

Media Release: Australian Academy of Cinema and Television Arts

***Priscilla* Producer awarded for lifetime achievement by Australian Academy**

Strictly embargoed until Wednesday 21 November 2012

One of Australia's most revered producers, Al Clark, was today announced as the recipient of the nation's highest screen accolade – the AACTA Raymond Longford Award.

With a filmmaking career spanning three decades, Clark has produced or executive produced 19 feature films including some of Australia's most iconic, celebrated and internationally significant cinema, from *Chopper* through to *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*.

In addition to his outstanding skill in production, Clark is also lauded for his skill in identifying new talent, launching the careers of many leading Australian screen practitioners and performers.

Clark exec produced the first feature film to star Russell Crowe (*The Crossing*). He also produced the first Australian feature film to star Ryan Kwanten (*Red Hill*), and produced director John Polson's first feature film, *Siam Sunset*.

Clark was also instrumental in launching the international careers of Lizzy Gardiner (who, at 25-years-old, won, together with Tim Chappel, an AFI Award, BAFTA Award and Academy Award® for Costume Design for *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*), Andrew Dominik and Eric Bana (*Chopper*), and Stephan Elliott and Guy Pearce (*The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*).

Clark's contribution to the screen industry beyond production also spans decades, having served on the board of the Australian Film Commission (1989-1992), and having participated in official juries of several international film festivals, including the San Sebastian and Valladolid Film Festivals.

According to AFI | AACTA CEO, Damian Trehwella, the Australian Academy was impressed by the diversity of Clark's attributes, skills and contribution to the Australian and international screen industries.

"From the many recommendations submitted in support of Al Clark for this Award it was clear that he is not only an extraordinary and tenacious producer, but that he is noted by a cross section of the industry as a mentor and educator whom many credit for launching their careers.

"After emigrating from the UK in the 1980s, Clark was quick to embrace and recognise the cultural and cinematic value of Australian subcultures, and is credited with the commercial and cult-following success of a number of Australian films which have become international icons."

Trehwella said the Australian Academy was also impressed by the diverse pillars to Clark's outstanding career.

"Al Clark is also recognised for his talent for prose and writing, which many note contribute to his keen eye for a great script, and to his ability to nurture young writers and directors. The author of two film books, *Raymond Chandler in Hollywood*, and *The Lavender Bus*, Clark is also the founder and former editor of *The Film Yearbook*, adding to his praiseworthy and celebrated encyclopaedic knowledge of film.

"Clark's background in the music industry is also impressive. Having previously worked in publicity for Virgin in the UK, Clark represented huge acts including the Sex Pistols, XTC, Phil Collins and Devo. This background has created a distinct advantage when creating and marketing films. As noted by Hugo Weaving, Clark's 'comprehensive knowledge of music and the music industry has meant films he is associated with are able to access scores most Australian films cannot'."

AFI | AACTA Chair Alan Finney, who worked on the Australian distribution of four of Clark's films - *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, *Absolute Beginners*, *Gothic* and *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* - said:

"Al's commitment to and passion for the Australian film industry, his body of work and the way in which he has nurtured new talent who have all gone on to great heights deserves this highest of recognitions.

"In addition to helping filmmakers to craft their projects, from assisting in casting and creative, through to finance and distribution, Clark is a celebrated mentor, noted for his collaborative and inclusive nature, regardless of people's backgrounds and experience. It is for each of these reasons that the Australian Academy is proud to recognise Clark for his lifetime contribution to Australian film," Finney said.

Upon being told of the Award, Al Clark said:

"With a love of films that always transcends the frustrations of getting them made, I've tried to choose distinctive projects, to navigate them soundly, to find gifted people to work with, and to bring out the best in their considerable talents. I'm grateful to AACTA for this great recognition and for everything it represents."

The AACTA Raymond Longford Award will be presented to Al Clark at the 2nd AACTA Awards Luncheon, presented by Deluxe, in Sydney in January 2013. The presentation of this Award will include tributes from screen practitioners and performers who have worked with Al. Tickets to the event go on sale early December.

Video clip - Al Clark informed of his Award

A video clip of actor Roy Billing informing Al Clark that he is the recipient of the AACTA Raymond Longford Award will be available on the [AFI | AACTA website](#) from 9:30am Tuesday 20 November 2012.

Industry support for Al Clark

"Al's unique view of the world, film and the arts has been a great inspiration for me. His ability to recall any moment from any movie or book, analyse its value and express it succinctly is a rare quality. He has taught me and many other actors the value of truth in performance as well as truth in oneself. He is an educator and has opened my eyes to many filmmakers and styles just through his sheer enthusiasm for the medium. He's very generous with his wisdom." **Guy Pearce**

"During my first exhausting week of production on *Priscilla*, I was under attack from all sides. Some thought I was making a very dangerous movie. The PC brigade was in full demolition mode. Everybody had an opinion. Everybody had a re-write. My producer, Al Clark, was doing his best to keep them all at bay, but at the same time needed to guide me through an expanding minefield... Al's knowledge, grace, tenacity and good judgment are always at my (and many others) disposal 24/7 and for this I am very, very thankful. I could not think of a finer recipient for the AACTA Raymond Longford Award." **Stephan Elliott**

"Al's body of work has been impressive. He has tackled low budget material with the same vigour and enthusiasm as his bigger budget films. It is gratifying to know that one of these, *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*, became one of the highest grossing films in Australian history, due, in no small part, to the passion, skillful guidance, ingenuity and musical knowledge of Al Clark as producer." **Michele Bennett and Andrew Dominik**

