

Wayne Blair

Ray Argall interviewed Wayne Blair for australianscreen on 17 June 2009

Q Can you talk about your screen career path?

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Blair Okay. I was living in Sydney. I got to Sydney in '99. 1999. And at that time, also I still am, I was acting. And I saw an advert. I was at Film School actually. It was at their library. A friend of mine was an editing assistant at Film School. And I just went out there on my day off. And I saw an advert for the Uncle Lester Bostock Scheme which is at Metro Screen which is for new Indigenous filmmakers to produce their own five minute story. And I had a story. And I sort of applied. I did my application. Did my form. Had no idea about it. I didn't think --- I thought film making was for someone else, to be honest. I was just so into the acting side of things. And I did the application. Went in for my interview. There was about three or four on the panel. And they said, yes.

So three or four weeks later I found myself, you know, writing and directing my first short film, five minutes. So if it wasn't for that scheme I would not be doing what I am today. I mean, I did that film and the film was okay. Went to festivals, so people liked it. And then through Metro Screen in Paddington in Sydney again, through the Uncle Lester Bostock Scheme, I did it again. This time a 10 minute film – while I was still acting, while I was still paying the rent in Sydney. I ---

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And what they did, they actually gave you two grand I think it was to produce. But it wasn't about that. They gave you in-house facilities. So I actually got to learn the process of making a short film really, a short story. And I did it the next time with a 10 minute story. And that did quite well.

And it sort of --- It was a snowball effect really. I just started with short film. And because of the acting side of things, and I'd been in a little bit of TV. I did *Mullet* by that stage. So I'd been in front of the camera but I sort of was always pretty observant about what was happening around me. And it just sort of --- I liked all that stuff. And um ... It just --- It was a little bit --- Not power, but I just went okay, if I like story that much I could have a bit more of a say because my impulse is about acting or within a scene, um ... not correct, but they felt like they were on the right path of what the director was trying to say.

So, do you know what I mean? It just felt like something right. And it just sort of flowed.

Q In the course did you do hands-on stuff with cameras and sound?
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Blair Not so much hands-on stuff with camera and sound, not to that extent. I mean, in that film *Fade to Black*, my first five, Warwick Thornton shot it funnily enough. But --- who was the sound person? I forget her name. Ingrid. So it was people within the industry that knew that this was a new filmmaker, and they had quite --- a bit of an experience. So they set me up with a mentor. But we did do a course which was a little bit of hands on, but, you know, I left that to the other people I dare say at that early stage. And only in the last three or four years have I really had a really good look at it.

I actually went to NYU, New York University. Did their sight and sound summer course back in --- what year was it? 2002. And that was a two month course and that was when I got into an Arriflex and I was like into the --- I think it was Super 16 and we were like shooting in New York and I made six short films. Like one or two minutes. But old school. Cutting on a Steenbeck and all that sort of stuff. And that's when I really got to learn about lights and just film, just the process of film and sound, and the old school style. So it was great. So it's been a continuing sort of process. A little bit --- what's that word? Osmotic. I said that in front of Aden Young. I went, 'Oh it's very cosmotic.' He said, 'Wayne, it's osmotic.' And I went, 'Oh, thanks.'

Q What was that process like? Was it a slow thing or did you learn it overnight?

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Blair It's different. But they both inform each other I found. And I get that question a lot. That question from media or whoever. What do you enjoy or prefer? And the grass is always greener. But it's --- it was different. But I just sort of jumped into it a little bit. A little bit of ignorance is bliss. And I just went for it. I didn't sort of question much, and I trusted a lot of people. That was the key at that early stage. It wasn't like I was eight and I was into film and --- I did work at Video Ezy and Plains Video when I was young. Do you know what I mean? But those stories. I played rugby league and cricket. I was from the country. I didn't really --- I wasn't interested in film. And the films I loved were like --- I love *Monkey*, or I like *The Karate Kid*, or loved *E.T.* Everybody probably loved those films as well. A bit of *Battlestar Galactica*. *The A-Team* I was right into. *World's Wrestling* when it was coming out. So do you know what I mean. I had a --- I loved all

that stuff. I loved watching things like that. But I didn't grow up --- wasn't born with a camera in my hand. It came very late. And I gave myself permission to do that.

