

THE CROSSING

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SYDNEY: 53-55 BRISBANE ST SURRY HILLS NSW 2010 AUSTRALIA TEL: (61) 2 8217 2000 FAX: (61) 2 8217 2035
UK: 22 NEWMAN STREET LONDON W1T 1PH UK TEL: (44) 20 7636 9613 FAX: (44) 20 7636 9614

THE CROSSING

SYNOPSIS

Sam arrives in his home town after 18 months away, hopeful that Meg, the girlfriend he abandoned, will go back with him to the city. His return brings the outside world into the parochial confines of the town, provoking mixed reactions which fuel conflict.

Meg, heartbroken when Sam left her, has begun an affair with Sam's friend Johnny. On the eve of Sam's arrival, Johnny asks Meg to marry him. The marriage proposal, along with Sam's unexpected return, forces Meg to choose not only between the two men but also the type of life she wants.

The conflicting loyalties and emotions generated by the triangle provide the focus for an array of inter-related characters enmeshed in the life of this country town. There is a feeling of impending tragedy as night falls and Johnny becomes increasingly desperate.

Unaware that Sam has decided to return to the city alone, a drunken Johnny with Meg beside him, races away from the Saturday night dance with Sam in pursuit. The two cars hurtle down the highway towards the railway crossing on a collision course with a train

THE CROSSING

PRODUCTION CREDITS

DIRECTOR	George Ogilvie
PRODUCER	Sue Seary
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS	Al Clark Philip Gerlach
WRITER	Ranald Allan
ASSOCIATE PRODUCER	Jenny Day
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY	Jeff Darling
PRODUCTION DESIGNER	Igor Nay
EDITOR	Henry Dangar
MUSIC	Martin Armiger
COSTUME DESIGNER	Katie Pye
CASTING	Faith Martin & Associates
FIRST ASSISTANT DIRECTOR	Chris Webb
SOUND RECORDIST	David Lee
CONTINUITY	Jo Weeks
PUBLICITY	Catherine Lavelle Shelley Neller Annie Wright
STILLS PHOTOGRAPHER	Jim Townley

THE CROSSING

PRODUCTION NOTES

When producer Sue Seear decided to make **THE CROSSING** she knew that because the cast would be young and inexperienced, the director's input would be crucial and that it would take "extreme care and talent to realise the project to its full potential".

THE CROSSING needed a special director, one who could give it the pace and energy it needed," Seear says. In the meantime she worked with screenwriter Randal Allan, making substantial changes to his script.

When George Ogilvie agreed to direct the film the script underwent further streamlining. Meanwhile, Seear got the backing of the Beyond International Group for the film and through them, funding from the Australian Film Finance Corporation.

"I was careful not to film too soon, but to let it take time to develop. We all worked as a cohesive team, with more than the usual input from the writer. Fortunately, this was one of those productions on which all of the key people clicked. We all had the same vision of **THE CROSSING** from the start."

The next step was location hunting. Seear and Ogilvie set off from Sydney into the New South Wales countryside, driving eight hours a day, zigzagging their way across a diverse range of landscapes, following the railway lines and rivers. They were looking for a township of 3000 - 4000 people.

Four days later they knew Junee, 500 kms south west of Sydney, was the best choice for the town scenes. Seear explains: "Junee won because of the layout of the town, its architecture and general ambience. We knew we could visually enhance the basic look of the town. Also, it was important that the main highway didn't run through the town we chose or that the streets were not too wide, so we could capture the roadside buildings in the Anzac Day march scene. Junee was perfect in this respect."

The mid-point between Melbourne and Sydney, Junee has been a railway town for more than 100 years. Much repair work on interstate freight trains is done there.

North west of Junee is the small grazing and crop district of Condobolin (pop 3600). The geographic centre of the state of New South Wales, its topography is flat and open. "We chose the area on the outskirts of Condobolin for some specific scenes, notably the car chases, the train stunt and Meg's farm, because it has a broad, endless horizon, so it gives an impression of vastness and nothingness."

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THE CROSSING PRODUCTION NOTES CONTINUED

With locations decided, Seeary then cast "a very broad net" for the right actors. "Due to the ensemble nature of the young cast, we chose to workshop dozens of actors and to select from that group," she says. "It's a style George Ogilvie enjoys working in because of his strong theatre background. Since the young actors had no major credits, or even showreels, this was an efficient way to see them all together. It also enabled us to see how they looked in combination."

As for the subject matter, Seeary says she was able to identify strongly with the leading characters, Meg and Sam. "The passion and intense emotions were really exciting to me. I wanted to explore the first love experience on screen as this is often shrugged off by people as insignificant, 'puppy' love. But it's a very powerful and beautiful experience. Some films have taken a sentimental approach to this issue, but what I liked about **THE CROSSING** is that it exposes the raw emotion involved in young love."

A lot of effort went into recreating the era - the mid 1960s - and the cars contributed in no small way to the authenticity in this area. The cars became "the bane of my life" jokes Seeary, who with the help of production designer, Igor Nay, a specially hired "car wrangler" and various local car clubs, scoured Australia from north to south to obtain the required vehicles. Once procured, a number of the vehicles had to be fixed mechanically and aesthetically.

"Cars are a very big part of a young man's life," Seeary explains. "This is even more pronounced in the isolated countryside where cars are the only available form of personal mobility."

The action component of the film was carefully mapped out - "like a military operation" - by the director, cinematographer and stunt co-ordinator.

