

AUSTRALIA

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

“Somewhere over the rainbow,

Way up high,

There’s a land that I heard of,

Once in a lullaby.”

Baz Luhrmann, the writer, producer and director of the critically acclaimed Academy Award-winning musical *Moulin Rouge!*, returns to the big screen with an adventure as epic as the land in which its story unfolds. Twentieth Century Fox and Bazmark Film II present *Australia* starring Academy-Award winning actress Nicole Kidman (*Moulin Rouge!*, *The Hours*), Hugh Jackman (*The X-Men Trilogy*, *The Prestige*), David Wenham (*300*, *The Lord of the Rings Trilogy*), Bryan Brown (*Breaker Morant*, *The Thorn Birds*), Jack Thompson (*Breaker Morant*, *The Good German*), David Gulpilil (*Walkabout*, *Crocodile Dundee*), David Ngoombujurra (*Rabbit Proof Fence*, *Ned Kelly*) and introducing 11 year-old newcomer Brandon Walters as Nullah.

Directed by Luhrmann (*William Shakespeare’s Romeo + Juliet*, *Strictly Ballroom*) from his own original story and a script co-written over two years with Stuart Beattie, Oscar-winner Ronald Harwood and acclaimed Australian novelist Richard Flanagan, *Australia* is produced by Luhrmann together with G. Mac Brown (*The Departed*, *Unfaithful*) and Catherine Knapman (*Moulin Rouge!*). Two-time Academy Award-winning production and costume designer Catherine Martin (*Moulin Rouge!*, *William Shakespeare’s Romeo + Juliet*) returns as Luhrmann’s creative partner. Cinematographer Mandy Walker (*Lantana*) collaborates with Luhrmann on their second project following her work on the award-winning worldwide campaign for Chanel, *No. 5: The Film*. Dody Dorn (*Kingdom of Heaven*, *Memento*) and Michael McCusker (*3:10 to Yuma*, *Walk the Line*) join Luhrmann’s team as the film’s editors. The music team is headed by two-time Academy Award nominated composer David Hirschfelder (*Shine*, *Elizabeth*) and consists of long-time Luhrmann co-producer Anton Monsted (BLAM – *Something For Everybody*) and a variety of musical contributors, including Felix Meagher.

THE ROAD TO OZ

In 2001, director Baz Luhrmann's *Moulin Rouge!* was released in theaters to universal worldwide acclaim. The film grossed over USD\$177m during its initial theatrical release and was nominated for 8 Academy Awards including a Best Picture nod and went on to win 2 Oscars. The film also revived the moribund musical genre, opening the door for a series of Hollywood musicals not seen since the last heyday of the genre in the 1950s. Ironically, the studio's initial marketing campaign avoided any reference to it being a musical; such was the prevalent mood at that time in Hollywood that musicals were not commercial. The film was recently included by *Entertainment Weekly* at No. 10 in its list of *100 New Classics* of the past 25 years.

After its release, Luhrmann next re-directed his award-winning version of Puccini's *La Boheme* for the Broadway stage in 2002/2003. While Luhrmann was no stranger to the world of opera, live events and theater, he had never before undertaken a production on Broadway. A previous incarnation was staged during an Australian run at the Sydney Opera House in 1990 and was an enormous success. Luhrmann's bigger, bolder staging with an exceptional international cast of emerging young opera stars was lauded by New York theater critics. The show ran for over 6 months and was nominated for 6 Tony Awards winning for Production Design, Lighting Design and a special Ensemble award. It also played for limited runs in Los Angeles and San Francisco.

Luhrmann had been thinking for some years about his next motion picture project. Having completed the 'Red Curtain Trilogy' of *Strictly Ballroom*, *Romeo + Juliet* and *Moulin Rouge!* Luhrmann focused his creative vision in a whole new direction: the historical epic. Says Luhrmann, "The movie musical was a great childhood love of mine but I was also a big fan of the historical epic".

Luhrmann grew up in a tiny lumber town in northern New South Wales, Australia where his family ran a small farm, the local gas station and, for a short time, the local cinema. Luhrmann remembers that "epics were the kind of movies that you would hear about for weeks beforehand and that every single person in town would go to see. You can imagine the impression made on a small boy in a tiny town by such films as *Lawrence of Arabia* and the big adventure romances set in exotic faraway lands".

