



**SCREEN AUSTRALIA, SILVER LION FILMS, MYRIAD PICTURES
AND ROADSHOW FILMS
PRESENT
IN ASSOCIATION WITH FILM VICTORIA
AN INGENIOUS CO-PRODUCTION
A SIMON WINCER & LANCE HOOL PRODUCTION
BRENDAN GLEESON
STEPHEN CURRY**

THE CUP

**WRITTEN BY ERIC O'KEEFE AND SIMON WINCER
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS LANCE HOOL, KIRK D'AMICO, JOEL PEARLMAN,
GREG SITCH, PETER de RAUCH, JAMES M. VERNON
PRODUCED BY JAN BLADIER, DAVID LEE, SIMON WINCER
DIRECTED BY SIMON WINCER**

“*The Cup* is more than just the story of a horse race. It is the story of triumph over adversity,” says the film’s director, producer and co-writer, the internationally acclaimed Simon Wincer.

Probably no horse race had a more extraordinary effect on a nation than the running of Australia’s 2002 Melbourne Cup.

At the heart of this true story is Damien Oliver, a young jockey who loses his only brother in a tragic racing accident just days before the Melbourne Cup. The race fall hauntingly similar to the way their father died 27 years earlier. After suffering a series of discouraging defeats, Damien teams with Irish trainer Dermot Weld, and triumphs at the 2002 Melbourne Cup in one of the most thrilling finales in sporting history.

Australian actor *Stephen Curry* portrays Damien Oliver, starring alongside Irish actor *Brendan Gleeson* who plays Dermot Weld.

Starring

BRENDAN GLEESON

AND

STEPHEN CURRY

“THE CUP”

DANIEL MACPHERSON

JODI GORDON

BOBBY FOX

HARLI AMES

MARTIN SACKS

SHAUN MICALLEF

BILL HUNTER

LEWIS FITZ-GERALD

ALICE PARKINSON

FEATURING

COLLEEN HEWETT

AND

TOM BURLINSON AS DAVE PHILLIPS

Production team

Director	Simon Wincer
Writers	Eric O'Keefe Simon Wincer
Producers	Jan Bladier David Lee Simon Wincer
Executive Producers	Lance Hool Kirk D'Amico Joel Pearlman Greg Sitch Peter de Rauch James M. Vernon
First Assistant Director	Bob Donaldson
Director of Photography	David Burr ACS
Production Designer	Lisette Thomas
Costume Designer	Julie Middleton
Make-up Supervisor	Jo Fletcher
Editor	David Pulbrook
Composer	Bruce Rowland
Horse Department co-ordinator	Georgia Aikman
Horse Master	Evanne Chesson
Stunt Co-ordinator	Reg Roordink

Storyline

It is called “The Race That Stops The Nation”, but never in the history of Australia’s Melbourne Cup has there been so dramatic a contest as the running of this Thoroughbred classic. Simon’s Wincer’s The Cup is the true story that chronicles the intrigue and the ambitions of the world’s greatest horsemen as they vie for one of the crown jewels of racing.

A host of horsemen from Ireland, Dubai and Australia – each a character in his own right – rounds out the rich cast. From Ireland, the wily Dermot Weld, the most successful trainer in Irish history. From England, Europe’s high achieving jockey, the celebrated Frankie Dettori and from the Middle East, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed, Crown Prince of Dubai, the richest horseman on earth. But it is Australia’s Damien Oliver who becomes the film’s focus when the jockey’s older brother is rushed to the hospital after a racing accident the week before the Melbourne Cup. A day later, Jason Oliver succumbs to his injuries, an event eerily reminiscent of his father’s death 27 years earlier following a similar riding mishap.

Determined to overcome a cruel twist of fate, Damien insists on competing in Australia’s biggest racing festival. Booked to ride in twelve races over two days, he loses every one - Badly. By the time he mounts up for the Melbourne Cup, it is a foregone conclusion he cannot win.

This only makes his astounding victory in Australia’s greatest race even more inspiring. To his broken-hearted mother Pat, and his girlfriend Trish, Damien’s triumph over a week of agony, is a gift from heaven. To his countrymen, still in shock from the Bali bombings, his gutsy ride speaks volumes about Australia’s mettle. And to his fellow horsemen, hardened competitors who have “seen it all” his gritty performance in the face of unbelievable pressure is a testament to the one attribute that knows no measure: the human spirit.

THE CAST

Brendan Gleeson – portrays *Dermot Weld*

Dermot Weld, known as the Irish Wizard, is one of Ireland's most successful trainers. He holds the record for the most winners trained in Ireland – 2,578 – set in August 2000. A qualified veterinarian and former jockey, Dermot was the first international trainer to train the winner of the Melbourne Cup – Vintage Crop in 1993. In 2002 he arrived in Australia with two contenders for the Melbourne Cup – Vinnie Roe and Media Puzzle. The pundits thought Vinnie Roe was the best chance to take out the race. They didn't bank on the combination of Dermot Weld, Damien Oliver and Media Puzzle.

Brendan Gleeson was drawn to *The Cup* by the story. "There is something exciting about this true story that doesn't happen very often. Everyone comes out of it enhanced. There is a lack of cynicism. It is a story that transcends sport."

When he read one of the early drafts of the script Brendan had some misgiving about the "Irish dialogue". He was reassured when Simon Wincer said he was happy to let him work on that part of the script. After all, said Simon, "It was written by a Texan and an Australian."

During the Melbourne Cup's 150th tour of the world in 2010, Simon travelled to Ireland and spent time going through the script with Brendan. The journey also gave Brendan the chance to meet Dermot Weld at the official VRC Melbourne Cup dinner in Dublin.

"He invited me down to his stables. It was interesting observing him. It was even more interesting to meet his wife Mary and get her take on him," explains Brendan. "I was able to use this in the film."

Brendan isn't a punter and hasn't had much to do with horses, except what he describes as an ill-fated syndicate with some friends. "She had a lovely character but we were just paying for the feed. She wasn't a champion."

The professionalism of the film crew wasn't a surprise to Brendan. "The Australian crews are renowned all over the world for their efficiency. They are good at what they do. We've had huge shots to do with 500 extras and mad horses and it should be mayhem and tortuous and slow, but it hasn't been like that at all. We get our shots in and it doesn't feel pressurised. The set up is there and all I have to do is just swan on and do my job. It's been a good experience and it's been fun."

Brendan puts the feeling on set down to director Simon Wincer. "The mood always comes from the top. If you come across a fractious shoot it invariably comes from the top. Simon is calm – camera problems, crowd problems – nothing fazes him. And he pushes it along. We work at quite a lick. The atmosphere is calm and efficient – a pleasure to work in."

Brendan has a great love of Ireland and the Irish culture, a love that has kept him living in his homeland rather than moving to the US. He has a love of music and can still be found playing the fiddle in the pubs of Dublin – but not so often now his profile makes him the centre of attention rather than the music. Brendan loves the fiddles, the pipes, the gigs and the reels.

Brendan came to acting late in life. He was teaching English and Gaelic for 10 years while performing with a local theatre company. “I didn’t see it as something I could do fulltime. I always thought that was for other people. I didn’t want to act for the sake of it. I didn’t want to do washing powder ads in order to maintain my life.”

Brendan also didn’t want to deprive his wife, Mary, and four sons a good life, saying he was “terrified of not having enough money”.