"As a writer and raconteur Al has an unerring sense of style and effortless ability to find the 'mot juste'. His skill as a writer gives him a keen eye for a strong script, and a talent to bring out the best in younger writer/directors, encouraging them to shape their work in a way which suits their idiosyncrasies yet speaks to a wide audience. His comprehensive knowledge of music and the music industry has meant films he is associated with are able to access scores most Australian films cannot. He has significantly helped to put Australian film onto the world stage, tirelessly promoting and championing local talent internationally." **Hugo Weaving**

"Al Clark is a fine producer, a great mentor of young talent, and an excellent writer on industry matters ... Add me to the list of admirers." **Phillip Adams**

"The incredible moment when Al Clark decided to trust and nurture everyone involved in *Priscilla* was a turning point for many people. Every single detail was Al's. His decisions are all heartfelt and never about money or the back-end. His passion for filmmaking is purely about that - films." **Lizzy Gardiner**

"Al is a producer who is tenacious, bold and ferocious in protecting the creative vision of the director, as well as ensuring that everyone involved in the project is working with one aim in mind, and that is the realisation of the project without compromise. Australian cinema would be the poorer without Al Clark's vision and philosophy." **Ana Kokkinos**

"Al is a hands-on producer, involved with every step of the filmmaking process. He regularly visits the set and talks to actors and crew and his enthusiasm rubs off. He's a joy to work with." **Roy Billing**

"Al's contribution to the Australian film industry is simply phenomenal. Apart from having one of the most critically and financially successful Australian films in history, all films he's associated with have a distinct Australian flavour. This distinguishes Al, for it is the film that motivates him and not the promise of success. Of course he makes films for an audience, but first and foremost his motivation is to make great films and films that inspire him. He has been on various industry boards and helped shape the Australian industry in a positive and constructive direction." **Darren Ashton**

"Frugal, reclusive, outgoing, generous, laconic, eloquent, secretive and very much his own person, Al Clark does not court the limelight. But his contribution to the Australian cinema, and to international cinema, is immense," **Bob Ellis**

Al Clark - Filmography

1984 - **Secret Places** (executive producer) – director Zelda Barron – with Marie-Therese Relin, Jenny Agutter.

1984 - **Nineteen Eighty-Four** (co-producer) – director Michael Radford – with John Hurt, Richard Burton.

1986 - **Absolute Beginners** (executive producer) – director Julien Temple – with David Bowie, James Fox.

1986 - **Captive** (executive producer) – director Paul Mayersberg – with Oliver Reed, Irina Brook.

1986 - **Gothic** (executive producer) – director Ken Russell – with Gabriel Byrne, Natasha Richardson, Timothy Spall.

1987 - **Aria** (co-producer) – directors Robert Altman, Jean-Luc Godard, Nicolas Roeg, Bruce Beresford etc – with Theresa Russell, Bridget Fonda, Tilda Swinton.

1990 - **The Crossing** (executive producer) – director George Ogilvie – with Russell Crowe, Danielle Spencer.

1994 - **The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert** (producer) – director Stephan Elliott – with Terence Stamp, Hugo Weaving, Guy Pearce.

1997 - **Heaven's Burning** (producer) – director Craig Lahiff – with Russell Crowe, Youki Kudoh.

1999 - **Siam Sunset** (producer) – director John Polson – with Linus Roache, Danielle Cormack.

1999 - **Eye of the Beholder** (co-producer) – director Stephan Elliott – with Ewan McGregor, Ashley Judd.

2000 - **Chopper** (executive producer) – director Andrew Dominik – with Eric Bana, Vince Colosimo, Kate Beahan.

2002 - **The Hard Word** (producer) – director Scott Roberts – with Guy Pearce, Rachel Griffiths, Joel Edgerton.

2004 - **Thunderstruck** (executive producer) – director Darren Ashton – with Sam Worthington, Callan Mulvey, Stephen Curry

2006 - **The Book of Revelation** (producer) – director Ana Kokkinos – with Tom Long, Greta Scacchi, Colin Friels.

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2007 - **Razzle Dazzle** (executive producer) – director Darren Ashton – with Ben Miller, Kerry Armstrong, Tara Morice.

2009 - **Blessed** (producer) – director Ana Kokkinos – with Frances O'Connor, Miranda Otto, Deborra-lee Furness.

2010 - **Red Hill** (producer) – director Patrick Hughes – with Ryan Kwanten, Steve Bisley, Tom E. Lewis.

2013 - **Goddess** (executive producer) – director Mark Lamprell - with Laura Michelle Kelly, Ronan Keating, Magda Szubanski.

Notes to Editors

First presented in 1968, the AACTA Raymond Longford Award is the highest accolade that the Australian Academy can bestow upon an individual.

Named in honour of the great Australian film pioneer, Raymond Longford, the Award recognises a person who has made a truly outstanding contribution to the enrichment of Australia's screen environment and culture.

Peter Weir, Geoffrey Rush, Fred Schepisi, Ken G. Hall, Tim Burstall, Charles 'Bud' Tingwell, Jack Thompson, Jan Chapman, David Stratton, and Don McAlpine are just some of the Australian screen icons bestowed this prestigious Award.

A full list of former recipients can be found [here](#) on the AFI | AACTA website.

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