After the ten year journey creating the highly stylized and theatrical musical based-works of the 'Red Curtain Trilogy', Luhrmann next set his sights on a new canvas on which to set his trademark universal storytelling style: a series of films that would take him to exciting locations around the world where he would bring historical stories to the screen on a massive scale.

Luhrmann says, "I had been evolving several epic works; some in an ancient period, some European romances and some based in my homeland of Australia. One of the ancient epics was the story of Alexander the Great. At the same time, Dino De Laurentiis approached me identifying his shared passion

to make a film on the subject, and I had for a long time wanted to revisit the extraordinary and thrilling creative experience of working with Leonardo di Caprio. For the next two years, Catherine Martin and I found ourselves exploring Jordan, the deserts of Morocco and the jungles of Thailand as we developed the property.”

Unfortunately, a competing project based on Alexander’s life was being hurriedly prepared in order to be the first such film in release. Rather than sacrifice the time and quality necessary for such a mammoth undertaking Luhrmann reluctantly put his own project on hold and chose not to move forward at that time.

As he explains, “I was tremendously disappointed when the Alexander project fell apart so I went on a journey on the Trans Siberian Railway to clear my head after focusing on the project for such a long period of time. I then met my wife Catherine Martin and our one year-old daughter in Paris and we decided to spend time there to regroup, recharge our spirits and assess what our next creative step would be. During this time we began to discuss our little girl’s life. Due to the nature of what we do we knew our children will always be part of a traveling circus. But, we asked ourselves, where is the place that they would call home? Where would their roots lie? This, more than anything, prompted our desire to reconnect with Australia. I began to reacquaint myself with Australian history and in particular, Australian cinema. I could not help but be struck that for the rest of the world Australia is a little mysterious, very adventurous and mostly unknown.”

And so, Luhrmann began a new journey on the road to Oz.

THE GENESIS OF THE SCREENPLAY

With the idea of creating a historical epic set in Australia firmly in place, Luhrmann began the process of creating his story. As the director explains, “In my creative process, my stories specifically grow from issues that I’ve experienced in my own life. I do this in the hope that, if I am truthful and honest, there will be other people out there who will want to share in these issues. On my way back to Sydney from Paris I began to think of the main character embarking on a journey of their own that will transform them in some way. It is the issue of transformation that I am most interested in exploring at this time. I recognize a feeling that exists in me and my generation that at a certain age you get locked into a pattern of life that will remain constant for the rest of your days – growth simply stops. So, I was very interested in the idea of growth and rebirth. Secondly, life in the post-9/11 world has created an environment in which the future seems difficult to predict in the same secure way we used to. It has unnerved us because we are not used to that. So, I was equally interested in a story about characters

that live in uncertain and tumultuous times. These tend to be times of war and great change and, like it or not, we are wedded to such times.

“I wanted there to be in the story a journey where the main character, who lives a very controlled, sedentary life, is plunged into upheaval and, as a consequence, immense change. What would come of this is the realization of what is truly valuable and important in life. On a personal level I came to realize the fact that if I am surrounded by the people I love and, especially by my family, then even during these tumultuous times I have everything. I have a truly meaningful and vital existence. I wanted this theme to resonate in our mythologized version of Australia above all things. I wanted to tell it, as life is itself, with laughter, drama, tragedy and tears.”

As he began to develop a story line that follows the main character, Lady Sarah Ashley, on her journey from England to the rugged frontiers of northern Australia, Luhrmann came to a deeper understanding of his country particularly over two critical issues. He studied the matter of the country’s relationship to their indigenous people; specifically the then still unresolved issue of the Stolen Generations. He also delved into the history of why the nation had not yet defined itself as a republic, separate and distinct from the British Commonwealth. Additionally, as Luhrmann began writing a story that took place across Australia’s Northern Territory and the Kimberley Region of Western Australia, he realized that this film would provide a rare opportunity for both he and his family to experience a part of the country that is rarely experienced by most Australians living in the big urban centers. He and his family would have the chance to truly participate in life in one of the last true remaining frontiers.