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So with the directing side of things, getting behind the camera, I just went this seems like a good idea. And I really liked it. I loved it actually. And it wasn't a chore. And at the start or throughout it, it wasn't painful. I mean, you worked hard and you thought hard, but I enjoyed all that, and I still do. So a little bit of ignorance is bliss for me. And I just went with the flow a little bit. And I learnt along the way. As any filmmaker says. They look back at their films at a certain shot or a scene and they wish they could do it again, or a performance. I got all that all the way through.

I found one thing. The way I got better was to do it again and again. And getting a camera in my hand, no matter what really. Just a little mobile phone or something. I don't know. But yeah.

Q Working on stage is very different to working on screen. Did you find that there were new techniques that you started to learn about that was helpful in your storytelling?

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Blair A little bit, yeah. I found that --- A little bit. I mean, there are things that are sort of a little bit more innate that are inside you, that subconsciously just come up with when you write and when you give yourself permission to go --- When I'm writing or when I'm --- Well, say when I'm writing for instance in a transition between a scene. Why can't I do this or why can't I do that? Or why can't I have words come up on a screen? Or why can't I just have a transition that goes from this to that just quickly. Do you know what I mean? I think they're inherent in you.

But as I've taken a few more bites of the apple, I don't know if it's a good thing or a bad thing, but I've found that I can use that to my advantage. And when I'm starting to inform myself more, and just being immersed in the world of film, watching film, watching --- And then getting a language, my own language, and not being afraid of that. Actually accepting that and saying, 'My name is Wayne Blair and yes I am a filmmaker.' Do you know what I mean? 'Hey Wayne.' You know, but I am and I'm a storyteller. And when you're an actor in Sydney and you say, yeah, yeah I act a bit. No, no. That's my profession. Saying it now seems a bit weird.

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But as I've gone along I've sort of just --- just --- It's just increased. It really has increased for me being a bit more proactive, being very proactive and finding out how I want to shoot my next film. Or how I want to tell my next story. Or how I work with the cinematographer for instance, or the production designer. And having those resonating sessions where you just talk film, and what you --- You know, 90% of it could be, you know, but 10% could be the gold that you're looking for. And that's what you'll shoot for the next six weeks or four weeks.

But anyway, I think basically yeah, that's it.

Q In terms of the process of development, you write a story, then you shoot your film and you're with the crew and then you're in the editing room. Is there any particular area that you recall where those ideas start to come in?

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Blair For me it's not one of those things where all the ideas come in the editing suite and we just go, okay let's do that, or on the set. It's a little bit of both. It's a little bit before. In pre-production and post for me. It sort of evens itself out. And when you do have in pre-production, when you do sit down with the cinematographer and say let's do this, let's do that, it's funnily enough, some of those ideas that I've had haven't been as strong as the ideas that I've had at breakfast that morning, shooting that day.

So it's a little bit 50/50 for me. It evens itself out I have to admit. But I mean, in saying that the ideas that I've had in pre and say talking to Murray or talking to Justin, or talking to the cinematographer in question, it's sort of like, the homework does pay off. So it evens it out for me I have to admit in pre-production and post.

Q How did you find going from a process which is focused on performance to having to deal with all the extra people?