When Brendan finally took the step he knew it was the right one. “I felt I’d misjudged the situation. I knew I was home when I had to reapply for a passport and put my occupation down as ‘actor’.”

The years spent teaching the Irish language reinforced Brendan’s love of the culture, the music, the history and the stories – what he describes as the “folk memory”. He doesn’t agree with some schools of thought that Irish is a dying language, but even though the young people appreciate the language he can’t see it re-emerging as a spoken language.

Brendan’s sons all play the fiddle and have their father’s love of music. And two have his love of acting. He never encouraged the boys to act when they were young.

“I can’t deny it is an instinct, but I wouldn’t have it when they were younger even though there were opportunities. Kids need to be anonymous.”

Like all parents he has only one concern about his children.

“All I care about my lads is that their spirit stays intact.”

Brendan Gleeson’s extensive credits include *Braveheart*, *The Butcher Boy*, *The General*, Steven Spielberg’s *A.I.: Artificial Intelligence* and Martin Scorsese’s *Gangs of New York*. He is well known to younger audiences for his portrayal of the defence against the dark arts professor “Mad-eye” Moody in three Harry Potter films. Last year he played Winston Churchill in the historical drama *Into the Storm* which earned him an Emmy for Outstanding Lead Actor in a miniseries or movie. In 2008 he appeared in the Oscar nominated film, *In Bruges*. Brendan has also been nominated for two BAFTA awards – best supporting actor in 2009 for *In Bruges* and best leading actor for his portrayal of Winston Churchill in *Into the Storm*.

Stephen Curry – portrays *Damien Oliver*

Damien Oliver was Australia's leading jockey in 2002. He had already won the most prestigious race in Australia, the Melbourne Cup, in 1995 on Doriemus. In 2002 he won the Jockey of the Year Scobie Breasley Medal for a record fourth time. He had the world at his feet. When local trainer Lee Freedman didn't have a runner in the Melbourne Cup Damien agreed to ride Media Puzzle for Irish trainer Dermot Weld. Then, just days before the race, Damien's world was rocked by the tragic death of his brother, Jason, in a riding accident in Perth. The Oliver brothers had followed their father Ray to the racing game even though he was killed in a race fall in 1975 when Jason was five-years-old and Damien only three. Following Jason's death it wasn't so much a question of 'will Damien ride in the Cup?' but 'will he ride again?'

Stephen Curry showed dedication to his craft and enormous discipline when preparing for the role of Damien Oliver. He shed 12 kilograms by giving up some of the things he loves – potato, rice, pasta, bread and beer. Admitting he's not a 'natural horseman', Stephen still learnt to ride the thoroughbred racehorses portraying Media Puzzle.

He spent a lot of time with Damien before and during the shoot. "He is one of our finest jockeys, respected by everyone in the racing community and the broader community. It's an honour to play him," says Stephen. "He's been very kind, letting me follow him around on race day. I saw his meal – half a bottle of Gatorade and a handful of jelly babies. Being a jockey is a thankless job and they diet even harder than I did! You know, I'm not going to become a jockey!"

When he first began learning to ride, about two years before filming began; Stephen would go to director Simon Wincer's farm for lessons. "I enjoyed that a lot – and then I got onto thoroughbreds – and I didn't enjoy that at all. I don't think they love me. Then tend to buck a lot when I am around. And they rear up and knock me off in front of 500 extras. I am sensing the horses have a fair inkling I don't know what I am doing."

The 2002 Melbourne Cup is an enduring memory for Stephen, an event he says is a truly inspirational story. It drew him to the film.

"You can't help but become emotionally attached to the characters and what they've gone through. It was a horrible moment in one family's life. Playing a real person does add pressure. You want to get it right."

And Stephen believes it is important for the Australian film industry to tell Australian stories.

"They are an integral part of our culture. We have the people to tell our stories well. Films like *The Cup* will help bring Australians back to see Australian films, and there will be an international audience.

"We have a rich history of making films that appeal to a great cross-section. This is a great achievement, considering the lack of funds in this county. But that is more than made up by the ability of our technicians."

Getting it right was made easier by Simon Wincer, the man Stephen describes as ‘the consummate director – a calm, relaxed man who is passionate about the project’.

“It was a great honour to have him invite me on to the project and trust me to play Damien,” says Stephen. “Apart from dieting and spending time with big scary creatures – this film has been great. The story attracted me in the first place and working with Simon.”

The Cup also gave Stephen the opportunity to work with actors he knows and admires – like Brendan Gleeson, the man he describes as ‘one of the best actors in the world’.

Portraying Jason Oliver was Daniel MacPherson. He and Stephen have been friends for years. “I went to his 21st birthday party,” says Stephen. “He has a great energy and is invaluable to have on the set.”

He also worked with Shaun Micallef, his on-stage partner in their two-hander, *Good Evening* – the Peter Cook and Dudley Moore stage show.

“Shaun was keen to work on the film. He wanted to meet Simon who came to see us doing our show. When Simon arrived backstage, Shaun looked at me and said ‘Damien that was one hell of a ride’. He had the role from that point!

Stephen praised Tom Burlinson and Bobby Fox, saying, “they do the job and do it right – and they enjoy themselves. They bring a great energy to set with no ego.”

Stephen Curry is one of Australia’s most acclaimed young actors winning Best Lead Actor at the 2007 Australian Film Awards for television drama as well as Most Outstanding Actor at the 2008 Logie Awards for his performance as Graham Kennedy in *The King*. He is fondly remembered as the youngest member of the Kerrigan family in the hit movie *The Castle*.

Daniel MacPherson – portrays *Jason Oliver*

Jason Oliver and his brother Damien were not just siblings – they were best mates. They both followed their father Ray into the world of racing, despite his death following a race fall at Kalgoorlie in 1975. On October 30, 2002, just days before the running of the Melbourne Cup Jason Oliver suffered severe head injuries after a fall during a barrier trial at Perth's Belmont Racecourse. He never regained consciousness. Following the tragedy Damien wondered whether he would ever ride again.

Daniel MacPherson is a lover of horseracing and an owner of race horses so *The Cup* has been a dream job. Daniel's grandmother introduced him to horseracing when he was three-years-old and the 2002 Melbourne Cup was the first he missed. He'd just moved to London.

Daniel first met Damien when he moved to Melbourne as a 17-year-old and had started working on the television series, *Neighbours*. "I have spent time with Damien and Trish at the races. To be involved in the telling of his story is very special."

But Daniel hasn't called on this friendship to ask Damien about his brother, Jason. "I've been respectful about how much I have asked Damien about the relationship. Trish has been forthcoming and so has Neil Pinner. It's a very sensitive subject and it means a lot to Damien. I am gentle around the subject, but there have been some bits of advice.

"I feel an utmost responsibility and respect for Jason's memory. I have put as much life and energy into this character to make Jason full of life and a great mate – a guy you'd like to hang out with. I hope I have done Jason's memory proud."

One highlight of working on *The Cup* for Daniel was the chance to ride a thoroughbred. "If you are a fan of horse riding and get to ride a thoroughbred it is like being a formula one fan and getting to drive the car. It's so cool. You have a unique relationship with each animal. They have their own personalities. I enjoy working out how to get them comfortable and me comfortable on them – finding their quirks and traits."

The jockeys working on the set were happy to pass on advice to Daniel about his techniques and would point out if he was doing something wrong.

"Everyone has been so generous of their time and their knowledge. There's a great feeling about this movie throughout the racing industry."