Seeary notes: "Some of the shots were extremely risky. From a cost and logistics point of view, they were a dangerous proposition. And because the stunts happen so fast, you need a lot of cameras to cover them. You only get one chance."

There was also a great deal of careful deliberation over the appropriate music. "**THE CROSSING** has many opportunities for great music and we knew that, chosen correctly, the music would give a special added dimension to the film. With Martin Armiger, we selected a number of early-to-mid 60s songs which suit the film, giving tone to the storyline, without necessarily commenting on the image."

In Junee, filming went smoothly, with fine weather and exceptional co-operation from the town authorities and citizens. In Condobolin, the production team sweltered in temperatures of up to 44 degrees C, but otherwise shooting was fortunately without incident.

THE CROSSING

THE SOUNDTRACK

THE CROSSING soundtrack album, to be released in Australia on Regular Records, features some of today's top artists, both Australian and international.

SONG VERSION	ORIGINAL VERSION	NEW
Betty Wrong		David Bowie/Tin Machine
King Of The Road	Roger Miller	The Proclaimers
She's Not There	The Zombies	Crowded House
Nature Boy	Nat King Cole	Kate Ceberano
For Your Love	The Yardbirds	Peter Blakeley
My Boyfriend's Back	The Angels	The Chantoozies
Nowhere To Run Cummings	Martha & The Vandellas	Stephen
Love Letters	Ketty Lester	Jenni Forbes
Let's Dance	Chris Montez	The
Cockroaches		
Here Comes That Feeling Cockroaches	Brenda Lee	The

All of the songs - except for a new recording by David Bowie and Tin Machine - are cover versions of popular songs of the early and mid 1960s

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CREW BIOGRAPHIES

GEORGE OGILVIE

DIRECTOR

By coincidence, George Ogilvie had read and very much liked Randal Allan's script of **THE CROSSING** some years before Sue Seary optioned it.

At that time, another independent producer was considering producing it. His plans did not include Ogilvie as director, so being a philosophical man, Ogilvie got on with his own prolific and acclaimed career in directing Australian theatre and films.

It was a serendipity then that the Beyond International Group should ask him to direct **THE CROSSING** several years later.

Ogilvie is one of Australia's leading directors. He returned from Europe in 1965 to become associate director of the newly-founded Melbourne Theatre Company. From 1972-76, he was artistic director of the South Australian Theatre Company. Subsequently, as a freelance director, Ogilvie has directed theatre, opera and ballet to general acclaim.

In 1982, he directed an episode of Kennedy Miller's mini-series *The Dismissal*. In 1983 he directed episodes of the same company's *Bodyline* mini-series, and in 1985 he co-directed *Mad Max, Beyond Thunderdome*. He was nominated in 1986 for the Australian Film Institute's Best Director award for *Short Changed*. He directed another feature film *The Place At The Coast* in 1986 and then the mini-series *The Shiralee*, the highest rated mini-series on Australian television in 1988.

Ogilvie says of **THE CROSSING**: "It is a poem in image and sound and not much dialogue ... to me, this film is pure cinema ... and behind it is a ritual of life and death, a surreal quality."

One of the challenges for him as a director is that unlike most films which tell a story through one person's point of view, **THE CROSSING** has three points of view - those of the three principal characters.

"They're all equally important, so we had to carefully and gently draw the audience through their three lives and families, sustaining the momentum, but still retaining balance," Ogilvie says.

In casting, Ogilvie, whose work with actors is legendary, says: "I needed not only the right people for the roles, but people who could support each other throughout the shoot." His choices were vindicated by the performances delivered by Crowe, Mammone and Spencer and by their obvious fondness and camaraderie during production.

THE CROSSING CREW BIOGRAPHIES CONTINUED - GEORGE OGILVIE

With his strong theatre background, Ogilvie finds workshopping with actors the best method for casting. "If you spend 15 minutes with someone you can get only a superficial idea of what they can do. So a whole day of workshopping relaxes them, and finally you see what they can do."

A former actor himself, Ogilvie is particularly sensitive to actors' needs; "It seems to me the essential quality that an actor requires is the ability to be spontaneous. It's a very difficult ability in terms of art. When you are on a set and you have to wait 12 hours to be spontaneous about a scene that you've gone over and over and rehearsed, then it's a very difficult thing to do. Very difficult."

Working with young actors, the main problem which presented itself was not directing them in how to act or interpret character, he says but in helping them to understand what he calls "the nature of filmmaking." "For example, Robert Mammone (Sam), who has done a lot of drag car racing, was raring to go when we filmed him on the open road. He delivers beautifully in characterisation and in the style of his driving. Even the stuntmen were impressed. Then we had to encourage him to transport his acting into a situation of typical film illusion. His car was being towed on a low trailer surrounded by cameras and lights and he had to merely pretend to be driving, yet still look intensely concentrated."

Because of the 24-hour time span of the film, the actors had "an intense seven weeks," says Ogilvie. "It was fairly high-powered for all of them as the story hurls itself towards the final tragedy. Every moment was vital, critical and intense."

"I think this film is about how many people forget that love is the only important thing. Without it life becomes a compromise. To me the period is the least important thing, except in so much as it meant we could reveal the story without the influences of the modern world. So you get a certain innocence and love exposed. Today, people manage to hide their need for love very well."

THE CROSSING

CREW BIOGRAPHIES

SUE SEEARY

PRODUCER

When Sue Seeary first read **THE CROSSING**, she knew she wanted to make the film because "it was the first script in a long time that moved me."