As research continued and the story developed Luhrmann was aware that, above all, the story had to be entertaining. The enormous scale of an undertaking of this kind meant that it had to appeal to the largest possible audience. Particularly appealing to him was the idea of an entertainment that would bring together different types of audiences into one theater in the grand tradition of classic Hollywood ‘event’ films. These films, which Hollywood used to produce in abundance, would bring together men and women, young and old, including entire families to see them. Luhrmann comments, “When experiencing these kinds of films, from *Gone with the Wind* and *Ben-Hur* to *Lawrence of Arabia* and *Titanic*, the audience was communing in this one big motion picture experience. I wanted to create a cinematic work that would be similarly inclusive because, if nothing else, I feel passionately about having more inclusiveness in our lives. Bringing people together brings comfort to the heart and soul in this unpredictable world of change.”

AUSTRALIA: THE STORY

Australia tells the story of Lady Sarah Ashley (Nicole Kidman). Desperate for cash, Sarah's husband has spent the past year Down Under, preparing to sell their last remaining asset; a cattle station the size of Maryland, called 'Faraway Downs'. Suspicious of his stalling, Sarah travels by flying boat to the remote tropical outpost of Darwin, northern Australia, to take matters into her own hands. She is met in Darwin not by her husband, but by a crude, rough-hewn cattleman, known only as 'The Drover' (Hugh Jackman). On the overland journey to Faraway Downs, Sarah and The Drover discover a profound, mutual dislike.

After an unexpected turn of events, an enchanting, part-Aboriginal child, Nullah (Brandon Walters), suddenly makes his way into Sarah's life. Nullah reveals to Sarah that all is not as it seems. The ruthless station manager, Neil Fletcher (David Wenham), is in cahoots with cattle baron King Carney (Bryan Brown) and together they are plotting to take over Sarah's land.

To save Faraway Downs, Sarah must join forces with The Drover to drive 1500 head of cattle across northern Australia's breathtaking, yet brutal landscape. Along with Nullah, they are joined on their quest by a misfit band from the station, including the alcoholic accountant Kipling Flynn (Jack Thompson), The Drover's two Aboriginal stockmen Magarri (David Ngoombujurra) and Goolaj (Angus Pilakui), the Aboriginal housemaid Bandy Legs (Lillian Crombie), the Chinese cook Sing Song (Yuen Wah). All the while, they are shadowed by a mysterious Aboriginal magic man, King George (David Gulpilil).

Sarah is transformed by the power and the beauty of the world's most ancient continent, finding romance in the landscape, passion with The Drover, and a maternal love for Nullah. But, when war laps the shores of Australia, this unlikely family is torn apart. Now Sarah, The Drover and Nullah must fight to find each other amidst the tragedy and chaos of the Japanese bombing of Darwin.

"THE AWESOME POWER OF THE LANDSCAPE"

Australia unfolds on the continent that Luhrmann sees as the world's last great frontier. As he explains, "As an Australian filmmaker, I am using my country as a canvas on which to create a metaphor for 'the faraway'. It is an exotic place at the end of the world where you can be transformed by experience and ultimately by love."

Set in the northern outback of Australia in the late 1930's and early 1940's Luhrmann's screenplay transcends the story's locale with themes that are both universal and mythic. "This is universal

storytelling that is set in a land far, far away, which happens to be the outback of Australia before the start of the Second World War. If I were making this movie in the 50's or 60's the setting could have easily been the Middle East or Africa. The trouble is that in today's world audiences can't disassociate themselves from the current realities of the politics of these places. This part of Australia, the top end, the outback, is the faraway of the faraway. It is one of the last places in the world that still conjures mystery, excitement and romance in people's minds.

"The awesome power of the landscape here has the ability to transform character. The region in which the film takes place was, and is, a genuinely brutal place. This is the driest continent in the world with the greatest distances between which points there is no population. If you live here then you are constantly challenged by the elements. The phenomenon of the wet, where the parched desert-like land can be transformed overnight into a Garden of Eden is a metaphor itself for the transformation of the characters of Sarah and The Drover themselves."