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Blair I didn't mind it. I thought --- See, at the start it was --- You just have to give yourself permission to be --- You know, you have the vision. You have to be open and receptive to everyone and answer all their questions. You know, what colour shoe or what this, or hairstyle or --- you know. And you have to sort of give --- People are just doing their job and when you give people ownership of the film and you say, this is not just my story, it's about you as well. It's about us or what have you, it's great. I like it actually. I suppose coming from a sporting sort of background, having a little bit of the team. Having a little bit of a community there. That's what I enjoy the most. And when you don't

have that in key departments it just shows. And god, I'm still trying to work it out, whether to have the best people or a team of champions or a champion team. Not too sure about it yet. I'm sort of still aiming for the champion team because I enjoy having good people around I think, and listening to people. And basically it's their film as well, and if you can be a good planet and have a lot of satellites around you and listen to everyone, I think that's the key. I think that's the key for me. I enjoy it because it's good.

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And it's good when you're --- not confident, but you know, you sort of --- you just jump off a cliff and you just know that a net will appear. You know what I mean? I love that feeling where you've done your homework and all you've got to do --- Okay, all you've got to do is get on set and just pray for the best, you know. But you've really done your homework though and you can just go out on set and just be there for the moments. And when you've got your team around you and you've sort of got people that you trust. And it's a really good feeling.

Q When you've presented your films to an audience, how have you found that?

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Blair Look, it's scary. It's great though because when you know you've got something good you sort of know. You sort of know it's okay. And when you first start to make film and you've got a good film and you go yeah, and you think everyone's going to love it, but there's always some person that doesn't or some person who sees something and says, hey look out. And your ego gets affected because you think, you know. But as you go along, it's so subjective it's not funny. And you've got a good piece of theatre or film or a piece of art, not everyone's going to like it. But it will resonate. It sort of resonates with them and sometimes that's even better sometimes.

So in saying that I found the experience quite exhilarating. I love it to be honest. And it's good when people laugh and feel sad when you laugh and feel sad, not only in places like Rockhampton or Sydney, but in Berlin or Los Angeles or Cloncurry or Longreach. Do you know what I mean? It sort of has that same feeling. I think that's the best. When you sort of give it over and people can relate to it. Yeah, people can relate to it.

Q Have you taken the film around Australia?

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Blair It's been on festival circuits and things like that.

Q Have you been with it?

Blair In some places I have, yes. Some places I have. And you know, you might have 100 people watching it and it would be lovely, 'Oh thank you so much, thank you.' And then a month later you'll get an email from someone from the heart, who's a school teacher somewhere and it's affected them. I had a brother or I had a sister --- I'm not downplaying that at all. It is what it is. But yeah, you get that type of feedback. It's nice. Sort of gives you a reason to exist.

Q Going back to when you were growing up. I'm interested in the sporting connection as well.

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Blair Basically --- I found like with sport when I was growing up, especially cricket and rugby league living in Queensland. I was okay at it. I was sort of better than the average person at it, but I found as I grew up, you know, getting into my teens, it just helped me and being a young Aboriginal fella in Queensland in the '80s and having been good at something, great at something, you had a little bit of a street cred, at school. And you still got the slang terms and racist terms and you still had your fights, but you still could beat everyone at cricket or rugby league. So it was great.

And in saying that, what it did for me, it was good. But how I found out in my teens --- when I got older, there were people all around Australia that were sort of good as me or better than me. And you had to train, keep training, or do weights back in those days. Anyway, to get better you had to keep training. You just couldn't trust your skill. Do you know what I mean? So that sort of taught me a big thing, but I started getting sick of those things at the age of 16, 17, 18 when alcohol sort of came about and people were doing it socially. I liked it social. I like the fun about it. I just didn't like training. They were the things I wasn't passionate about. I started getting passionate about acting and storytelling and movies and things like that.

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So what it's sort of taught me I suppose in this sort of game is you just can't rely on --- There's a couple of points I'm trying to make I suppose. You just sort of --- You've got to keep training yourself in this game. Anyway, that's not really a point. Sorry.