She also knew that since the casting would involve young and relatively inexperienced actors, it would take "extreme care and an exceptionally talented production team" to realise her ambition to make the film. Oh, and major finance, too.

At 27, Seeary had several factors strongly in her favour - her clear vision of how the film could be, her commitment to the project, calm determination to make it happen and a decade's worth of broad-based experience and valuable contacts in the film, television and recording industries.

Seeary has an extensive background knowledge in the legal and business sectors of the entertainment industry having managed a management consulting firm, both of which specialised in the entertainment industry.

"Then I decided to freelance and found myself getting involved in a variety of documentary films. I became fascinated with filmmaking" she says.

Through freelancing, she developed multi-faceted skills and a unique understanding of the various aspects associated with filmmaking. She has attended the major television, film and music markets and festivals around the world.

Her credits as production manager, and other related productions positions, include the feature films *Afraid To Dance*, *Backlash* and *Dear Cardholder*, the highly successful television series *Beyond 2000* and a documentary series for the production company Garner MacLennan.

In 1987, after reading the first draft of **THE CROSSING**, Seeary took out an option on the property and set about getting the finance to make it. She took it to the Beyond International Group, which decided to back it in their feature filmmaking debut.

Then she and Beyond production chief Al Clark approached leading director George Ogilvie (who had just completed working with Bryan Brown on the *The Shiralee*, which became the highest rated mini-series on Australian television in 1988). Ogilvie, as fate would have it, had read the script some years before and liked it.

With these key elements in place, Seeary was ready to proceed with casting, hiring of key crew members, location scouting and the myriad details that constitute the art of filmmaking.

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CREW BIOGRAPHIES

AL CLARK

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

As head of film production and development with the Beyond International Group, Al Clark reads hundreds of scripts each year.

Asked why **THE CROSSING** impressed him sufficiently to support its progress through several drafts and into production as BIG's first feature film, he replies: "Its strength and simplicity. It is not reliant on embroidery in the form of stars or obvious hooks. There is something elemental about it that can be understood by anyone anywhere. Although its setting has some impact on the kind of movie it is, it could be set in a rural town anywhere. And what's at stake emotionally in the story is what goes on every day, everywhere.

Clark makes the point that film is "a combustible medium where the desire to make a movie is so strong that people often do so prematurely." This tendency, he says, had been exaggerated in the Australian industry in recent years by the 10BA tax legislation which promoted the dominance of financiers and brokers rather than that of creative producers, directors and writers.

"I was determined that **THE CROSSING** should not be one of those underprepared films," he adds. "The film was only worth making when the right team of people came together. The first turning point for us was when George (Ogilvie) said he'd direct it."

THE CROSSING was a harmonious production from the outset, according to Clark. "In its making there has been a lot of quiet electricity, and a lot of understanding and accord among the key creative team".

There was also a good dose of serendipity. When filming had to be delayed for a few months because Ogilvie, whom Clark describes as "the most responsible director I've ever known", had to fulfil unexpected personal commitments, some distinctly positive benefits occurred as a result of the postponement. They avoided the flooding which took place in and around the proposed country locations: there was extra time to integrate the locations more comfortably into the script: and the newly-hired director of photography (Jeff Darling) and production designer (Igor Nay) had time to contribute some valuable ideas about the way the film was to be shot.

After **THE CROSSING** received funding from the Australian Film Finance Corporation, BIG decided not to presell the film abroad because, as Clark says: "We knew that its value was going to be much greater as a finished picture. Also, a cast of unknowns is not a good departure point towards a

important for an Australian distributor to help make the film known and to build a sense of anticipation about it."

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THE CROSSING CREW BIOGRAPHIES CONTINUED - AL CLARK

Clark strongly believes that there "is no need to have a gulf between the artistic and the commercial," and that **THE CROSSING**, while set in Australia, "has a universal perspective, and an international attitude."

He began his career in 1971 as a journalist in London. He joined the Virgin Group in 1974, and during his 13-year association with the company, held positions as director of publicity, creative director, head of film production and director of film acquisition. His British film credits as co-producer are *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Aria* and as executive producer *Secret Places*, *Absolute Beginners*, *Captive* and *Gothic*.

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CREW BIOGRAPHIES

PHILIP GERLACH **PRODUCER**

EXECUTIVE

In his roles as executive producer and principal of the Beyond International Group, Philip Gerlach has controlled the production of hundreds of hours of entertainment product including feature films, television series, children's programs, dramas, mini-series, telemovies and television specials.

He says he agreed to back **THE CROSSING** as his company's first feature film because, like producer Sue Seary, he has "a passion for this style of teenage film". A great fan of such successful films in this genre as *The Breakfast Club*, *Pretty in Pink* and *Some Kind of Wonderful*, Gerlach thought on first reading of **THE CROSSING** that "it stood up as a story applicable to any country".

"The classic story of someone leaving a small town to move to a big city and then returning to find their hometown has grown even smaller than when they left is a universally common experience," says Gerlach.

"The principal characters in **THE CROSSING** are all aged between 18 and 21, the period when people go through the most rapid transition in their lives. This opens up many dramatic possibilities."

Since the film would not have a cast of stars, it needed strong action, good structure and it lent itself to the inclusion of an innovative soundtrack. The soundtrack aspect particularly appealed to Gerlach because of his strong background in the Australian music industry.