To get comfortable Daniel transformed his body, shedding just under 10 kilograms and developing muscles he didn't know he had. While he enjoyed the physical side of it, the new look body came at a price. "I didn't eat one biscuit on set!"

Daniel has always been moved by the theatre of sport. "It is so unscripted. There is so much emotion. And this is one of those moments when the theatre of sport takes over. If you scripted a story like this no one would believe it.

"And in the hands of someone as talented as Simon and the incredible crew and talented and diverse cast, the story is a well crafted piece of cinema. Australian audiences have the history

of it. They know where they were in 2002. And it has all the elements for overseas audiences.”

Daniel says that working with Simon has been disconcertingly easy - so much so that he was worried. “I’d lost all this weight and horse riding training and we’d just do a couple of takes!”

Daniel loves being at the track. He loves the great characters of racing. And despite the expense and frustration he has enjoyed being a racehorse owner.

Daniel MacPherson began his acting career as Joel Samuels in *Neighbours*. In 2001 he moved to London where he played both Jesus and Judas in the West End production of *Godspell*. This led to the regular role as PC Cameron Tait in the long-running television series, *The Bill*. He returned to Australia in 2004 and has appeared in the series *City Homicide*, the telemovie *Black Jack*. Most recently he has been the host of *Dancing with the Stars* and *Beat the Stars*.

Tom Burlinson – portrays *Dave Phillips*

Dave Phillips is Dermot Weld's travelling foreman, getting the horses prepared for their races. In 2002 he travelled to Melbourne with Media Puzzle and Vinnie Roe. He called on the local knowledge of his brother, Niall when Media Puzzle raced in the Geelong Cup to qualify for the big race.

Tom Burlinson is no stranger to Australian horse movies. He credits *The Man From Snowy River* as the movie that 'changed his life'. This led to his role as Tommy Woodcock in *Phar Lap*. On both projects, Tom worked with Simon Wincer.

"Simon and I have a longstanding association and a very good working relationship. He can deliver a really good picture and a really good horse picture. He is the right person to direct this movie. This is his baby. He is passionate about the story and that is infectious.

"It is an Australian film maker telling an Australian story and that is a good thing."

Tom remembers the moment when Damien Oliver blew the kiss to the heavens after winning the 2002 Melbourne Cup. "It is one of the great moments of Australian sporting history and it touched everyone, whether they were race going fans or not.

"When I first read the script, and this doesn't happen all that often, I found myself becoming very involved in the story and moved by it. I had been looking for something to get me back into movies. I just had to get the role."

On set, Tom took Bobby Fox under his wing. Tom knew what it was like to be a 'first-timer' on set with much more experienced cast members.

Tom was able to draw on his experience of working with horses from his earlier productions. He knows the horses don't understand why they stand around on set for hours and do the same thing over again.

"Horses can't act, but if you build up a relationship off the set they will look to you for reassurance when they are on the set. I did this with 'the big horse' in *Phar Lap*. And I was able to talk to Bobby and Stephen about this."

Tom Burlinson is one of Australia's most popular and successful contemporary actors and entertainers. Being cast in the title role in the feature film *The Man from Snowy River* led to Tom being offered a succession of leading roles in Australian and international films and mini-series over the next several years. These included *Phar Lap*, *Eureka Stockade*, *Flesh and Blood*, *Windrider*, *Piece of Cake*, and *The Legend of Kootenai Brown* as well as *The Man from Snowy River II*. In 1991 Tom sang the voice of the young Frank Sinatra in the Warner Brothers mini-series *Sinatra*. This was his first professional singing engagement and opened up a new career in Australia and internationally.

Jodi Gordon – portrays *Trish Oliver*

Trish Oliver was Damien's support following the death of his brother, Jason. She has inner strength that helps get Damien through the tough times. Now the mother of his two daughters, Trish Oliver, was trackside when her husband failed to ride a winner in 12 races during the Spring Racing Carnival in the lead up to the 2002 Melbourne Cup. She was there when he rode Media Puzzle to victory with the hearts of the nation riding with him.

Jodi Gordon says that meeting Trish Oliver gave her an insight that helped with preparation for her first role in a feature film.

“It was fantastic. You read about people but when you meet them face to face you understand them a bit better. After meeting Trish I did tweak how I played the character, but we are not making a documentary. My portrayal of Trish is a mixture of the script and meeting her.

“I talked to her about her relationship with Damien and how they met. It gave me a feeling of how they work as a couple and I was able to incorporate that into the movie.”

To make her more physically like Trish, Jodi changed her hair colour – becoming a blonde for the duration of the shoot. It took 18 hours over three days to transform Jodi.

The Cup was a learning curve for Jodi. She says she learnt something every day. “It's a whole new world. It is a very different pace to working on series television.”

The progression from television to film was made easier by Jodi's fellow cast members and director Simon Wincer.

“I know Simon has done a lot of great work and it was amazing to work with him. He creates a really relaxed and encouraging environment. When I am relaxed I can give my best. When you are doing a difficult scene an actor can start to panic, but Simon calms you down. You talk about it and you get through it. Simon has a real fatherly quality and he got the best out of me. I appreciated that.”

Jodi admits the role of Trish stretched her, as it was so very different to everything she has done before. Along with Simon, her other cast members also made the transition easier for Jodi, particularly Stephen Curry.

“Stephen is an incredible actor. He gives you so much and working off each other makes it easier. He is so talented and it has been wonderful working with him. Everyone was fantastic.”

Jodi admits that until she read the book *The Cup* her interest in racing was the fashion stakes.

“But the script and the book have given me an insight into the world of the jockeys, the trainers and the horses. I had no idea and I have found it fascinating. It is not just that the Melbourne Cup is a big event it is the emotional journey that this family goes through. You feel everything they go through. It grips you and you cry – a lot.”

And for Jodi there were many emotional scenes.

Jodi Gordon is best known to Australian audiences for her award-winning portrayal of Martha in *Home & Away*. For this role she was awarded the Logie Award for Most Popular New Female Talent in 2006 and was nominated for the Silver Logie Award for Most Popular Actress in 2009. Jodi has also appeared in *Dancing with the Stars*. Jodi is an ambassador for Tony Bianco shoes.

Bobby Fox – portrays *Niall Phillips*

Niall Phillips, Dave's brother, left Ireland for Melbourne and had established himself as a trainer working in the Geelong area in 2001. When Dave arrived in Melbourne with Media Puzzle the horse had to win the Geelong Cup to qualify for the Melbourne Cup. It was partly Niall's inside knowledge that helped Media Puzzle across the winning line and the road to equine immortality.

Bobby Fox had not worked in front of the camera before his first day on the set of *The Cup* but he was not a newcomer to the entertainment industry. Bobby had been wowing audiences with his portrayal of Franki Vali in *The Jersey Boys*.

"I was delighted when I was offered the role. This is the way I wanted to take my career. The first couple of days I wasn't sure what I was doing here, but it got easier as time went on."

And it was during those early days that Bobby did most of his scenes with Brendan Gleeson. "I was instantly intimidated and that was perfect for my character. Niall was intimidated by him because he was only a surrogate member of the team, brought in by his brother."

And playing Niall's brother is Tom Burlinson, who became Bobby's surrogate brother on set. "He is an absolute gentleman. Tom is the ultimate professional who has been so giving on the set. He plays my big brother and has been my big brother on this shoot. He understands the position because he's been there before."