In addition to inspiration derived from the land itself, during his research Luhrmann became fascinated with what he refers to as "the naturally occurring collisions of characters and imagery created by the juxtaposition of the Anglo administration, Aboriginal cowboys, Chinese pearlers, crocodiles, palm trees and other contrasting elements."

The director was particularly interested in the melting pot of ethnicities that existed in the north of the country. "I was staggered to learn that there was a huge Asian population in Darwin during the 1930s. This is the great strength of the north. With a great ethnic diversity for such a small city (Darwin is a mere 100,000 people, but seems ten times that in its cosmopolitanism), Darwin was, and continues to be today, an exciting place with great food, culture and a vibrancy of life. Its proximity to Asia shaped a strong influence over the very spirit of the city.

"In addition, this part of the country produces some of the finest luxury goods in the world. From the iconic pink diamonds to crocodile skins and the beautiful South Sea pearls. Not to mention some of the finest beef in the world.

"It's this canvas on which I'm painting a universal story, but I have my own personal connection to it because it's a canvas that is also my home."

"LOVE IS TRULY ALL THAT MATTERS"

The background of the story during the years leading up to the Second World War is an ever-changing one. It is a world that no one can control. In a war-torn climate that will alter the world forever a nuclear family forms between Sarah, the English aristocrat, the Drover, a rugged cattleman and Nullah,

the orphaned child. Luhrmann says, “No matter that war may tear you apart. Even if these relationships mean defying everything and everyone to be together. You do what you must do to be with the people you truly love.”

Luhrmann feels that in today’s troubled world this is a message that will resonate with audiences. “As individuals, we feel we are in a moment in time in which the scales of change that surround us are so great that the only act that truly empowers us is to defend the love that we believe in. Northern Australia in the late 1930s, with the war approaching, provided a good canvas to throw this thematic idea into relief.

AN ODYSSEY OF SELF DISCOVERY

Luhrmann’s *Australia* is also the story of a woman’s remarkable transformation while defying the odds against her. As the story begins, we see Sarah as a rather cold and prudish woman who cares more for her Ferragamo shoes than for her husband. Believing her husband is off having affairs and childless at the age of 40, she feels that her life is over. She has become a woman whose only real love is for her prized horses. When she suddenly finds herself caught in the middle of the Australian outback her journey becomes an odyssey of self-discovery. She is transformed through the love she discovers and it is at this point that her life truly begins.

Luhrmann says, “Lady Sarah Ashley’s journey is fundamentally about rebirth of spirit. When Sarah first arrives in Australia she is as uptight as Katherine Hepburn’s character in *The African Queen*. But when Sarah embarks on the cattle drive she unexpectedly finds love: love of the land, love for the orphaned child and a passionate, romantic love for the Drover. She rediscovers her sexuality as she begins a relationship with a man with whom she is living out of wedlock. This relationship is judged harshly by the social mores of the time. She is faced with a similar challenge by taking in a part-Aboriginal child as her own. She learns to stand up for her relationships for she has learned what truly matters.”

NULLAH

Between 1910 and 1970 the Australian government and the governments of the Australian states were involved in a nation-wide program in which Aboriginal children, and in particular part-Aboriginal, part-Caucasian children, were taken from their families and placed in church missions or state institutions.

This was a misguided attempt to lift these children out of poverty and offer them the possibility of a more rewarding future by distancing them from their Indigenous families and communities. Part-Aboriginal children in particular were deemed as 'salvageable' and removed from their traditional culture in an attempt to re-educate them. These children have come to be known as the Stolen Generations and, while statistics are murky, it is believed that between one-tenth and one-third of Aboriginal children were taken from their parents and relocated. The country's relationship to this sad chapter in its history has only recently begun to be reconciled when the Australian government officially issued an apology to its Indigenous citizens in February 2008. This is the world into which Nullah is born. Nullah is both black and white in a world that cannot tolerate having such individuals integrated into their society. When his mother dies tragically, and with no father to claim him, Nullah becomes an orphan in a world that has no place for him. It is Sarah who ultimately defies the social order of the time and seeks to provide the boy with a home. Nullah, in turn, is the catalyst who opens Sarah's heart and brings Sarah and The Drover closer together.