"**THE CROSSING** was a film we could make with no apologies and no compromises," says Gerlach. He explains: "We could afford to fund and control its worldwide distribution rights. We didn't have to sell our souls to make it and this fitted in well with the Beyond Group's corporate policy. It was adequately budgeted: we didn't have to cut corners anywhere, so we really feel we've given the film its best shot"

Gerlach also thought **THE CROSSING** would work in every market in the world because of its straight forward subject matter - "love, passion and youth."

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CREW BIOGRAPHIES

RANALD ALLAN **SCREENWRITER**

THE CROSSING was the first screenplay Ranald Allan ever wrote and its slow gestation from original concept into final draft and filming symbolically reassured him that "things do have their own perfect timing".

Allan was living with tribal aborigines in Arnhem Land (in the Northern Territory of Australia) when he wrote **THE CROSSING**, having borrowed a screenplay from a friend to learn the writing format.

"**THE CROSSING** deals to a large extent with my youth and with growing up in a country town," he admits. "Ironically, the film was finally shot not very far away from Parkes (in central New South Wales) where I spent my adolescence. The film also dealt with unresolved things in my life to do with love triangles and first love."

Setting the story within a 24-hour time-span evolved from his growing knowledge of aboriginal lore and the importance and significance it places, in spiritual terms, on the different times of the day. "The most extreme and emotionally vulnerable times, according to the aborigines, are dawn and sunset," Allan says. Hence, the story opens before dawn and reaches its climax soon after sunset.

Allan had met director George Ogilvie once before while working as a script editor on the feature *Short Changed* and had noted then "an electricity, an exceptional exchange of energy." Allan says both he and Ogilvie have a strong sense of ritual and this is brought out in **THE CROSSING**.

"Anzac Day within the Australian culture is one of the few ritual days we have not misappropriated or commercialised. The key thing is it's a memory of death and sacrifice." The notion of sacrifice is echoed in the final drag scene between Sam and Johnny at the level crossing. Allan explains: "In the boredom of the country, young men frequently had drag races and some got killed - sacrificed, cut down in the prime of life - spectacularly, especially at level crossings. So there was a link between the Anzac Day march and the final drag race."

For a writer, the wonderful thing about growing up in a country town, according to Allan, is "the opportunity to see the world in microcosm. If you live in a certain suburb in a city, people are generally from the same background, lifestyle and socio-economic group. But in the country, you meet everyone from hillbillies to the landed gentry and you see a rawness of life that a lot of city people are protected from."

THE CROSSING CREW BIOGRAPHIES CONTINUED - RANALD ALLAN

Working on the script through rehearsals and pre-production was "a very dynamic process", says Allan who greatly enjoys the collaborative nature of filmmaking. "For me a script is a starting point. **THE CROSSING** underwent enormous development during rehearsal. When I work with George, solutions come to me easily. It was really exciting, too, to be able to trust such a talented team, to see them not only understand what I was trying to say, but also to add to it and extend it."

Allan showed writing talent while still a young schoolboy, but teachers constantly expressed their frustration that he wasn't realising his potential. He says he was too busy being a rebel. While at university, he won first and second prizes in a writing competition and these were later published in a literary journal which made him realise he could be a writer if he tried. But he was too busy skipping classes, avoiding study and going to movies - 240 of them in one year. He did not aspire to be a screenwriter then. But, after many different travels and experiences, Allan began to write seriously. In 1989 his autobiographical account, *Tennis With Jack At Warren's* was published by Allen and Unwin.

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CREW BIOGRAPHIES

JEFF DARLING **PHOTOGRAPHY**

DIRECTOR OF

In **THE CROSSING** Jeff Darling saw a chance to make "something timeless and highly atmospheric".

Darling, whose career in recent years has deliberately straddled commercial and dramatic cinematography, says that scripts can be interpreted in many different ways, but for him, time was the most influential factor in his photographic approach to **THE CROSSING**.

The film's 24-hour span prompted Darling to emphasize the theme of time through repeated observational images, with "light, shade and colour progressing through the hours and emotional upheavals of the day".

"Showing time passing heightens suspense and gives a hint to the audience that something else is about to happen," Jeff says, adding: "I wanted my style to be controlled, so there were times when it wasn't intrusive and times when it was deliberately so. The most voyeuristic moments are to do with the 'breathing spaces'. These give the audience a chance to absorb what's taken place, to 'breathe' and put the rapid emotive story into the perspective of its timelessness."

Darling says he loathes the direction in which modern filmmaking generally is headed. "Everything is so clean and crisp and perfect. I wanted to give this film an edge. When I saw the landscape and how blue the skies are, I saw that the colour was potent enough to overwhelm the narrative. Therefore, I wanted to have something that suppressed colour, something done subtly, so that people would have the chance to observe the narrative more."

Darling used angles that avoided clutter as he felt many of the locations were already rather cluttered. This pursuit of simplicity was also in aid of avoiding distractions from the central narrative.

"I'm not a technical person, not into hair splitting," he says. "I look at each scene to see emotionally what it's trying to express and evolve my approach from there. I do devise a shot list, but while filming I like to keep spontaneity within that approach."

Darling's credits include *Young Einstein*, *The Place At The Coast* and many award-winning commercials and rock video clips.

THE CROSSING

CREW BIOGRAPHIES

IGOR NAY **DESIGNER**

PRODUCTION

When Igor Nay read **THE CROSSING**, three things struck him immediately - its simplicity, the intensity of the characters' emotions and the notion of the country town as an additional, important character in the story.