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I suppose the key for me with those sports, what it taught me about was --- I don't know. It's just about having a nice little team and having, you know, you're not the centre of the universe, even though you might think you are. You're definitely not. And you sort of have

to rely on other people. And just the camaraderie-ship and just you're all aiming for a common goal and people are different. You get a couple of idiots in your team. You get a couple of good people. And you're not going to keep those people as friends for life. But I can look back on those days and they were 17, 18 years ago, like half my life ago, but I still remember them. It still puts a smile on my face. And you learn things from that. People. You're observant of people and what people are like and how people can react. And how selfish people can be. The relationships between them and their girlfriends. It's just so --- Especially in a country town. You get it all really. So it sort of helped my storytelling. Every time I get angry or sad or happy, I usually just use this one, use this one, remember this, remember this, remember how I feel and hopefully inform an actor of how they can be able to feel. Give them permission to be something.

Q Quite a lot of your work's been with kids. Is there a particular connection there?

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Blair When I was growing up I had about seven or eight mates I used to hang around. And we're still --- from the ages of nine. Because my dad was in the army we moved around a lot. So when we ended up in Rocky I was nine. And so those group of friends I had, you know. I said this --- We weren't the cool group or we weren't the sportspeople. They weren't really into sports but I sort of was. We weren't the nerds. We weren't like the skateboard group. We were like the go-cart kids. We had go-carts. We'd make go-carts and they were sort of into their scouts and knots and all that sort of stuff. I wasn't a scout either. But I went to their scout dances and met the girls or whatever, but I didn't --- I wasn't into scouts. They had the corroboree groups. Not in the Aboriginal term but in their scout world in Queensland.

Anyway but we had a good group of friends and they were a little bit of a motley crew and I really enjoyed that to be honest. And we're still friends today, even though one's a school teacher and one's on the dole, and one's in prison, or one's not working in Rockhampton. You know, we're still good mates. It's funny. So I was always interested in that sort of energy or whatever that dynamic is. And I suppose that's in my early films about friendship and mateship and where you might go. I mean I used to work Sizzler at the ages of 18, 19 and I thought I could work here forever. I remember I left Sizzler and I was thinking, is this place going to survive without me. You know what I mean? It did. It is still working. I didn't go there on the weekend but it's still going ahead. You know what I mean? Just my mentality was different. I've sort of been a late bloomer I think in my brain. Other

stuff I've been early but in my brain I've been a late bloomer, because I just think, can I do that, can I do this. And you sort of give yourself permission to be whatever, or to say yes to a lot of things, and you go shit, I can do that. I can do that. I can learn to do that better. Like and I've proven it to myself so.

So those early stories about my friends they came from a really good place I suppose. And because we moved around a lot, when I got to that place my friends became very important. And you know, sort of taught me a lot of good things. And you're generous and you're humble, and you're sort of, you know. And I found a way too. You know in that whole *Cinema Paradiso*. I remember I saw that film *Cinema Paradiso*, the dude --- the old man said go away from town and don't ever come back for 36 years. I thought, I couldn't believe that. But the dude's got a point. You've actually got to --- There's a time when you have to break away from that crap. You have to break away and live and be a man and go out and --- not sow your seeds but sow your seeds in the world. You have to be whoever you are. And you have to go, yeah. You can't keep on going back to home. Oh this is my home and this is my room and I've got my ornaments and there's my cricket trophy for Under 12s. I've given all that up. Do you know what I mean? I've sort of finally moved on – at the age of 37, with the little cricket trophy in my pocket. I don't.

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But you have to sort of break away from all that. So at the start I was sort of there, but now I've sort of done all that. And we're still good friends. You accept it and you just --- you know, life's moving on now I just have to admit. Just finally.

Q Those connections can go for years?

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Blair I don't know. It's sort of an evolving world for me. I'll work it out. That's what it is now. Tomorrow it might be different. No, it won't be. It will be the same, but organically different.

Q How do you like working with the younger actors?