Tom also helped Bobby with insights into working with horses. Bobby had never had anything to do with horses.

Bobby couldn't believe the attraction the Melbourne Cup holds for Australians – the race horse that stops a nation. Now he thinks of the 2002 Melbourne Cup as "magical".

"I worked on the script, met Damien and Niall and then I watched the race. I was in tears. It was an epic thing. I tried to put myself in Damien's place but I couldn't. My heart went out to him. That one day was a tragedy mixed with a joyous and elative event. It is an important story."

Bobby initially spent time on the phone with Niall before meeting him at the Geelong Racecourse during filming. "He was so giving, a really lovely fellow. He told me about his relationship with Dave – things that the Phillips family didn't even know. I got a real feel for his spirit."

The Irish dialect coach on set did help Bobby. After living in Australia for seven years he had developed a "hybrid" accent. She helped him "turn it on for the cameras."

Bobby is a world champion Irish dancer and has a feel for storytelling. He says that "actors don't have to sing or dance but dancers and singers have to act or they give a completely lifeless performance." This attitude was a great help on set.

And it was the story that impressed him. "The story is magnificent and to tell it all you need to do is just be truthful."

Bobby Fox has been wowing audiences around Australia for more than a year with his portrayal of Frankie Vali in *Jersey Boys*. Born in Longford, Ireland, Bobby is four times World Irish Dancing Champion. He came to Australia with *Riverdance* and decided to stay. He has appeared in many Australian musicals including *Mamma Mia!*, *Dusty*, *Leader of the Pack*, *Sweet Charity* and *Spamalot*.

Harli Ames – portrays *Saeed Bin Suroor*

Saeed Bin Suroor is the head trainer for His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum and his Godolphin stables. He is a regular visitor to Melbourne for the Spring Racing Carnival, bringing the Sheikh's prized thoroughbreds. In 2002 Saeed Bin Suroor brought Pugin Hatha Anna and Bee Keeper to Melbourne. Even with international jockey Frankie Dettori in the saddle Pugin wasn't good enough. The Godolphin stable has never won the prized Melbourne Cup.

Harli Ames can't believe how lucky he was to win the role of Saeed and get paid for the privilege of coming to work every day. "I am very fortunate to have such a role."

"It has been a great experience – from Simon Wincer down to the driver there has been a wonderful energy around the set."

In the lead up to the shoot, Harli went to early morning track work at Flemington and met many of Melbourne's leading trainers and saw them in action. He also watched footage of Saeed at race meetings around the world, absorbing his demeanour and how he conducted himself. He didn't get a chance to meet the trainer but did talk to people who'd worked with him, including jockey Kerrin McEvoy.

Harli was a little intimidated at the thought of working with Brendan Gleeson, "but once we were on set he was so funny and playful. He was wonderful to work with."

The Cup was Harli's first major Australian film. "There was a great camaraderie on set. And Simon is a real gentleman. He is calm on set and makes the work fun. The people working with him have been with him for a while and there is a real sense of understanding about how everyone works."

The film has given him a real insight into the world of racing and racehorses, but Harli admits that he had the easy role when it came to the horses. "Unlike Stephen and Daniel, I didn't have to ride them."

Harli was moved by the story. "The 2002 Melbourne Cup is an amazing story. No matter where you were it had an effect on you. It is a fantastic story, an amazing Australian story that everyone can relate to."

Harli Ames – is a NIDA graduate and has appeared in several television series including the critically acclaimed *East West 101*, *Killing Time*, *Rush* and *City Homicide*. His film credits include *Fool's Gold*, *Knowing* and *Mask II*.

Martin Sacks – portrays *Neil Pinner*

Neil Pinner is Damien Oliver's long time business manager, confidante and friend. Neil was at Damien's side when Jason Oliver passed away and was there when he rode Media Puzzle to victory in the 2002 Melbourne Cup.

Martin Sacks admits that he drove Neil Pinner "a little mad" with questions on background and history. "He was very kind giving me a few keys to who he was and his relationship with Damien and Trish."

Martin also had the pleasure of dining with Neil and Damien along with Stephen Curry. "We sat opposite each other. Funnily enough Neil and I ate pasta and Damien and Stephen had fish and salad!"

Playing a real person is a double-edged sword for Martin. He feels an intense responsibility to honour the essence of the person and to make it an authentic portrayal but there is the advantage of being able to get information on the person and build a background to the role. And with the role of Neil, Martin didn't have to starve himself!

Neil Pinner did visit the set when Martin was working and was impressed with his portrayal. "He did say that I was a bit greyer and a bit balder but he thought I'd be alright."

"Neil is very enthusiastic about the film being made. It will be wonderful to see his and Damien's relationship up on the big screen."

Martin had many scenes with movie newcomer, Jodi Gordon. "She's doing a great job. She will blow people away."

Martin puts the success of the film down to Simon Wincer. "He is the driving force behind this. He has lived with it for so long and he is so passionate about the story. I think that enthusiasm gets passed on to the cast and crew. Simon guides you. He's not imposing, just inspiring to work with."

Martin sees the film as a fantastic opportunity, especially as it is the type of film he can take his kids to, unlike some of his more recent roles.

"I was delighted to be offered the role. I just loved the story and the script. When I read it I knew I had to do it."

"It is a wonderful Australian story directed by Simon Wincer. He knows about horses and he knows about storytelling – he's the perfect man for the job."

Martin Sacks is best remembered by Australian television audiences for the role of PJ in the long-running series *Blue Heelers*. In more recent years he has appeared in *Underbelly*, portraying Mario Condello. He has also had roles in *Sea Patrol*, *City Homicide* and *Rescue Special Ops*. Martin is also a director having directed episodes of *Blue Heelers*, *All Saints* and his own short film, *Crushed*.

Shaun Micallef – portrays *Lee Freedman*

Trainer Lee Freedman had brought Jason Oliver to Melbourne to ride for him. When the partnership didn't work out, Jason asked Lee one favour – could he take a look at his younger brother, Damien? The rest is history. Damien Oliver and Lee Freedman are still a formidable double act. When Lee doesn't have a runner in the 2002 Melbourne Cup, Damien takes the ride on the Irish legend Media Puzzle.

Shaun Micallef had to change his look by dying his hair black to take on the role of Lee Freedman. “Well, it's only a mousse. I'm not a committed enough actor to actually dye my hair permanently. I come in an hour early and they put the mousse in my hair and it sort of washes out at the end of the day.”

Unlike his co-stars Stephen Curry and Daniel MacPherson, Shaun didn't have to lose weight to take on the role. In fact he could have put on weight to look more like the trainer. “I wish I had put on weight. You win more awards if you put on weight than if you put mousse in your hair,” jokes Shaun.

On a serious note, Shaun says that the relationship between Lee and Damien is an important role in the film. “It is an honour to be asked (to play Lee Freedman) and I feel a duty to serve the relationship well in the film.”

Shaun didn't meet Lee prior to the filming but did get to speak to him on the telephone. He did meet Damien and says he is a “very generous soul to give this story to a film maker and to trust the story to be told to a large number of people.”

“It is an inherently moving story and it touched so many people when it happened.”

Working with Simon was appealing to Shaun. “For a first time actor in a non-comic role he was very tolerant. He didn't get cross with me at all and he didn't make me feel like an idiot, which is good because I feel like an idiot a lot of the time!”