These ideas strongly affected his approach to the production design. He'd already been on two location surveys to Junee prior to production, one with director George Ogilvie and once with cinematographer Jeff Darling. The three had discussed in detail the type of look and feel they wanted to achieve.

"Those surveys gave us time to just walk around and absorb the atmosphere of the place," says Nay who has worked on some of Australia's most critically acclaimed film and television productions of the past decade.

The character of the town as portrayed in **THE CROSSING** is, in Nay's words "conservative, slightly melancholy, sometimes depressed".

Most of the film was shot on locations rather than on sets, but Nay says: "I approach a location as a set and usually alter it in some way. In Junee, we tried to make the town look as simple as possible because we did not want anything to distract from the emotional drama on the screen."

Using as a reference for colour and mood the work of Edward Hopper, an American artist who painted a lot of small towns, Nay set about transforming the main streets of Junee into his vision of a town in the mid 60s. He covered up all of the neon lights and modern advertising on facades - "it was visual pollution, for our purposes"; he put plain brown boards over the commercial awnings, built a false front (which looked like an extension of the pub) for the video shop and where possible painted rusty, oxide colours, occasionally accented with splashes of brighter hues.

Supported by an enthusiastic and inventive art department team, Nay decided to paint one of the local hotels, a milk bar, and an old cinema building which was used as the set for the dance hall scenes. Selective use of colour and tone in the main characters' homes also reflected mood and character: Johnny's - very dark; Sam's - mid tones and Meg's - light. In fact Nay designed the whole of Meg's kitchen around the red dress Katherine wears in the scene where she stands on the kitchen table. For Meg's house, the team found an empty farmhouse and gave it "a slightly romantic feel, all new floor coverings and furnishings because Meg's mother is a neat housekeeper".

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THE CROSSING CREW BIOGRAPHIES CONTINUED - IGOR NAY

At the town's Memorial Hill, they built a "strong and alive" (Second World War) memorial, a copy of one in a Sydney suburb. Props were obtained locally and from Sydney and included, in addition to furniture, 1950s jukeboxes and pinball machines.

Then there were the cars, which were stylistically critical to the film. Nay looked all over Australia for the cars, some of which required doubles for stunts.

The cars make a strong statement in **THE CROSSING**, but it was inappropriate to hot them up, according to Nay, who researched the era. He explains: "You have to remember these are the kids' first cars. They're farming or working class kids, not wealthy, and their first cars would have been at least 10 years old. Many people have an image of the mid 60s as seen in American films - mini-skirts, long hair, cars with fins ... but in Australia at that time, especially in the country, things were different. It was still a conservative, austere time. People drove utilitarian cars - that's a country attitude at any time. The only exception to this was Sam, who's been to the city."

Nay's film credits include the features *The Boys In The Island*, *A Street To Die*, *Rebel*, *Silver City* and *Far East* and television *The Clean Machine*, *Melba* and *Five Mile Creek*.

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CREW BIOGRAPHIES

KATIE PYE **DESIGNER**

COSTUME

Through most of the 80s, Katie Pye's highly individual fantasy garments and shockingly arty clothes, earned her the title of the 'enfant terrible' of the Australian fashion scene.

A few years ago her style mellowed, yet Pye retained her fine reputation as one of the country's top designers, with two national fashion industry awards to her credit.

Finally, looking for new challenges and a different direction, she closed her Sydney business and went to India where she spent three months in an ashram. On her return to Australia, (director) George Ogilvie, an old friend, asked her if she'd like to design the clothes for **THE CROSSING**.

"It's very different from designing a range," Pye says. "I'm used to designing with no parameters. In a film, there are clear parameters within which to design. It was an indulgence for me and since film is so collaborative, an exercise in giving up total control."

Pye spent a lot of time with Ogilvie and production designer Igor Nay, talking about the characters in depth, building up a full picture of their backgrounds and aspirations.

Ogilvie, says Pye, felt the script needed a stylised approach to costume design and should have a strong sense of self. Between their initial meetings and commencement of production, Pye had six months "in which to digest all the ideas and research and script subtleties and allow the strongest images of that era to surface."

She admits: "The hardest thing for me was not to overdesign. I didn't want the clothes to distract from the performance and passion of the story."

So she introduced some simple subliminal devices: "I decided to exclude jewellery or hats (with a couple of exceptions to make certain scenes authentic); to use plain blocks of colour and to have just the line of the period, rather than fussy attention to detail. I didn't want it to look like a time capsule."

Pye took into consideration not only era, but context - ie the country, its landscapes and architecture, people's conservatism She combed through her father's large collection of old magazines and scrutinised photo albums of the times.

THE CROSSING CREW BIOGRAPHIES CONTINUED - KATIE PYE

"Because of the vast age range in the cast, I varied things. The older people were stuck in a style from a previous era and the young characters wouldn't have had the money to buy the kind of fancy clothes depicted in American films of this era."

She also took pains to consult the actors on their preferences. "It was important for them to feel comfortable in their clothes, to be able to freely express their feelings," she explains.

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CREW BIOGRAPHIES

HENRY DANGAR

EDITOR

One of the greatest editing challenges for Henry Dangar was finding a balance between the emotional "light and shade" in **THE CROSSING**.

"The intense emotions needed to be offset by moments of relief and laughter, so that the audience gets some breathing space - and that was tricky to achieve," Dangar explains.

Dangar, who grew up in an Australian country town and went to live in Sydney as soon as he finished school, says he was particularly sensitive to the oppressive attitudes of the country people conveyed in **THE CROSSING**.