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Blair I enjoy it. I think a lot of those young actors, I've sort of known and I know their families and I've had a connection with --- Some of them I don't know at all, like for instance (UNCLEAR 23:59) from *Double Trouble*, I had no idea about. So you have to sort of, obviously get a whole sense of trust about very quickly. And sometimes with a lot of that stuff you just don't push it. You just let it happen. You still be a

nice person and you sort of be a great example to someone. But you just have to trust it I suppose.

So in doing that it's just a little bit of everything. You sort of learn on the spot and you be generous and you be just, you know, you do unto others. And it sort of comes back to you a little bit. So, fluke? Dunno.

Q Do you think they look up to you and see what you're doing?

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Blair I think there's a sense of that of course. Yeah, definitely. And I think there's a little bit of my old man as well, you know, the way --- And with those kids, sometimes you've just got to tell 'em. 'Don't do that, or don't do that around me.' And sometimes you are the little bit of the teacher or the parent on set. But then you can just use that to your advantage and then you can just be their friend. And it's just like anyone in life. You're not lying to people but it's a hard life, you know.

But anyway it's --- You become sort of the adult and then you become their friend on the spin of a dime. If you can do that I think you're fine because you just need to do that with young people. Then they know where they stand because if you don't tell them they'll never know. So you have to have some little bit of authority but funnily enough if you get that at the start or the end, it comes up now and again, but primarily if you can be their friend --- You know, as you do with the cinematographer or the production designer. You can do it with someone who's nine. You say, this is your story as well. Their eyes light up.

Q I do think in film they're like sponges. They see all these people, these adults on the set working and doing stuff, and the kids think this might be something for me. The kids seem very relaxed and obviously that's a credit to what you're doing. Is it a challenge working with kids for the first time?

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Blair A little bit. It's sort of quite similar when you get a really good actor -- - I've found good actors, they're like little kids. They're sort of sponges as well. And when they're not being overly --- what's that word? When they're not being overly neurotic it's good. When they're balanced, but they still listen to you. They want to be the best they can be. I like that. And then you have --- there's a time when you just have to just shut up for a day or two and just let them find it themselves. It's a little bit of both. And I found as the director or the person that sort of

guides everyone that way, if you can do that really good then you've done --- 95% you've done your job.

So I found basically with those kids, the young people I've worked with, and the good actors, they're sort of quite similar to be honest. And some of them have got experience in front of the camera and some of them don't. But there's similar traits for both.

Q Is there any particular collaborations you've had along the way with people who have endured for quite a long time?

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Blair I think a couple. I think definitely Kylie Du Fresne, the producer. I mean I think when we did *Black Talk*, Kylie didn't actually know I had the money for *Black Talk* from the Australian Film Commission at the time. We had the money, and we met at a coffee shop in Newtown. And I wasn't pitching this thing to her. I had the money and I wanted a producer. And we sort of started out there. And we sort of started out together. She had a bit more experience than I did, heaps more actually. So we formed a friendship and she's great with story with me. So that's been great.

And Murray Lui, the cinematographer, we've done two or three films together now and he just grew up the road in Townsville, so I think that collaboration was successful because we're nearly the same age and had the same sort of --- liked the same movies. And got each other and laughed at the same jokes quite heavily.

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So yeah, those two people have been great for me. And there's been others who have come in and out and I'm sure there will be new ones to form. So yeah, primarily those two thus far.

Q In theatre?

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Blair In theatre? Neil Armfield is great. He's become a good friend. And Wesley Enoch and Stephen Page. Just the good directors I dare say. And yeah. There's so many actually. I've been very fortunate.

Q Do you talk much about your work together?

