



**MEDIA RELEASE: STRICTLY EMBARGOED UNTIL WEDNESDAY 23 NOVEMBER 2011**

## **Australian Academy announces first Award recipient – Don McAlpine**

Australian cinematography legend, Donald M. McAlpine (ACS/ASC), was today announced the recipient of the nation's highest screen accolade – the AACTA Raymond Longford Award.

The announcement sees McAlpine join an illustrious group of Australian screen greats, each of whom are previous Raymond Long Award recipients, including Peter Weir, Geoffrey Rush, Fred Schepisi, Charles 'Bud' Tingwell and Jack Thompson.

McAlpine's career spans more than 50 films made over 40 years, and includes Australian classics such as *Don's Party* and *'Breaker' Morant*, through to international blockbusters such as *Predator*, *Patriot Games* and *X-Men Origins: Wolverine*.

He has received numerous accolades throughout his career including an Oscar® and BAFTA nomination for Best Cinematography for *Moulin Rouge!*, a BAFTA nomination for *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet*, working with Baz Luhrmann, as well as three AFI Awards.

This marks the first award to be bestowed by the newly-established Australian Academy of Cinema and Television Arts (AACTA), which is just one week away from revealing all nominees in competition for an award at the inaugural Samsung AACTA Awards.

McAlpine will be officially awarded with a special presentation at the Samsung AACTA Awards Luncheon on Sunday 15 January – the first of AACTA's two awards events, both of which will be held in January to fall within the international screen awards season. The Luncheon will include special tributes for McAlpine by fellow screen luminaries Bruce Beresford, Jack Thompson and P.J. Hogan.

AFI | AACTA CEO, Damian Trehwella, said:

"The announcement of Don McAlpine as the recipient of the AACTA Raymond Longford Award marks a milestone in Australian history, being the first award bestowed by the new Australian Academy.

"Don McAlpine is a most deserving recipient of the Raymond Longford Award, the highest accolade which AACTA can bestow on an individual, and we are delighted that such an outstanding screen practitioner is the first person to be awarded by AACTA.

"With more than 50 films to his name, three AFI Awards, one Academy Award nomination and two BAFTA nominations amongst other accolades, McAlpine is truly an Australian artist of international standing.

"Announcing Don McAlpine as the first honoree of the inaugural Samsung AACTA Awards provides the perfect opening to our Awards season, and we wait with anticipation to reveal all AACTA Award nominees in Sydney next week."

McAlpine, now aged 77, is still working at full speed and continues to adapt to new digital technology. With his lifelong partner, his wife Jeanette, at his side, he has just completed filming for P.J. Hogan's latest feature film, *Mental*, starring Toni Collette, Liev Schreiber and Anthony LaPaglia.

Upon being told of the Award, Don McAlpine said, "I accept the Raymond Longford Award as a great personal honour. I am thrilled with the honour it implies to the art and craft of Australian cinematographers."



Fellow Australian screen great and long time friend, Jack Thompson AM, said:

“Don and I have known each other for about 40 years. He's a good friend. His cinematography has been instrumental in both my career as an actor and the establishment of an Australian film industry that is recognised worldwide for excellence. No one deserves this award more than Don. His contribution to cinema is without peer. Good on ya mate!”

Internationally acclaimed director, Bruce Beresford, also praised McAlpine:

“Don has photographed a staggering number of feature films, both in Australia and overseas. He is a great artist, capable of varying his style to suit the subject matter of the film. He is a delight to work with. A credit to the Australian film industry.”

AFI Chairman, Alan Finney, said:

“Don McAlpine has been a key player in our industry over nearly 40 years working on an incredibly diverse range of films including such memorable films as *Moulin Rouge!*, which earned an Oscar® nomination in 2002, *Predator*, *Down and Out in Beverly Hills*, *Patriot Games*, *Peter Pan*, *The Time Machine*, *Clear and Present Danger*, *Mrs. Doubtfire*, *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and *X-Men Origins and Wolverine*.

“I first became aware of Don when I became involved in our industry back in the early 1970s and films such as *The Adventures of Barry McKenzie*, *The Getting of Wisdom*, *'Breaker' Morant* and *My Brilliant Career* played a key role in establishing our local production credentials both in Australia and Internationally.