"People in small country towns like the one Meg and Sam come from expect everyone to conform," Dangar says. "It may not be stated, but its strongly implied in **THE CROSSING**. I recognised that state of mind and the loneliness which comes from it, as it popped up so often in the story."

Dangar also noted that the film worked best emotionally when this feeling was conveyed. "Whenever the pressure of the town on the young kids was released, the film took a dip dramatically. Fortunately, because the performances of the cast were so good, we were able to keep up the pressure."

Throughout the production, Dangar felt the film grew enormously. "The producers had the vision and confidence to allow that to happen. The performances, especially, grew and as a result, the narrative was changed. Then, during editing, it became apparent that a couple of scenes needed to be reshot, not because they were poorly done, but because the strength of the performances made it evident that in two specific instances a different mood was required."

Working with George Ogilvie was a delight for Dangar who, for the first time in this feature film career, was asked for his insights and ideas on the film long before shooting began.

"George creates an atmosphere where you feel as if you're a contributor rather than someone who's being directed. He and Jeff Darling and I had a number of discussions before production began."

Some directors leave editors alone to get on with the job, others "analyse

sparked ideas in me by forcing me to dig deeper and to be more questioning, which is wonderful."

Dangar's credits include *Winter Of Our Dreams*, *Travelling North*, *For Love Alone*, *The Clean Machine* and *The Bangkok Hilton*.

THE CROSSING

CREW BIOGRAPHIES

MARTIN ARMIGER

MUSIC PRODUCER/COMPOSER

If there is a key theme in the music which Martin Armiger selected, produced and wrote for **THE CROSSING**, it is "passion".

"To me, **THE CROSSING** is primarily about teenage passion and it takes those emotions very seriously. No one working on this film is patronising of young love and the music reflects this."

Armiger is the most successful producer of soundtrack albums in Australia, having won the ARIA (Australian Record Industry Association) awards as Best Producer for the ABC series *Sweet and Sour* and best soundtrack album for *You've Always Got The Blues*. He shared with Bill Motzing the Australian Film Institute Award for Best Original Music for the feature *Young Einstein*.

Armiger readily sets the musical context for the mid 60s, the approximate era portrayed in **THE CROSSING**. "It was an explosive time in pop music. The increasing influence of black music styles on English pop groups combined with a burst of experimentation in both sounds and lyrics. It gave the Top 40 a new and lasting character.

"In Australia the local music scene took off, with a whole series of artists - like Normie Rowe, Ray Brown and The Offbeats and The Easybeats - were beginning to find an original and distinctive voice."

Armiger says that music was always intended to play a big part in **THE CROSSING**, reflecting emotions; and although "we started out thinking we'd need a lot of songs, the way the movie turned out, we felt we didn't need as many. So there's more underscore than we originally expected."

Because he and music co-ordinator Martin Fabinyi (founder of Regular Records) spent so much time in consultation about the music with the key creative team on the film, Armiger says that by the time he saw some of the scenes cut together, they knew exactly which music they wanted.

productions. Using certain techniques, working with sounds or rhythms, we wanted to twist them into real 90s songs."

He adds: "We tried to find songs which would stand reinterpretation by modern artists and which hadn't already been used in other films. We decided to reinterpret the songs to be different and to connect the trials of the screen characters with what kids are going through today."

Armiger's recent film credits include *Cane Toads*, *Sweetie* and *Young Einstein*

THE CROSSING

LEAD CAST BIOGRAPHIES

RUSSELL CROWE

PLAYS JOHNNY

Russell Crowe couldn't wait to play Johnny because not only would it afford him the chance to work with (director) George Ogilvie but also, as he puts it: "I have this basic Australian attitude about favouring the underdog. I even barrack against my own football team when they're winning."

To Russell, Johnny's personal journey seemed particularly intense and dramatic. Asked to describe some of his perceptions about his screen character, Russell, 25, says "Johnny's simplicity is part of his complexity and he has an inability to communicate his feelings to her, which is so Australian. He's a product of his environment and he wants to progress within it, to marry Meg and have a family, with all the stability that represents. He's tied to the town through his mother and his dead father."

One of the great things Ogilvie brought out, says Russell, was the influence of the parents on the three lead characters. "All the parents had to do was treat the young lovers with the respect they demand for their own. Love among teenagers is often disregarded as unimportant, but it may be the most important in your life. Everything at that age is so heightened."

Russell does not identify personally with Johnny at all. Johnny, he explains, is totally at home in the country - hunting, being practical, "a down-to-earth, primal and atavistic man". Russell, on the other hand, is "not practical, can't fix cars and abhors the idea of hunting." But he barracks for Johnny as a sensitive, reticent man, "not just an aggressive country bumpkin" and he sees his main dramatic challenge is making the audience like and care about Johnny and admits that he (Russell) would "fall in love with Meg, too."

As part of his preparation for the role, Russell spent time on a western New South Wales farm, shooting and playing tug-of-war (a favourite form of

observation." he says. "I don't have a technical approach to acting. I was hopeless at maths. Acting for me is an instinctive ability and the more I do the more I can see what it is possible to learn and do in the future".

It is hardly surprising that Russell became an actor. His parents were location caterers. He appeared in *Spyforce*, a television series, at six and spent school holidays around film and television sets.

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THE CROSSING LEAD CAST BIOGRAPHIES CONTINUED - RUSSELL CROWE

"I harboured a great desire to be Elvis Presley and still faintly do, "he jokes. After leaving school, he played with various rock bands for six years before landing the role of Eddie/Dr Scott in *The Rocky Horror Show* which toured New Zealand in 1986 and Australia in 1987/88.