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Blair A little bit. I mean it's a really weird place this place called Sydney. I don't know. No, not --- You do and you don't. It's sort of --- I talk to other people to be honest about where your career path is going. I suppose to your agent and to your parents, and to your girlfriend. I'm not too sure. But other than that. No, to be honest, not really. You

don't sit down and say, 'Hey what do you think about...' Yeah, you do. I reckon we could do it more. I reckon we could do it more, but do we bore each other, or do you get jealous. That's another thing I've found, you know. Like I've found the good people are quite generous, and the not so good people are just --- They're the ones that climb up the ladders and push the ladders away, whereas the people who climb up and bring you with them, or you bring other people with you. Or not so much a sense of climbing up a ladder, but you're just getting better within yourself. They're the people that you sort of hang around.

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And it's busy in Sydney. It's busy. People are busy I have to admit. And they're always doing 10 things at once to sort of pay the rent or mortgage in this place because fruit and vegies are so expensive – especially in Bellevue Hill. That's where I moved to. But yeah, the DVDs are cheap.

Q You've moved across to television and started to work with other people's scripts. How's that been?

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Blair It was scary at the start, but it's been great. It's been the best thing for me, to work on other people's stories, and to work with different actors and very experienced actors. I found it great. It's been a sort of revelation. I've enjoyed it immensely. I never thought I could do it but yeah, four years ago. But love it now.

Q In terms of your career if you like, does that hold anything in terms of evolving as a director?

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Blair Yeah it does. As I said, you keep shooting film or tell a story or shoot a shot or a scene and you edit it, it just makes you better. You learn on the job I reckon. And then you sort of have a breather and then you learn again. So that's been great, to continually do it. And also I dare say, just to give you more confidence and just to work on another person's story is great, and seeing what they have and a new interpretation of something.

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And fortunately, touch wood I've had a good feeling about all that sort of stuff. Things have worked to my favour. So I cannot complain. So it's been great thus far.

Q I'm interested in your thoughts on a work ethic.

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Blair Not really. It was a little bit --- is the word spasmodic? But it was a bit all over the shop. Not all over the shop in a bad way but in a good way

because I didn't know. I did a Bachelor of Business when I finished school because I just wanted to stay in Rockhampton and be with the girlfriend at the time. So that was it really. But I was still okay at business. I wasn't the best. I just got sounds. I did the degree. But it wasn't something I wanted to do. That's the Sagittarian in me maybe. I just did it and didn't know what else to do at the time. But I was okay at it all and it just came from the blue. The acting, it just came out of nowhere. It didn't just come out of nowhere. It was building. And then I thought, shivers, I don't want to be 30 going I should have done this or I should have done that. I didn't want to have any regrets. So I just went, you know what, if the time is right, the time is now. And I think I was 21, 22, 23. And I went and went for it. And I went for it in a big way. And when I got to that course at QT in Brisbane, when I started the acting course, I went there on my first day, on a Monday. I had no idea what I was getting myself in for. You know, ignorance is bliss. What do they say? That saying? That artists are really good at their birth and their death and in the middle it's all ego. So they're just trying to please everyone else or the papers or the film festival.

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So at the start or whatever, I got there at about eight o'clock. It was raining. I was driving from Bracken Ridge to Kelvin Grove which is like a 45 minute drive in Brisbane. Rain. Weather. Peak hour traffic. Country boy. I got to it and there were about 300 young people on the course, for the first lecture on drama. And I was like, oh my god, people are giving themselves permission to do what they want in life. And I was late. And I walked in there all wet and stuff. Everyone was laughing. Not laughing, but you're just in the middle of everything. And it started from there. And I remember finishing that lecture and I was all by myself and I walked to the next lecture room because then we were getting into our classes and two of the guys in my class went, 'Hey Wayne, how are you?' Like, I'm an actor like you. I'm in your acting course. I went, wow, you know. And they accepted you.

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So I found it very --- this whole performing arts and TV, film, theatre. It's quite a sort of good club as well because people are really generous. And when people are, you know you're in the same boat. They're sort of --- They do want to help you. And it does bring a smile to my face seeing those people out there. And doing the same thing for other younger people or older people who are coming through. But yeah, don't know what that question was Ray.