Shaun admits he isn't a racing man. Not only has he never been to the Melbourne Cup his first visit to Flemington Racecourse was during filming.

Stephen Curry and Shaun have worked together off and on for the last six years. They appeared in *The King* together and have worked together on stage in the two-man Peter Cooke & Dudley Moore show, *Good Evening*.

“I know him very well and that helps a lot. We have an unspoken shorthand way of communicating. When Simon saw us on stage he saw that and I think that is what prompted him to invite me to take the role of Lee ...wonderful actor that I am, I think it was probably the relationship Stephen and I have that could be transferrable to the story of Damien and Lee. “

Shaun tells the story of auditioning for Simon when he visited the pair backstage. “I said to him ‘Damien that was one hell of a race’. There was an embarrassed pause but despite this Simon was happy to offer me the role!”

Shaun Micallef is one of Australia's leading funny men. He most recently hosted the Channel 10 series *Talkin' 'Bout your Generation*. His television credits include *Newstopia*, *Thank God You're Here*, *Micallef Tonight*, *Welcher & Welcher*, *The Micallef Program* which received Logies for Best Comedy Program, and *Seachange*. Film appearances include *The King*, *Aquamarine*, *Through My Eyes*, *The Extra*, *Bad Eggs*, and *The Honorable Wally Norman*.

Bill Hunter – portrays *Bart Cummings*

Legendary trainer Bart Cummings is known as 'The Cups King'. In 2002 he had already trained 11 Melbourne Cup winners. In 2002 he hoped Miss Meliss would give him his 12th win but he had to wait until 2008 to achieve that milestone.

Bill Hunter felt it would "get in the way" if he'd met Bart Cummings prior to portraying him in *The Cup*. "I feel it is a bit daunting to meet the person you are portraying. I have seen him on television over the years and that gives you an impression of the man. He's a very laconic sort of bloke with a dry humour. He doesn't mince words and doesn't waste any. I'm a little more erudite than he is."

Bill says he enjoyed portraying Bart, but says that playing someone who is still alive is a responsibility that puts a little more weight on the role. He loved the script because it was well constructed with just enough pathos and a touch of humour. "It is not too wordy which pays a compliment to the medium. A common fault of some scripts is they write the pictures." Bill has met Damien several times over the years and describes him as a "charming little bloke – an incredibly talented man."

Having "every vice known to man", Bill remembers the 2002 Melbourne Cup for two reasons – Damien's win on Media Puzzle and the fact his horse ran second. But his most vivid Melbourne Cup memory is 2008 when he backed the winner – Viewed trained by Bart Cummings – and had a big win. "The people will remember the 2002 Melbourne Cup because of the courage of the man. It was extraordinary."

Bill didn't think twice about taking up the role of Bart Cummings when offered to him by Simon. They have worked together periodically over the past four decades.

"As long as he told me where to stand and what to say I was happy. Anyone who says there is any more to it than that is full of b#*@. It is a job. It is a craft, but there is no art involved. What you need is commonsense and a reasonable rough head. You put on the makeup and the wardrobe and that is half the performance. That upsets the purists, but never mind. They don't work as much as I do!"

Bill has been in more films than anyone else in Australia and says he has only ever seen about 10 per cent of them. "I don't see much point. The damage is done. I don't go to the premieres, unless I can rely on bumping in to my old mates."

Bill Hunter's list of credits is so extensive there is an industry joke that you can't make a film in Australia without Bill appearing. He started out in television in the 1960s and has, as he puts it, appeared in more films than any other actor in this country. In 2005 his portrait won the Packing Room Prize in the Archibald.

Simon Wincer worked with Bill on at least half a dozen occasions and, despite the role of Bart Cummings being a cameo, Bill read the script and said he would love to be a part of it. Reflecting Simon Wincer said "that sort of came about under 'the old pals act', over the years Bill and I had so many adventures working together I just wanted him to be a part of the cup".

Sadly the cup turned out to be Bill's last film.

Alice Parkinson – portrays Jenny, Jason Oliver’s girlfriend

Following the tragic loss of her partner Jason in 2002, Jenny disappeared from the public spotlight.

Alice Parkinson didn’t meet Jenny but has been able to speak to people who knew her – Damien, Trish and Neil Pinner. “Everyone speaks highly of her. She was a lovely girl who was profoundly moved by what happened.”

“I have great respect that we are dealing with real lives and real people. Jenny’s journey is an emotional one.”

There is one horse race that Alice watches religiously and it is the Melbourne Cup. She remembers that year so well.

“When I first read the script I was in my favourite park in Sydney. Luckily I had sunglasses on. I was an absolute mess. I had flashbacks to the news of that day in 2002. I remember the emotion of the win. It was like a movie right there. It was highly emotional, particularly for Jenny. Every time I looked at the script I never got dry eyed.”

Alice was surprised at how easily she coped with the emotion of the role. She puts it down to the fact that the story was so moving it was almost unbelievable. “Because it is a real story about real people I found it easy to access that kind of reality. The script is beautiful and the emotion was there.”

Working with Simon was very satisfying for Alice. “He’s such a wonderful talent and it was a gift working with him. He allows you to do what you have to do yet he was careful about not over playing the scenes.”

Alice says she was delighted to play a vulnerable and feminine role in comparison to some of her most recent parts that are “very action packed and tomboyish.”

She is sure the film will resonate with international audiences. “It’s all about brotherly love and family love and how we honour the dead. There is a particular resonance with Australia, but the Cup is the most amazing racing event in the world!”

Alice Parkinson’s feature film credits include *Where the Wild Things Are*, *Wolverine* and *Mao’s Last Dancer*. Alice recently completed filming the female lead role in the action adventure film *James Cameron’s Sanctum 3D*. She has appeared on television screens in the long running drama *All Saints*, ABC’s *30 Seconds*, *Dance Academy*, and *Blue Water High*, and in Nine Network’s *The Strip*. Alice’s theatre credits include Sydney Theatre Company’s *The Taming of the Shrew*, Griffin Theatre’s *The Peach Season* and B Sharp’s *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* at Belvoir Street Theatre. Alice has also performed lead roles in productions of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Three Sisters* and *New Anatomies*.

Colleen Hewett – portrays Pat Rudland, Damien & Jason Oliver's mother

In 1975 Ray Oliver was killed in a race fall at Kalgoorlie in Western Australia. His wife, Pat was left with two small sons – Jason was just five-years-old, his younger brother Damien only three. In 2002 she sat in the same North Perth church listening to the same priest who farewelled her husband, Father Dan Mulligan, farewell her eldest son, Jason. Pat married jockey Lindsay Rudland. He apprenticed both the boys, allowing them to follow in their father's footsteps.

Colleen Hewett says Pat Rudland is a caring and encouraging mum who has reared her two sons for the last 27 years on her own after Ray was killed. "She stuck by her true beliefs and brought them both up – both champions."

"I didn't talk to Pat. I would have loved to have met her if I wasn't portraying her, but I didn't want to be influenced. I just wanted to be a mother. I really hope she is happy with the way I play her."

Colleen knows a lot about racing – well the punting side of it anyway. "I'm a bit of a punter. I've won and lost a lot of money with Damien on board," she admits. "I watched that whole tragic week leading up to the 2002 Melbourne Cup. I don't think anyone in Australia didn't know about the tragedy.