Music has been an important part of his life "since I was a kid" and he used it as a device to help him get inside the part of Johnny, writing and recording six songs related to **THE CROSSING**.

His relationship with Danielle Spencer (Meg) and Robert Mammone (Sam) he describes as a "meshing of minds, a great mental kinship". And he acknowledges the tremendous input of George Ogilvie, whose directorial judgement he trusts implicitly.

Russell's other film appearances include *Blood Oath* (with Bryan Brown) and *Spotswood* (with Anthony Hopkins). His theatre credits include *Blood Brothers*, *Bad Boy Johnny* and *Simpson J 202*.

THE CROSSING

LEAD CAST BIOGRAPHIES

DANIELLE SPENCER

PLAYS MEG

Danielle Spencer won the role of Meg ahead of hundreds of other young hopefuls who went through the director's extensive screening process and then spent the next five months "thinking constantly about the film and my character".

"It all went into my unconscious so that by the time we started filming, with George's (Ogilvie) help, I felt very relaxed about it," Danielle says, adding: "I felt a very big responsibility, not only because this is my first big part in a film, but also because a great deal of **THE CROSSING** rests on the cast. I hope the audience will be engaged emotionally by it."

Danielle, 20, who has trained extensively in drama, singing, classical and jazz ballet and modern dance, claims that it was obvious she'd become a performer when she was little. Her mother was an entertainer before she married Danielle's father, Don. And he was an entertainer who had a single in Australia's Top 10 during the 60s, toured with the Rolling Stones and Chuck Berry and in recent years has written children's albums.

"Because of dad I feel very balanced about the entertainment industry," Danielle says. "He neither encouraged nor discouraged me from going into showbusiness. Acting was always on my mind, but getting an education was a priority."

In high school, Danielle studied dance and drama for her higher School Certificate, but she could see that "dance had its limitations". She applied to NIDA (National Institute of Dramatic Art, but at 17 was too young to be accepted. Instead she won a small role in the 1987 Sydney stage musical *Rasputin* and began "learning on the job".

Working on **THE CROSSING**, Danielle says she learned a lot from George Ogilvie and the older actors. From her imagination she constructed a profile on Meg whom she describes as "an innocent leading a very simple life, a real farm girl. Emotionally she's more complicated; decisions, especially when it comes to Johnny and Sam, are not cut and dried for her."

For Danielle, it was important to maintain an emotional ambivalence about the two young men throughout the film. "Johnny's loveable and Sam's exciting, so it's a difficult choice for Meg," she says. "Sam represents financial and emotional insecurity. He's already taken off once and left her. Johnny would be an easier decision because Meg loves the town, the people, her family. Johnny represents security, but there is a magnetism, a chemistry between Meg and Sam"

One of the most difficult aspects of the role was sustaining the intensity of emotion throughout the shoot especially when key scenes were shot out of

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THE CROSSING LEAD CAST BIOGRAPHIES CONTINUED - DANIELLE SPENCER

This, however, Danielle achieved with ease, according to the makeup technicians who recall that she cried so much on the day of the Anzac march scene that they had to apply cucumber slabs to reduce the puffiness of her eyelids.

In the future Danielle would like to do a diverse range of roles, but admits that until she grows and looks older she is destined to be cast in the "young lass" parts.

Her film credits include *Crack In The Curtain* and the lead role in *What The Moon Saw*; television credits include the series *Mission Impossible*, *Dolphin Cove*, *Rafferty's Rules* and *The Flying Doctors*.

THE CROSSING

LEAD CAST BIOGRAPHIES

ROBERT MAMMONE

PLAYS SAM

Robert Mammone was holidaying in his home city, Adelaide, when his agent rang asking him to audition for **THE CROSSING**. "When I heard George Ogilvie's name, I told my agent I'd return to Sydney immediately," he muses reflectively.

He did one workshop where he observed he was, at 24 one of the oldest actors there - "and that made me nervous". George helped to get him "loose enough to perform", then he was called back to screen test with Russell Crowe (who'd already been cast as Johnny), along with "a roomful of potential Sams". More nerves.

When he learned he'd won the lead role of Sam, Robert cautiously didn't allow himself to celebrate until his contract was signed. Then he permitted himself to become ecstatic.

He went out and bought tapes of music from the early and mid 60s and for the next few months as he prepared for the role, he listened to those instead of the radio. A friend gave him some books about that era and by the time shooting began, Robert felt he knew Sam very well.

"I really felt for Sam," he says. "I live in Sydney now, but I went back to Adelaide recently and met up with a lot of my schoolfriends, none of whom are in the entertainment industry. There was a funny vibe between us. I've moved on and I'm no longer one of them. There's a lot of support from them but there's a sense of distance because my life has taken such a different direction to theirs."

When Robert first attempted acting after leaving high school his father was concerned. "He wanted me to get a trade behind me first. But I've always done what I wanted. So I identify and connect with Sam in this regard".

Robert knew he "just felt good" when he was performing, even at school so when he graduated, he "floated" in that direction. A great believer in fate, Robert recalls that a friend introduced him to a casting agent at 15 and the woman, who happened to be the leading agent in Adelaide, put him on her books immediately.

"I'm an instinctive actor," he notes. "I haven't had any formal training. I don't intellectualise, I just do it".