Q: Was there a moment when it went from I'm just playing around to something more?

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Blair Yeah, that's evolving. I think that's definitely evolving. And you sort of --- as I said, 'My name's Wayne Blair and I'm a...' That's what they do in those meetings. 'I'm an alcoholic.' 'I'm a gambler.' 'I'm a sex addict,' or whatever. That's why they do that. You have to say who you are in life sometimes I think. You have to accept who you are. And so yeah, it's --- It's not hard. It's --- Why am I finding it hard to speak about this. I think it is what it is. I think --- I go home to the country a lot and you get a lot of people who --- a mate who's a carpenter and they work with their hands like 24/7 and they've got three houses. And they go to you and they go, 'What do you do, mate? Munzie knows you. So what are you up to?' 'Oh yeah, I'm a writer/director/actor in Sydney.' 'Oh yeah, what have you been on?' You know what I mean. I get the same old thing. But I suppose that's the cross I have to bear. And it's just in Rocky anyway.

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Anyway, the mind boggles, Ray. To be or not to be.

Q I know what you mean. In your Sydney group it's all the same language. Do you still play any sport?

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Blair Not really. No, not at all. I used to play touch, but it's sort of --- no. To be honest, no. I just don't find the time.

Q You used to play touch?

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Blair Touch at Queen's Park and Bondi Junction. Just like mixed touch. And that was great. But I just haven't found the time. You're not in town long enough to partake in a team sport over a summer or winter. So instead of pulling out I just sort of don't do it. But I still exercise which is great. But yeah, try and exercise my brain. Read more books.

Q Just explain where we are?

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Blair We are in Surry Hills in Sydney, New South Wales, Australia. This is the Belvoir Street Theatre. Home of Company B theatre company. And I'm an associate artist here. (There's Jane driving through. It's really good when the producer's driving through. I like that.)

Yeah, so basically this is where I --- one of my jobs.

Q When did that happen and do you want to take us in?

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Blair Yeah, come. I started out acting. And I've been fortunate enough to work at Company B a number of times. And in the last two or three

years I've done --- They have two theatres here, an upstairs theatre, 320 people, and a downstairs theatre of 83. So I've directed, as a director, a couple of downstairs shows. And fortunately being an associate artist I've just been in the right place at the right time, and have been able to direct a show upstairs now which is called *Ruben Guthrie*. What are we now, June 2009. So that's where it's at, at this point in time. And as an associate artist I'm must affiliated with the company. I'm not too sure what it does. I know what I do. I give feedback and that sort of stuff and give my artistic knowledge to other people.

Q So you're always working with other people?

00:39:26

Blair Definitely. You're always collaborating with writers or actors or other directors. That's just part of the game I suppose, and whether it be in theatre, where we are now, film or TV. I mean this is where the show is at the moment and this is where I spend most of my time really, in Sydney which is great. It's great to be affiliated with this sort of company. It's the best really. I take it for granted a little bit. But yeah, it has a good feel and it has a bit of a family, a bit of a community around the place. It's not perfect but show me a family that is perfect. But it definitely is the best.

Q Do you have anything you do when you're not involved in film?

00:40:15

Blair Do I do anything? I have to admit I like to go home a lot. When I'm not working I like to see the oldies or the cousins. That's my pastime, is family I suppose. And just keeping fit. I'm not a big gym junkie but I sort of like to sort of breathe a little bit of good air and starting to get a little bit more skinny.

Yeah, family's my pastime really because you get busy. I'm sort of paying the bills in this place and I can't wait for the day when I can be --- all that pressure's off a little bit, you know. It's not really pressure. I really enjoy it. I feel very fortunate, to be honest. And now in these interviews I just go, okay, this is where I have an opportunity to work. And other people look at it and go, oh my god. And I think sometimes you've got to sit outside yourself and say, good work or something, or just say yeah, job well done, and then get to the next one.