"It was the second time in that lady's life it happened. She knew it could happen again and it did. I watched the entire coverage. It was an awful time for all Australians. We are very family in this country and we do wear our hearts on our sleeves. It was heartbreaking and then the miraculous high with Damien winning."

Colleen says the only motivation she needed to portray the emotion of Jason's death was imagining it was her own family. "I just asked 'how would I be feeling now?'"

"This is my first film and I am so delighted to be asked to portray Damien Oliver's mother. It was an honour, an absolute honour. I am chuffed."

Colleen says Simon is "an absolute gem" and admits to being in awe of the professionalism of Stephen and Daniel.

"I can't fault anyone. They are genuinely all here for the right reasons. It's not about work. It's about paying tribute to a family. This is someone's story.

Colleen Hewett is a highly acclaimed singer and actress. Her rendition of *Wind Beneath My Wings* is celebrated as one of the best ever recorded. As her music career grew so did her acting career with roles in some of the most popular television series made in Australia during the 1970s. Most recently she has toured with a production of *Chicago* and played Peter Allen's mother in *Boy from Oz*.

CREW

Simon Wincer – Director, co-producer, co-writer

“*The Cup* is the story of human triumph over tragedy. It is a moving, emotional story. A great story and great stories make great movies.”

In 2002 Simon Wincer was in the US completing the feature *Monty Walsh* and didn't see the race but Texan journalist, Eric O'Keefe told him the story. Eric wanted to write a book. Simon wanted to make a movie. Together they wrote the screenplay.

“I took that first draft to the VRC. Without their co-operation it would be impossible to make the movie. They were very supportive and arranged an introduction to meet Damien Oliver. We had long sessions with Damien and his manager, Neil Pinner, going through the whole story. From that we wrote the second draft. The one we shot was draft 20.”

This is a very personal story for Damien Oliver, and he has been available to crew and cast throughout the process.

“It is still hard for Damien to talk about his brother, but he has been fantastic. Damien came to the first read through we had with the actors and was delighted with how we were telling his story.”

Damien was also on hand to give Stephen Curry pointers, right down to how he puts his goggles on before a race. Damien's best friend, jockey Matt Allen, was Stephen's riding double which worked so well because Matt knows Damien's riding style.

Damien and Neil helped Simon get the story right, but the global financial crisis forced a long delay before production. *The Cup* is a big budget film by Australian standards with a budget of \$15 million. When a major investor pulled out the movie was put on hold. It has been worth the wait.

Simon Wincer has been around horses since he was a little boy. He knows that horses and all animals make great emotional stories and great movies. He was the right director for this film because he has the patience to work with the thoroughbreds.

“Working with thoroughbreds is a nightmare. They are fractious and don’t like to stand still. They are bred to run. They all have different personalities, but working with them gives some magic moments.

“Filming has been challenging. It was a tight schedule and we had to deliver big scenes day after day after day and deal with Melbourne’s weather. We shot during Melbourne’s winter, the worst one for 12 years!

“Luckily all the cast delivered. There was no need to do 100s of takes because people forgot their lines. And there were big days with 100s of extras. Luckily I had a great team of assistant directors around me.

“This has been a rare experience for me. The cast and crew were totally dedicated to the project. There was no whinging. It’s been a hard shoot with long hours but there was no drama. Every day went smoothly. It’s been hard to say goodbye to them.”

Simon knows that the 2002 Melbourne Cup is part of Australian sporting folklore. Everyone remembers where they were when Damien touched his lips and sent a kiss to the heavens. What many don’t know is the win was a triumph for Media Puzzle too. The horse had recovered from a broken pelvis and there was a time when there was talk of sending him to the knackery. Dermot Weld knew he was capable of winning the Cup.

And only a few weeks before Australia was in mourning because of the loss of so many lives in the Bali bombing. Damien was inspired by North Melbourne footballer, Jason McCartney who was badly injured in the blast, and Jason was inspired by Damien “Australia was looking for a hero – and Damien became that hero.”

The Cup was shot in high definition because of the very small cameras available for the crucial scenes of the race itself. Movie goers will ride the race with Damien, right in the thick of it.

“It will be the Cup as we haven’t seen it before. We will be right with Damien when he jostles for position.”

“DoP David Burr is talented and creative. He has a wonderful temperament. We’ve done six films together. My AD, Bob Donaldson and I have done 13 movies together. My producers, David Lee and Jan Bladier – we grew up together at Crawfords doing *Matlock*, *Division 4* and *Homicide*. Having these working relationships has made a big difference. We understand each other.”

Simon on the cast: -

Stephen Curry

“I approached Stephen four or five years ago. His performance as Graham Kennedy in *The King* was extraordinary. Stephen is believable as a jockey – he’s not too tall and he’s slim enough. He was the right person. He has a great twinkle in his eye and a good sense of timing. Stephen is a very capable young actor.

“Stephen is dedicated. He has stuck to his diet and looks believable in the saddle. I rode beside Stephen the day he had his first gallop. He yelled, ‘now I get it’. It was exhilarating to be with him!”

Brendan Gleeson

“He is one of the world’s great actors. When he was first sent the script he was not interested but changed his mind. He chose the role because it is an uplifting film. There are not bad characters, everyone is positive. He was worried about the Irish dialogue, but I pointed out to him that it was written by an Australian and a Texan.

Daniel MacPherson

Jason was happy to go back to Perth and be the big fish in the little pond. And he had a fantastic relationship with Damien. Daniel was the only choice. THIS IS MORE ABOUT JASON THAN DANIEL

Tom Burlinson

“I was nervous when Tom came in to audition. He is a good friend, and he was coming in to audition for an Irish character. He’s probably a bit older than Dave but he photographs young. It was a fantastic read. He chose himself for the part. He did a great job – and this gives him the chance to show his riding talents again. Tom’s a natural.”

Bobby Fox

“I’d seen *Jersey Boys* and knew Bobby was Irish but he had no film experience. He leaps off the screen with vitality and energy. Tom and Brendan helped him a lot on set, getting a real raw energy from his performance.”

Jodi Gordon

“She did a wonderful read. She is blessed with a great beauty and an inner beauty that shines through in this role.

Alice Parkinson

“Alice was nervous because she had just played the lead in James Cameron’s *3D Sanctum* and was suddenly taking on a smaller role. She did a fantastic reading and has pivotal scenes in the movie. Alice is wonderful and she’s going to go a long way, as is Jodi.”

Colleen Hewett

“I worked with Colleen a long time ago and remember her as an instinctive actress. She has a wonderful blue collar quality. I like that about her. She is very earthy and very moving.”

Martin Sacks

“Marty and I are old friends, but we never worked together. When he first started directing I was a bit of a mentor. I have come to know Neil Pinner well and we’ve become good friends.

I wanted someone who had the warmth of Neil and Marty pulls that off. He is a great Aussie type with lovely warmth and sincerity.”

Shaun Micallef

“Shaun’s casting was controversial. I had seen him with Stephen on stage in their Peter Cook and Dudley Moore production. He is a wonderful, capable actor. And he is the same type as Lee.

Lance Hool – Executive Producer

When Lance Hool first discussed *The Cup* with Simon Wincer he wasn't aware of Damien Oliver and his amazing 2002 Melbourne Cup win on Media Puzzle. "I didn't understand the significance of the Melbourne Cup in Australia; I just thought it was a wonderful human story. This is a love letter to Melbourne and Australia. It is a story that transcends borders. It is a universal story that could happen in Mexico City or in Rome, wherever there are two brothers living who are so close."

