up and started putting their views. Some views attacked me. Other views complimented me. Then they started attacking each other. There were factions of the left attacking other factions of the left. There were unionists attacking rank and filers, vice versa. It was quite an extraordinary occasion really, I've never had an opening quite like it.

43:07

Tom At the screening, there were different screenings of the film, in Brisbane and there were screenings in Sydney and the film went on release and on opening night Bernie Neville one of the rank and filers, who didn't agree with my depiction of him came down and you know, stormed the stage and basically told me off and said the film wasn't a reflection of the strike the way he saw it. And you know two of us have had an interesting debate about this over the years. Look I think it's justified to his view, it's about the way he was represented. Um, and I think it's just really symbolic of just how much the issue impacted on people in Brisbane. How it affected people. It was a talking point for over a year. And it's not forgotten.

Q *Gulpilil: One Red Blood*. What was your input as producer on an Indigenous film?

44:27

Tom My input really was to help Darlene realise her vision essentially. Just surround her with the resources that entitled her to make the film she wanted to make.

Tom Director Darlene Johnson and I had a very good collaboration on this film. My role as producer was really to facilitate her being able to realise her vision. And in that I managed to get her the best sort of possible sound recordists, cinematographers, editors. And we I think made a successful

film. She had some ideas about who she wanted to interview and how she wanted the story told. With um, stolen generations, she wanted the story to be told by people who represented eras within the whole story of the stolen generations and also to come from different parts of the country. She went on a couple of research trips, tracked down subjects you know, she wanted to interview. She also had some historians, Henry Reynolds. Marcia Langton. And I saw how this could become a really good you know, archive interview film.

46:46

Tom The archive came from a lot of different sources, it came from the recognised sources like the National Film and Sound Archive, but also came from private collections. You know from patrol officers for instance. Or some Aboriginal activists, a range of sources. We managed to find I think some really quite unique material. And then we had to clear the rights, and as producer that wasn't easy.

47:45

Tom With *Gulpilil: One Red Blood* um, Darlene's vision was quite clear. Darlene Johnson was the director, I was the producer, I actually helped also with all the logistics involved in the film. And also doing the sound recording I thought a producer with a reasonably inexperienced director that I should be there on location, so we all went to Ramingining together. And um, I found working with David, I found working with David Gulpilil really interesting, you didn't know what was going to happen from day to day. But um, Darlene and I knew roughly what we had to cover. We were lucky, we got some really quite unique ceremony, we got a lot of great moments down by the swamp, Arafura Swamp. Also getting David at his most relaxed, and that is when he was essentially fishing, hunting. The test then became to try and integrate the observational material we shot with David with some archive material. And some of the films that he was in as well. Um, and to do that properly it really came down to a narration and Darlene suggested that David should do the narration. And that was I think entirely appropriate. But the decision was

made late and David came into the studio, came down to Sydney and we did it here.

49:53

Tom As producer clearing rights to films is always tricky, particularly when they are feature films in a documentary. You know, the distributors are sometimes a bit loathe for you to use excerpts from already finished films but everybody wanted to cooperate because it was David. And David's fame as an actor was well known. But really when it came to *Walkabout* I had to get back to the director, Nic Roeg, he eventually gave me the permission to use it. And I think I was very, very pleased because he only really gave permission on the basis of what the film was about.

Q One of the intentions of the film was to help bridge the gap between black and white. Did you achieve this?

50:56

Tom *Stolen Generation*. Okay. I think what was great about Gulpilil is that he is such a well known Australian identity, it got the highest ratings for a television documentary on an Indigenous theme ever. So more people around Australia watched it than any other program on Indigenous issues, or featured, which featured Indigenous Australians. And I think there is something to be said for it. So in terms of bridging the gap, yes, I think it was effective in doing that. And also the film is used educationally a lot as well. But what else can I say.

Q Is producing easier than directing?

52:12

Tom Being a producer is easier, in fact mostly easier than being a director. You stand back and you know you're critical and supportive of the director. You don't necessarily have to work with the subjects as the director does, and you don't have to be in the field every day. You're really there as a sounding board. But more than that you're there to really make suggestions, could be ways in which you know, new interviews could be

made, new scenes could be captured. Depends if it's an observational documentary, you know, or an interview documentary, you're there really to say, to a director, okay I think you've got the whole story, let's start editing. Or you haven't got the whole story, and there's still more to be shot. But the role of the producer is also to help structure a piece in the editing room as well. And that becomes quite critical, particularly towards the end fine cut where often commissioning editors get involved, other executive producers from funding agencies. The producer's role there is to really protect the editor. To fight for the editor, to fight for their vision really. You know, of course other aspects of producing are sort of a bit, you know, less kind of interesting, but necessary as well. Like organising the shoot, making sure the per diems are paid and so on. Sometimes I get people to do that for me on films. Like I did with *Stolen Generations*. Those people are line producers or production managers. But often inevitably I do that myself.

Q What makes a documentary so?

54:15

Tom What makes a documentary so for me is actuality. It's lived experience, it's being able to I suppose um, observe the textures of everyday life, being able to um, observe the richness of a conversation naturally between two people. And also it's experiencing sudden turning points to a story. Turning points that you could never have planned or envisioned if you were writing a narrative. And the um, it's what appeals to me about documentaries is the um, the unpredictability of life, really.

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