Nearly one thousand young Aboriginal boys were auditioned for the key role of Nullah. Brandon Walters won the role after a long search. While Luhrmann and casting director Ronna Kress assembled the principal roles, Australian casting director Nikki Barrett spent months traveling to remote parts of the Australian continent shooting screen tests of young Indigenous boys, most of whom had no acting experience whatsoever. After Luhrmann had narrowed down the field from hundreds to a mere handful he spent several days in intensive workshop sessions in Sydney with the prospective young stars, conducting drama games and script readings in an informal environment. This was an exciting adventure for the boys who were mostly from very remote regions and had never visited the city. Luhrmann was immediately impressed by Brandon Walters' talent and natural screen charisma, and he was offered the coveted role and began preparing for his screen debut.

"The demands of filming extend over a six month duration which is an incredible challenge for an 11 year-old boy with no previous acting experience," says Luhrmann. Horse riding, whip cracking and dialogue techniques were on the very full curriculum for Australia's newest star and Brandon impressed fellow cast and crew alike as he rose to the challenges presented to him.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

To help create the world of the Australian outback of the 1930s as envisioned by Luhrmann, an enormous amount of research was undertaken by two-time Academy Award®-winning Production and Costume Designer, Catherine Martin and her teams.

Martin says: "Baz always directs us to start our process in reality. He is exigent in insisting on accurate historical investigation so that any divergence from the facts is made consciously. We may then make a decision to stretch reality to emphasize story points or character development. The recombining of

things that actually happened in order to strengthen the story is something that happens once we understand the facts. For instance, the live export of cattle had finished before the war years in Darwin, but in the film the cattle are still being shipped in 1942 heightening the dramatic impact of the story. “The Wizard of Oz” hadn’t yet been released in Australia in 1939 but Baz felt that the themes of that film were analogous to Sarah’s journey as well as the cultural melding of the main characters in our film: the English aristocrat, the rough hewn Drover, the orphaned child and the traditional owners of the land.

As Luhrmann explains, “While we have to find our own particular cinematic language to represent this film, its DNA comes directly from classic epic romances. To accomplish this I conduct a very intense period of personal and technical research, as I do on all my productions. We’re not making a documentary so there is a point at which we set certain rules in which the world of the film can sit.

“The defining rule of *Australia* is that, while we compress geography, time and some facts to amplify the romance, we never change the fundamental truth in which the world of the film is set. For example, while the attack on ‘Mission Island’ is a mythical telling, the plot points in the film have been directly drawn from history. There are documented cases where Japanese troops landed on Australian islands and where mission staff were killed during attacks. We took real-life stories such as the bombings and the capture and murder of priests and reweave these elements into our fictional story.”

Luhrmann was acutely aware that he did not want historical accuracy to bog down the dramatic elements of the story-telling. For example, he learned during his research that the missions were divided by the churches: Catholic, Protestant and Methodist. Rather than go into the politics of the situation he decided to create a generic religious institution.

The production team began the process of researching the very particular social history of the cattlemen of the period by studying various works of non-fiction and biographies such as “Hell West and Crooked” by Tom Cole and the Durack family saga, comprising “Kings in Grass Castles” and “Sons in the Saddle”, that describe so vividly the lives of the pioneering people who lived in the Kimberley at that time.

Interviews were conducted with veteran outback cattlemen by Luhrmann and his researchers. Luhrmann, Martin and their teams also embarked on numerous field trips to the Kimberley region as well as a visit to the Stockman’s Hall of Fame in far north Queensland and the Northern Territory Archives. Extensive consultations with the traditional owners of Carlton Hill Station, the land on which the mythical homestead ‘Faraway Downs’ was built, became a major source of research for the film.

Martin also used the online resource, Picture Australia, an extraordinary cache of digitalized images from libraries all over Australia, including the Durack Collection of photographs which give an amazing visual insight into the Mary Durack books. This resource enabled Martin’s team to study thousands of scanned images not available in print and which were scattered all over the country.