Lance has worked with Simon before on projects including *Crocodile Dundee in Los Angeles*.

"It's a great pleasure to work with Simon. We are a good team together. We help and rely on each other. We trust each other and, as we say, we go to 'war' together."

It is this faith in Simon and his ability that brought Lance to the project. He admits that if it was any other director doing a movie with so many thoroughbreds he would have said 'no'. "I started in the business in the horse department as a stuntman/actor in westerns. I know what a tough business it is working with horses."

Lance praises the 'solid' cast saying Brendan Gleeson brings 'a real gravitas' to the production.

When Simon told him he'd found Damien in the guise of Stephen Curry, Lance's first reaction was that the actor was 'a little overweight'. Lance laughs at the memory, "Poor Stephen's been working on getting thin ever since. He's terrific. He's given us a tremendous performance."

"The girls are terrific. Daniel is a star – he'll make it worldwide. Bobby Fox is spot on. He is another one with a real future," says Lance.

"It takes a very good actor to use another accent. Tom is just that. And it's almost hard to believe that Shaun is a comedian. Colleen is a natural. And Harli – we thought we'd have to bring someone from the Middle East. Ironically we found Harli, whose heritage is Middle Eastern, in Melbourne. It's a pleasure to find someone with the acting ability to bring the inner strength to the part. Harli brings it on."

For Lance, at the very core of *The Cup* is the intimate story about people and emotion. "It is about how we pay homage to our dead and how we deal with life."

Lance shares Simon's passion for the story. "His passion is infectious. It permeates through the crew. The movie is about passion and it's about feelings. We all relate to it."

David Lee & Jan Bladier – producers

Filming can only take place because of the team of professionals back in the production office. Simon chose veteran producing team David Lee and Jan Bladier for this vital role.

Jan and David have a long association with Simon. They started their careers together at Crawford Productions in the early days of television. Over the years they have worked together on many projects.

Together with Simon, Jan and David worked on the long process of pulling together the \$15 million budget for the film.

There were many challenges they had to face that began years before the shoot in 2010. Some filming began in 2006 at Flemington Racecourse. The track's layout was undergoing change so it was imperative some footage was shot while the track still looked as it did in 2002.

“It was like a military operation. Security at the track was particularly tight. We had seven crews around the track in amongst the 100,000 plus racegoers on Derby Day and Melbourne Cup Day. Each crew had a full 35mm camera, camera crew and grips. The walkie talkies we hired didn't work because it was just impossible to hear anything so we had to 'run' between the crews pushing our way through the crowd. It was a nightmare,” says Jan.

In 2010 not even the weather was on side.

“Melbourne had been in drought for years,” explains Jan, “but when we began shooting the drought broke.”

This caused problems finding race tracks that weren't sodden. The film equipment could damage soft tracks and while the racing industry has been very supportive their first obligation was to the safety of their riders.

“This meant we actually had to go to Swan Hill to find a track dry enough to film some vital scenes,” says Jan.

And there was Melbourne airport – where the crew had to film in a secure part of the tarmac with horses being loaded and unloaded. It was a mammoth task.

During the filming of *The Cup* literally thousands of extras were used, in excess of 4000. They had to dress in the race going finery as if it was spring in Melbourne when it was the heart of Melbourne's winter, with a freezing wind blowing across Flemington Racetrack.

And the famous Flemington roses were not in bloom so 4000 roses were tied to the rose bushes to bring spring to winter. The art department also had to label scores of bottles of beer with the labels of the 2002 sponsor – a brand of beer no longer available.

Moving the crew, cast and horses around Melbourne was a logistical feat. With a crew of 75 on the set at any time and at least 10 trucks as well as trailers for the cast a complex movement order had to be carried out between every set. This was compounded by the early starts and distances travelled between locations from the Melbourne suburbs to regional Victoria.

Of the 100 horses used during the shoot, up to 60 horses were involved in each of the race and stable scenes. The horse department employed strappers and stable hands to assist with grooming, feeding and the general care of all of the horses. When the horses were stabled away from their home base members of the horse department spent the night at the same location.

Dialect coaches were required to ensure the actors' Irish accents were believable and consistent. This meant even Irish born Bobby Fox having a few lessons. An Arabic coach was used for Harli Ames to ensure Saeed was believable.

Once filming was completed the work continued. In post-production country Victoria had to be turned into Dubai by replacing green hills and paddocks with desert and palm trees. Swan Hill racecourse was converted in to West Australia's Belmont track by changing the background shots. The racehorses in the footage shot in 2006 had to be replaced with horses that matched the 2002 race. Not even the minutest detail was left to chance.

These are just some of the intricacies that made *The Cup* such a challenging movie to shoot.

Bruce Rowland – composer

Bruce Rowland believes the score is often the unsung hero of a film. He says the score should enhance the film and hopes the score for *The Cup* will “help move the audience”.

“It’s an interesting score because it has allowed me to do things I haven’t done before.”

There is Irish music with the penny whistle, Arabic music, and modern symphonic music with strings, clarinet and lots of piano. And there are a couple of modern cues with rock and roll style guitar solos.

Bruce Rowland and Simon Wincer have been friends for years. Bruce has composed the score of two of Simon’s most successful Australian projects – *The Man from Snowy River* (Simon was Executive Producer) and *Phar Lap*.

Simon first discussed *The Cup* with Bruce about five years ago. He loved the script from the first time he read it even though he admits to beING “overwhelmed” at first by the magnitude of the task. He then broke the movie down into scenes to begin the process to create the perfect music.

“My inspiration comes out of desperation,” says Bruce. “If it has to be done by Tuesday, the best idea I’ve had by then is the best idea. Once recorded I never revisit the music.”

For Bruce, inspiration isn’t really a problem, cutting the music off is the problem. It comes to him everywhere and anywhere. It comes in the middle of the night, which is why he keeps a notebook by the bed. “I can be in a deep sleep and the music will come to me.”

In the music room, once Bruce feels he has ‘nailed it’ he shuts the piano’s lid and heads out into his property. “I do the lawns or chop the wood – anything to get away from the music. When I get back I hit the playback button. If it doesn’t hit me instantly I do it again.”

Eric O’Keefe – writer

Eric O’Keefe says the story of the 2002 Melbourne Cup is the best story he has ever encountered. This Texan journalist has covered assignments all over the world and says, “Nothing can compare to the safe of this broken-hearted man and the broken-down horse he rode to victory in the world’s greatest two-miler.

“I sensed that the moment I heard the first few details and it only got better the more I explored the individuals and events that stoked *The Cup*.

Eric first heard the story of the 2002 Melbourne Cup from US champion polo player, Memo Gracida who was playing polo in Australia at the time and went to the Melbourne Cup. Memo told Eric he had to write the story. His wife told Eric “you will never see a stadium filled with 120,000 plus people shrieking, screaming, clutching strangers at the moment of this great achievement.”

Eric first met Simon Wincer in 1998 on location in Canada during the filming of a Tom Selleck western *Crossfire Trail*. Eric felt it was only natural that he contact Simon when he began researching *The Cup*.

“Given Simon’s renown with movies featuring horses – *Man From Snowy River*, *Phar Lap*, and *Lonesome Dove*, among others – ringing him up was a natural.”

During his research, Eric had the pleasure of meeting Damien Oliver and his manager and confidante Neil Pinner. He knew from the start that they were great mates. He could see that their bond ran deep.