Of Sam, Robert says: "I like his individualism. That's his strength. To actually get up and leave town and then to come back knowing there would be drama and ramifications, that took guts."

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THE CROSSING LEAD CAST BIOGRAPHIES CONTINUED - ROBERT MAMMONE

Describing Sam and Meg's mutual attraction, Robert says: Meg is really a part of the land and Sam saw in her an energy, a zest for life, a certain vitality, which he also has. The bond between them was very powerful; often they'd communicate without saying a word."

During filming on location, Robert attended three or four sessions of the daily rushes and then felt "scared to death, so I didn't go back".

"George said we could go if we wanted, but it was probably better if we didn't. He was right and I trust him. He certainly knows what he wants in our performances."

Robert valued the interaction between himself and his co-actors Russell Crowe and Danielle Spencer. "We talked to each other throughout the shoot, questioning certain aspects of our characters and how they affect one another."

Asked what he'd learned from his experience on **THE CROSSING**, Robert says promptly: "Patience".

His film credits include *Damsels Be Damned* and *Luigi's Ladies*, television credits include the series *Rafferty's Rules*, *Willing and Abel* and *All The Way*.

THE CROSSING

CAST BIOGRAPHIES

DAPHNE GRAY
MOTHER)

PLAYS JEAN (JOHNNY'S

Portraying the grief of a woman like Jean, Johnny's mother, was not difficult for Daphne Gray. She simply remembered her late husband for whom she still grieves and "crying came naturally". Jean, Gray says, is a "tragic woman, immutably stuck in the past". Gray sees the roles of the three protagonists' parents as peripheral to the central love triangle, but important in terms of the emotional background they provide and the professional experience the actors bring. She enjoys filming enormously and especially enjoys the challenge of strong character roles like Jean. Her film and television credits include *Short Changed*, *Melba* and *The Shiralee*.

GEORGE WHALEY

PLAYS SID (SAM'S FATHER)

Whaley has had a long, distinguished career as a stage and screen actor/director as well as teaching young drama students. He says of his role as Sid: "We oldies give context to the youngsters and their situation. We shed some light on where they come from". Whaley describes Sid as "a very stitched up man who's aimed to achieve respectability and a certain standard". In recent roles, Whaley quips he has "cornered the market on Catholic priests and unsympathetic, hard-nosed fathers". Whaley has been general manager of the Canberra Theatre Centre, a director of the Australian Playwrights Conference (1981), head of the acting course and the National Institute of Dramatic Art and a resident director of the Old Tote Theatre Company. Recent acting credits include *Speed the Plow* and *The Doll's House*.

JACQY PHILLIPS
MOTHER)

PLAYS MARION (SAM'S

Marion is a woman who director George Ogilvie describes as having "compromised enormously in life. She has forgotten how important being loved is and has become resigned to accepting the unsatisfactory state of her life". Phillips graduated from Flinders University Drama Centre in 1977 and since then has successfully played a broad range of classical and contemporary stage roles. Her work through the 1980s was prolific and generally acclaimed. Among the plays in which she appeared for the South Australian Theatre Company are *Dreams In An Empty City*, *Vocations* and *Twelfth Night*. In addition to her stage work, she has also been a member of the rock band Red Smarties, a member of the Women Directors Workshop at Sydney's Nimrod Theatre and she won a State Busking Championship.

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THE CROSSING CAST BIOGRAPHIES CONTINUED

PATRICK WARD

PLAYS NEV (MEG'S FATHER)

Ward has been cast so often as "the aggressive type with an underlying menace" that he worries about typecasting. But when he talked to director George Ogilvie in more depth about Nev and his motives, he found an added dimension to this screen role. Ward says of New: "He has a raw, manipulative side. He worries about Meg making the wrong decision - marrying Sam. It will mean she will leave town. Whereas if she marries Johnny, Johnny can help Nev work the farm. He's very self-interested and keen to maintain the status quo". Among Ward's extensive television credits are *The Bodysurfers*, *Fields Of Fire III*, *Anzacs* and *Rafferty's Rules*.

MAY LLOYD

PLAYS PEG (MEG'S MOTHER)

May Lloyd has a somewhat exotic professional background. A New Zealander, she was a founder member of Stiff Bix Cabaret, a fringe satirical troupe consisting of a core of five actors, a male dancer and all woman band, The Wide Mouth Frogs. Lloyd worked as a writer, designer, actor and singer with the group. They performed a three-month season at Wellington's Rock Theatre. Later, they reformed as Chameleon Circus with the addition of puppets, clown and a fire-eating act. They toured extensively throughout New Zealand. Lloyd is also co-founder and lead vocalist with the Hot City Cats, a seven-piece twenties and thirties hot jazz band.

EMILY LUMBERS ***FRIEND)***

PLAYS JENNY (MEG'S

Lumbers has been singing and acting since childhood. Lead roles in school plays were followed by a course at NIDA from which she graduated in 1988. Her credits include *The Saint In Australia*, *Depth Of Feeling*, *A Country Practice* and numerous NIDA stage productions.

RODNEY BELL ***SHORTY***

PLAYS

Bell has been acting, singing and dancing professionally since he was four. At eight he appeared in the stage musical *Pippin*; in his early teens he won roles in various TV series. He graduated from NIDA in 1988. His credits include *The Young Doctors*, *The Restless Years* and *Shout - The Johnny O'Keefe Story*.

JOHN BLAIR

PLAYS BILLY (JOHNNY'S FRIEND)

Blair has begun to establish a reputation as a talented young stage actor