Martin says, “The process was extensive. We needed to be clear and accurate about a lot of unusual detail from the social history of this particular period. We researched everything from the appropriate

1930s breed of cattle, the shorthorn, to what the cattle was worth and how the prices rose during the war years. We researched how much a drover would get paid and how many stockmen and horses he would need to deliver the cattle. Questions such as what a particular property would be worth or what a station's brand looked like were constant. We had to research the 1930s Australian stock saddle and tack and have them custom made for the actors by a saddle maker versed in the finer details of the period. The Australian stock saddle is designed to hold the rider securely over great distances and rough terrain.

"Once we discovered what the realities were then we would translate that for each character. For example, a lot of indigenous stockmen rode bareback and shoeless but certain modifications needed to be made, either for character or for safety purposes," says Martin.

At one stage, Luhrmann embarked on a private journey across the country to experience the land in a deeper, more personal way. He gained an understanding of the land that proved to be so powerful and more potent than anything he could derive from history books that he encouraged Catherine Martin to take a similar journey; which she did along with their two children.

In an equally compelling adventure, the director decided to experience an actual cattle drive. So, along with Associate Producer, Paul Watters, and Luhrmann's assistant, Schuyler Weiss, Luhrmann found himself on horseback pushing hundreds of cows in the middle of the hot and dusty outback terrain. Although hidden from the real cattle drovers he was riding with, Luhrmann did secretly seek comfort from his iPod along the way.

THE COLOR PALETTE

Luhrmann and Martin, in collaboration with cinematographer Mandy Walker, studied vintage color photos from the 1930s and 1940s to help inspire the mutual creation of the film's color palette.

Martin says, "The palette has the period feel of a slightly de-saturated canvas containing bursts of color. When I first started working in film you couldn't digitally manipulate the image to achieve a desired effect, so if someone told you that they wanted a certain look then you had to achieve it in reality. That is what we have collectively sought to achieve here. The environment in which we are shooting has helped us enormously in this process because the dirt on the ground ends up covering everything; nature has helped us get a muted background palette from which all these colors pop.

"Baz did not want every scene to be generic, rather different moods needed to be evoked at different times to underline the narrative. So, the good times at the homestead are very light, white and airy while the dilapidated homestead is dark, depressing, dusty and red."

PRODUCTION DESIGN AND LOCATIONS

Principal photography on *Australia* commenced on April 30, 2007 at Strickland House in Vacluse, New South Wales. Martin and her production design team, headed by Supervising Art Director Ian Gracie and Art Director Karen Murphy, were already hard at work constructing massive exterior sets in both Queensland and Western Australia. A five acre set of the city of Darwin in the 1930s was built over a period of ten weeks on the Bowen foreshore in Queensland. The set included a full-scale, two-storey pub, a Chinatown area, dirt roads, period telegraph poles and street lighting and an extensive redecoration of existing buildings so that they would blend in with the 1930s set. At the same time, the foundations of 'Faraway Downs', the mythical homestead, were being laid outside of Kununurra in the far north of the country. Access roads were being created and country roads were being graded so that huge containers of materials and supplies could be trucked to the isolated location.

Martin says, "Bowen was the ideal location because we found two huge vacant lots located on the seafront by the wharf and, by some stroke of fate, Darwin wharf and Bowen wharf face in the same direction so we could match the light at both locations. At first we felt challenged by the fact that Darwin is on an escarpment and our town is flat. However, this allowed us to condense all the elements of Darwin into a smaller geographical area. It is Baz's vision of Darwin at the time that supports the storytelling; we tried to condense all of the characteristics particular to Darwin at the time, including the thriving Chinatown, the people trading in livestock and the rowdiness at the town pub.

"The scale, texture and volume of the Bowen set gave you a sense of being in a real place. For example, we never shot directly in the Chinatown set but it played an important role in bringing the town to life by adding depth and atmosphere to those shots where it was seen."

Filming in Bowen wrapped on June 28 and the production then headed to the Top End to shoot Darwin in the Northern Territory. Here, Luhrmann utilized the unique tides along an impressive wharf area for the scenes where Lady Sarah Ashley arrives in Australia, as well as post-bombing action scenes. After a few weeks of filming on the sound stages at Fox Studios Australia in Sydney, New South Wales, the company once again took to the road. The production set up headquarters in Kununurra in the East Kimberley region of Western Australia to take advantage of its varied landscapes.