“Stephen Curry and Martin Sacks have done a remarkable job of bringing this to life in the film as well as conveying the great fun the two share.”

Eric has spent time in Melbourne and feels a real affinity with the city.

“I love everything about Melbourne and rave about it to my fellow Texans every chance I get. I fully expect to be accorded ambassadorial status in the near future.”

David Burr – Director of Photography

David began work at Cinesound as a 17 year old. Today he is one of Australia's most respected DoPs.

He has worked with Simon Wincer on several projects and Simon was delighted to have him behind the camera on *The Cup*.

David worked in the industry during the halcyon days of the Australian film industry and has worked with some of the greats including Peter Weir, Bruce Beresford, John McLean ACS, John Seale ACS, Russell Boyd ACS, Don McAlpine ACS, Peter James ACS, David Gribble ACS, Dean Semler ACS, Ross Nichols ACS, Dick Marks and countless other dedicated technicians in all areas of the industry.

He lists the highlights of his career as *The Cars That Ate Paris*, *Storm Boy*, *My Brilliant Career*, *Gallipoli*, *Breaker Morant*, *The Getting of Wisdom* and *Puberty Blues*. And in more recent years highlights include *Paperback Hero*, *Crocodile Dundee In Los Angeles*, *Beyond Borders*, *Vertical Limit* and especially *The Phantom* directed by Simon Wincer for which David won the ACS Milli.

Bob Donaldson – First Assistant Director

Bob has worked with Simon Wincer on 13 films. It is a friendship and relationship that creates a smooth, calm set. They first worked together on *Prisoner* back in the 1970s and then *The Lighthorsemen* in 1986. "We've been going strong ever since," says Bob.

Their other films are *Quigley Down Under*, *Young Indy Chronicles*, *Lightning Jack*, *Operation Dumbo Drop*, *The Phantom*, *PT Barnum*, *Crossfire Trail*, *Crocodile Dundee in LA*, *Young Black Stallion*, *Nascar: The Imax Experience*, *Comanche Moon*, and now *The Cup*.

Lisette Thomas – Production Designer

Lisette Thomas has worked on numerous films and television shows as an Art Director and/or Set Designer including *American Pie*, *Crocodile Dundee in Los Angeles*, *The Phantom*, *Operation Dumbo Drop*, *Harley Davidson and the Marlboro Man*, *Shattered*, *The Doors* and *Wayne's World*. Her television credits include *Flash*, *Separate But Equal* and *The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles*. Lisette has also worked on commercials and corporate films for Compaq Computers, Xerox, Slice, Isuzu, Honda and Ronald Reagan's 80th Birthday Celebration.

Lisette began her career assisting Robin Wagner and Tom Lynch on Broadway and for the New York City Ballet before moving to California and working on numerous West Coast theatre productions. She has a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Carnegie-Mellon University and a Masters of Fine Arts from California Institute of the Arts.

Julie Middleton – Costume Design

Julie has worked on several films including *Day Breakers*, *The Phantom* (with Simon Wincer), *Spider and Rose*, *Quigley Down Under* (also with Simon Wincer), *Komodo*, *Wilful*, *Turtle Beach* and *Trouble in Paradise*.

She was costume designer on *Blue Water High*, *Spellbinder*, *Outriders*, *Snobs*, *Don't Blame Me*, *Time Game*, *Sun on the Stubble* and *Rafferty's Rules*.

Jo Fletcher – Make-up

Jo is a makeup artist and hairdresser who brings 15 years experience in film and television to *The Cup*. Her credits include *Where The Wild Things Are*, *Lake Mungo*, *Blue Heelers*, *Saddle Club* (series 3), *As The Bell Rings* (series 1, 2 & 3) and *Sensing Murder*. She has also worked on *Noise*, *Josh Jarman*, *Crackerjack*, *Chopper*, *Take Away*, *The Dish*, *Stingers*, *Sea Change*, *MDA* and *Something In The Air*.

The Equine Stars

Some would say the real stars of *The Cup* are the horses. The film features three major horse races - the Irish St Ledger, the 2002 Geelong Cup, where Media Puzzle qualified to race in the Melbourne Cup and, of course, the 2002 Melbourne Cup.

To capture these races 80 horses were used – all registered thoroughbreds. 500 horses were auditioned to find the right horses for the roles. For each race horse featured there were at least two doubles. Several safety horses were used throughout filming. These were Australian Stockhorses and crossbred sport horses.

The majority of the horses were specifically matched to the horses that competed in the actual races in 2002. Colour consultants were used to ensure the correct markings. Where markings weren't quite right makeup was used. But it wasn't just their looks that won them a role in *The Cup*. The horses were also selected because of their temperament.

There were a number of horses playing the roles of Media Puzzle, Vinnie Roe and Pugin. The individual horses were chosen for their specific skills such as calm horses for our actors to ride, galloping horses and specialty skill or trick horses. The speciality and trick horses were used for scenes requiring rearing or fractious horses.

The search for the horses was Australia wide. Some were bought through Inglis Thoroughbred Sales, from brokers, trainers or private sellers. Some were leased by the production company or given free. A few lucky horses were saved from the knackery.

Like our human stars, *The Cup* horses had to 'rehearse' their scenes including barrier loading, tracking shots and even walking around the mounting yard. They were trained and educated for their roles.

More than 50 professional jockeys were used during filming. While the actors are good horsemen most of the racing and track work was left up to the professionals. The jockeys had to fit filming in with their commitment to ride track work and race for their trainers.

The horse team

This large team of experts was headed up by **Georgia Aikman** who used her local and international experience in the worlds of racing, hunting, polo and show horses combined with her corporate expertise to meet all of Simon Wincer's requirements for his equine stars.

The senior wrangler, **Brett Welsh** spent many hours training the horses and ensuring they could handle getting into the barriers, cantering along the beach and doing track and racing work with the camera tracking alongside them. Brett is also the Assistant Horse Master on *The Australian Outback Spectacular*.

Horse master **Evanne Chesson** has trained horses and other animals for some of Australia's most successful television series and films. Evanne found and trained 'Spike' who features as the main Media Puzzles. Evanne says Spike loved being on set and was featured in a promotion for Victoria's Spring Racing Carnival following the filming.

Evanne's extensive list of credits include the ABC-TV series *Ben Hall*; *The Silver Brumby* which won an AFI Award; and feature films *Phar Lap*; *Breaker Morant*; *Evil Angels* and *Australia*. She has trained horses, dogs and even an echidna for the 'Antz Pantz' television commercial.

There were also 16 wranglers on the horse team who exercised and cared for the horses, and on race days this grew to about 40.

Production notes - For the trivia buffs

During the filming of *The Cup* there were

- 121 regular crew members
- 145 casual crew members
- 92 cast members
- 5 stunt doubles
- 4,000 extras
- 51 jockeys
- 25 barrier attendants and Clerks of the Course
- 200 sets of jockey silks manufactured
- 500 hats made
- 15,000 meals served
- 500 horses were 'auditioned' to 'cast' the 100 horses required
- 4000 fake roses were attached to the bushes at Flemington
- 100s of beer bottles relabelled with the 2002 Tooheys' label
- 55 horses stabled at Simon Wincer's farm between the completion of the main shoot and filming at Flemington Racecourse (one – Simon's favourite) is still there, now a member of the Wincer 'family'
- Members of the crew created a syndicate to buy one of the horses with the hope of one day watching him win