00:41:32

But this is Company B. This is Belvoir Street Theatre. And fortunately I do have a place here as well as the other things I do.

Q And how's the work/life balance?

00:41:43

Blair I'm still working that out, Ray, to be honest. It's hard. I find it hard. I don't have any family. Have the girlfriend, but it's hard because --- It's not hard at all. It's just the way life is. Life's not meant to be easy, blah blah. But it is what it is. I find it --- acting, theatre, directing, is very taxing and you have to have good time management skills. You have to be good on yourself. Stop the partying and stop all that sort of stuff. And sometimes the best business deals are done on the 19th hole. Is that right? So you have to find a good balance I've found. And I've lived in Sydney for the last 10 years and I've begun to work that out in the last two or three. But it's great for me actually. That's not going to say I'm going to join a cult or become a Buddhist or, you know, stop drinking or whatever. I have stopped drinking now for a little while. But you sort of move and shift and you sort of just roll with the punches a little bit. And I've learnt to be better on myself.

00:42:54

If you stay healthy and have a bit of a healthy body and a healthy mind, the rest follows. It becomes easier. You're sort of lighter on your feet. And you're sort of lighter for the decisions you have to make within your work whether it be introducing a new character or a script or a play or a theatre or being at rehearsals at 10 am in the morning, and being ready to go and just being --- look like you've done your homework. So still trying to work it out. Very very hard answer. And it's an organic one.

Q If you were that age again in your early 20s when you were starting out on this, or even younger, would you do things differently?

00:43:35

Blair Not really. I think I'd listen more. I try to listen and try to take things in. I'd read a few more books. And I'd watch a bit more European cinema. That's about it.

Q Any sort of advice for younger players coming in?

00:43:58

Blair Follow your instincts I reckon, and you've really got to want to do it. And if you really know you want to do it, don't be lazy. Don't be lazy, but you have to find the right balance with everything I think. It's in moderation. But once you get it --- I love it. I have to admit. I just absolutely love it. I'm very fortunate to do something I really love. And I've sort of got food on the table so I can't complain. And I just think it's the best thing I could have done. I just followed it. And it's fortunate that I'm around good people. When you're around good people and you find the generous ones and the more humble ones that are just --- And the word is ambitious. They just do what they want to

do. And they give themselves permission to be whoever they want. That's infectious. And if you can stay around people like that, it's part of the process as well. And you learn from them and give back to them as well, and then bring new people in. I think that's the key.

00:45:31

Blair Here we go. This is the downstairs theatre. I don't think we can go inside. This is Russell Crowe. This is a big acknowledgement here from Russell. The annual bursary and all the seats. He paid for that. So that's good. And he can be in one of my films for that. This is just the downstairs, the foyer. This is the box office just there. We walk down the front steps. They've changed this in the last year and a half, two years. So in ten years it will be changed again. There's the bar. The Belvoir Theatre Street bar. Today they're doing auditions in the theatre. Neil Armfield and John Woodland are doing their auditions for the next play, *Gethsemane* by David Hare. So we can't go into the theatre. We could duck our heads in. No, we'd better not. That would be pretty bad. But this is the walkway up to the theatre. This is the people in the show at the moment. So this might be good to have a look. These are the cast members. And there's another couple of walkways up to the main theatre which seats 320. But all these posters around these walls are of past and previous shows. A show written by Steve Martin. There's Angie Millikin over there. William Yang. South African show, *Like Doves We Rise*.

Q Is there any particular personality traits that make you good at what you do?

00:47:06

Blair I don't know. You're just a good listener. And you're a good sponge as well I dare say. But then you just have to have the right nous. You have to guide people and say, people have their opinions and then you just have to say, okay. I've listened, now this is the way we're all going to do it. This is what we're all going to do today. We're all going to do it this way. But you take everything on board and then you give ownership over to people and then guide them through.

END OF TRANSCRIPT