Martin's great challenge was the creation of an impressive homestead property built in the midst of the outback wilderness. Located at Carlton Hill, 60 kilometers from the town of Kununurra, Martin and her team constructed "Faraway Downs".

Luhrmann, Martin and cinematographer Mandy Walker decided that Carlton Hill provided the perfect relationship between the homestead, the environment and the light. As Martin explains: "After finding

this location we had the environment scanned and we then built a digital model of the house which was moved around until we found the perfect spot. This did not, however remove the need for lengthy scouts to the actual location, where Baz paced out every scene to ensure the distances the actors needed to cover were dramatically correct. There is a large Boab tree in the front of the homestead that is a key element in the composition. We spent a lot of time spacing it out to determine how big the tree should be and how far away from the house it should be positioned.

“The homestead set was a wonderful challenge; distilling with my team the local architectural style to find an iconic language for Faraway Downs. The house had to be a character in both its incarnations – before and after Sarah’s renovations. It needed to be substantial and charming enough to make Lady Ashley want to stay but not so out of kilter with the local architectural vernacular so as to appear implausible.

“I have loved the set decoration aspect of this film, working with Set Decorator Bev Dunn and our team. In particular, the major textural changes the homestead undergoes from the dilapidated state we first see it in, to the green oasis it eventually becomes. It was logistically difficult to accomplish this transformation but ultimately very satisfying.”

COSTUME DESIGN

Martin and her costume team, headed by Costume Supervisor Eliza Godman, faced an equally impressive task. They were responsible for creating almost 2000 costumes for the film on a scale four times larger than the work done for *Moulin Rouge*!.

The specific requirements for a big action movie meant having to make multiple copies of costumes for certain sequences. The department had to make nine pairs of jodhpurs for Kidman to wear during a horse action sequence and also had to create a slightly altered version for scenes where she is standing. As Martin says, “What looks good sitting on a horse doesn’t always look as good standing up.” Rain sequences in the film also contributed to the creation of multiple costumes. Another issue was that 1930s vintage clothing proved too small for contemporary actors to wear, resulting in the design and creation of 60 evening dresses for one scene alone.

Martin designed an extensive wardrobe for the film’s main character, Lady Sarah Ashley, which reflects her personal transformation as the story progresses. As Martin comments, “Baz had strong views about the kind of graphic ‘Englishness’ he wanted at the very beginning of the movie. She arrives on the flying boat wearing a blue and white nautical outfit which would have been more suitable for the Riviera than 1930s Darwin. She later wears a pith helmet with gauzed netting as if she were on a safari in Africa when

she travels to the homestead. The idea was to keep her quite tight and restrained. There is a sense of formality and occasion every time you see her.

“When she gets caught in a cattle stampede and loses all her clothing, she loses her pretenses as well. She makes the decision to choose survival over appearance and, in the process of pushing 1500 head of cattle across the harsh terrain, she is transformed into a very different woman.

“Sarah is a very independent and capable woman and always has been. She is a very modern woman and that spirit is expressed in her clothes. She wears pants, which was very avant-garde, in the spirit of such forward-thinking women of the '30s such as Katherine Hepburn and Carole Lombard. After the stampede we keep the characteristics of her wardrobe from the start of the film but simplify it to make it more real as the movie progresses and the story becomes more dramatic and human.”

To complement the fashion in Lady Sarah's wardrobe, Martin approached Ferragamo to collaborate on the design of Lady Sarah's shoes. As Martin says, “When you think of the 1930s one of the first names of shoes that comes to mind is Ferragamo. Ferragamo is synonymous with famous persons from the past and has a long association of making shoes for films and of revolutionizing certain styling and manufacturing techniques. One of the quintessential Ferragamo traits is their confidence to mix often exotic materials with more luxurious fabrics; the showcasing of this trait and use of materials such as chagreen is a wonderful complement to the exoticism of Northern Australia during this period.”

