Cinema: An invention without a future?

The career prospects for first-time feature film directors in the Australian Film Industry

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CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

This thesis is the result of a research candidature conducted as part of a Masters degree. I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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### Abbreviations and Acronyms

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<tr>
<td>10BA</td>
<td>Tax incentive scheme for film production</td>
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<tr>
<td>ABC</td>
<td>Australian Broadcasting Corporation (formerly Commission)</td>
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<td>ABS</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
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<td>ADG</td>
<td>Australian Directors Guild</td>
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<td>AFC</td>
<td>Australian Film Commission</td>
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<td>AFDC</td>
<td>Australian Film Development Corporation</td>
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<td>AFTRS</td>
<td>Australian Film, Television and Radio School</td>
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<td>AFI</td>
<td>Australian Film Institute</td>
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<tr>
<td>AQF</td>
<td>Australian Qualifications Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARTS</td>
<td>Office for the Arts in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet</td>
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<tr>
<td>ATO</td>
<td>Australian Taxation Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATSIC</td>
<td>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCITA</td>
<td>Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (Australian Commonwealth)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCMS</td>
<td>Department of Culture, Media and Sport (UK)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFTF</td>
<td>Experimental Film and Television Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FFC</td>
<td>Australian Film Finance Corporation</td>
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<td>FLICs</td>
<td>Film Licensed Investment Companies scheme</td>
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<tr>
<td>IAC</td>
<td>Industries Assistance Commission (now Productivity Commission)</td>
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<td>ICCPR</td>
<td>International Conference on Cultural Policy Research</td>
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<td>IMDb</td>
<td>Internet Movie Data base</td>
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<tr>
<td>NIDA</td>
<td>National Institute of Dramatic Art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>OzCo</td>
<td>Australia Council for the Arts</td>
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<tr>
<td>SBS</td>
<td>Special Broadcasting Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPSS</td>
<td>Statistical Package for the Social Sciences</td>
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Abstract

The initiative for this research project first emerged from a set of statistics, which appeared on the Screen Australia website in 2011 with no accompanying explanation. Over a thirty-year timeframe, the figures showed that almost 66% of feature film directors make only one feature film. The question of how feature film directors build a sustainable career within this sector formed the foundation of this study.

This research project involved a series of qualitative case studies, which focused on trying to reach an understanding of what constitutes the 'essentials' of a director's career.

An online survey was used to capture and measure some quantifiable data: Gender; educational level and duration; type of education; preference for course content; and professional experience were some of the targeted data categories.

Drawing on concepts from critical theory, political economy, education, and filmmaking disciplines the study examines the way that workers make a career in a precarious and uncertain industry.

The results show that prospective feature film directors start out with a high degree of optimism and are adept at positioning themselves through a range of strategies which ensures that they can make a living by utilising their knowledge of the ways in which the entire film and television sector operates.

The study concludes that the primary barrier to an individual career and an extensive body of work seems to be due chiefly to the restrictions imposed on production levels by government policy settings and general economic volatility.