When it came to creating jewelry to accessorize Lady Sarah Ashley's wardrobe, Martin chose to collaborate with Australia's premier supplier of south sea pearls of the time, Paspaley, who made beautiful pearl drop earrings, and diamond jewelry designer Stefano Canturi, with whom Martin also worked on *Moulin Rouge!*, creating the famed Satine necklace. Canturi specifically designed a suite of jewels including a diamond brooch, engagement and wedding rings, and diamond and coral earrings.

Although traditionally known in the film world as props, Lady Sarah's vast suite of blue and white luggage, supplied by legendary fashion house Prada, further identifies Sarah as being from the upper echelons of society. Prada, founded in 1913, was a logical choice as in the 1930s, the period of the film, the leather goods designed by Prada were a favorite of royalty and aristocracy.

R.M. Williams ('The Bush Outfitter') a company established in 1932, synonymous with the traditional clothes of the Australian bush, allowed Martin to access their archives in order to draw inspiration for the costume design for the film's 200 stockmen and later also manufactured the majority of cattlemen's costumes and boots. Martin went through old R.M. Williams catalogues to find the styles she felt were appropriate. She then had the patterns cut in the film's wardrobe department and graded before turning them over to the R.M. Williams work rooms. Existing styles of R.M. Williams boots as well as all manner of footwear and leather goods revived by R.M. Williams for Martin were also used in the production.

Hugh Jackman's costumes are derived from the traditional garb of the Australian 'Drover', a mixture of moleskins, checkered shirts and R.M. Williams boots topped off with an Akubra hat. Akubra has been making bush hats since 1912 under this trade name. The Drover's hip slung hobble belt is designed to hobble a horse at night or to help you catch it.

Martin says, "What is interesting about Baz's approach is that he is as focused on the texture of the background characters' costumes as he is with Nicole and Hugh's costumes. This focus creates the world of the movie through characterization and specific clothes. Baz is not satisfied with generic extras. Each role needs a look and a function in any given scene.

"In the film we represent two distinct Indigenous groups: a Kimberley mob, who are the traditional owners of the land on which the homestead is built, and an Arnhem Land mob. We decided, in consultation with the Mirriwoong tribe, the actual traditional owners of the real-life Carlton Hill station, to represent these groups as pan-Kimberley and pan-Arnhem Land, even though the cultural practices of groups within these broad geographical areas vary greatly.

"Each indigenous character has a very intensely studied costume based on interviews, expert advice and photographic research, particularly the photos of Donald Thompson and Baldwin Spencer who documented the lives of the Indigenous people of the Top End in the 1930s. We were also greatly assisted by Indigenous body adornment expert Dr. Louise Hamby, Postdoctoral Fellow of the Research School of Humanities at the Australian National University, who is also an expert in the Thompson photographs. The idea was to challenge people's stereotypical views of what our Indigenous people looked like in the 1930s and celebrate the artistry and beauty of the traditional dress of that area."

LUHRMANN'S JOURNEY

The making of *Australia* has been a deeply personal project for Luhrmann. "One of the reasons I started on this creative journey, what I sought to get out of it, no matter what the outcome, is a more direct understanding of my country. I've learned so much by researching the country's history, particularly its relationship with England, what it means to be independent and self-governing and the conflicted history with the indigenous people. When it came to the very sensitive issue of the Stolen Generations I travelled to Bathurst and Melville Islands to speak to the men and women who had been mission children. It was then that I realized that I had already got what I had been looking for in this project. I was becoming deeply connected to the truth and realities of my country, its history and its people. Being in the cross-fire of these stories, while in the process of creating my own, has deepened my personal understanding of Australia."

During the making of the film Luhrmann discovered an exceptional notion that proved to be equally compelling to him. It is a notion that he has come to believe in with all his heart. It derives from an indigenous idea that a profoundly sacred communication exists between man and the land.

As he explains, "In working with the Indigenous partners in the storytelling of this film, one has to be aware of the traditional belief that stories live on in the physical landscape. Obviously, for someone like me, an ideal like this is so compelling. It leads to a universal theme that we have tried to touch on in the film that you cannot really possess anything; not land, not a person, not a child. Real love makes you realize that you are a caretaker for these things. All that you do possess at the end of a life is your story."

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