“Don has now once again been recognised for his role as a cinematographer who has made significant and substantial contributions to the global art of filmmaking.”

### **Don McAlpine – A history of achievement in international cinematography**

From his birth in the small Outback town of Quandialla NSW, to the bright lights of Hollywood, and now back again, McAlpine's own life and career has mirrored not only the development of film and cinema technology over the last 70 years, but also the growth and expansion of the Australian screen industry and its international profile.

Starting his career as an amateur photographer in country NSW, where he was working as a school teacher, McAlpine quickly rose to prominence in the burgeoning local film industry of the late 1960s and 70s.

Having freelanced for the ABC, then becoming Chief Cameraman for the Commonwealth Film Unit (CFU), McAlpine took leave to shoot his first feature film: Bruce Beresford's *The Adventures of Barry McKenzie* (1972) – the first feature fully financed by the new Australian Film Development Corporation, and an internationally successful movie that spearheaded the resurgence of local production.

McAlpine went on to shoot many more films for Bruce Beresford, including *Don's Party* (1976), *The Getting of Wisdom* (1978), *'Breaker' Morant* (1980) and *Puberty Blues* (1981). During this period, McAlpine also shot for other directors, including Richard Franklin (*Patrick*, 1978), Tom Jeffrey (*The Odd Angry Shot*, 1979), and Gillian Armstrong (*My Brilliant Career*, 1979).

After coming to the attention of New York director Paul Mazursky, who asked McAlpine to shoot his influential 1982 film *Tempest*, McAlpine began working steadily in the US. His work from early 1980s with Mazursky and iconic directors like Alan J. Pakula (*Orphans*, 1987; *See You in the Morning*, 1989) and Martin Ritt (*Stanley & Iris*, 1989) led to projects with high profile Hollywood directors including Ron Howard (*Parenthood*, 1989) and Chris Columbus (*Mrs Doubtfire*, 1993; *Stepmom*, 1998).



Working in Hollywood, Don McAlpine's Australian connections have remained strong. He has worked there as cinematographer for fellow Australian directors Phil Noyce (*Patriot Games*, 1992; *Clear and Present Danger*, 1994), Mel Gibson (*The Man Without a Face*, 1993) and P.J. Hogan (*Peter Pan*, 2003). McAlpine has also shot two films for Baz Luhrmann: *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet* (1996), and then *Moulin Rouge!*, for which he was nominated for an Oscar® for Best Cinematography in 2002.

Whether he's working on edgy performance-based dramas like *Anger Management* (2002) or on big budget special effects-laden spectacles like *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe* (2004) or *X-Men Origins: Wolverine* (2008), McAlpine is known within the industry for his extraordinary ability to adapt his skills to the stories he is filming, and to complement the particular strengths and weaknesses of the people he is working with.

Don is currently the subject of a documentary, *Show Me The Magic*, to be screened next year on SBS and at key festivals. The film is being directed by Cathy Henkel, who is producing alongside Trish Lake, who says this of McAlpine: "Don is a man of artistry, skill, vision, ethics and amazing fortitude. He is a living legend."

#### **Video clip of Don McAlpine being told of his AACTA Raymond Longford Award**

A clip of Jack Thompson informing Don McAlpine that he is the recipient of the AACTA Raymond Longford Award will be available to view on the AACTA website from 9am Wednesday 23 November 2011: [www.aacta.org](http://www.aacta.org)

#### **Notes to editors:**

The lead-up to the Australian Academy's first Awards is in full-swing, with nominations for the inaugural Samsung AACTA Awards to be announced in Sydney on **30 November 2011** at the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA).

The first of the inaugural Samsung AACTA Awards events will be the **Samsung AACTA Awards Luncheon presented by Digital Pictures, which will be held on 15 January 2012** and timed to incorporate cross-feeds to the G'Day USA LA Black Tie Gala. The Samsung AACTA Awards Luncheon presented by Digital Pictures will recognise excellence across Feature Film, Television, Documentary and Short Film. A highlight of the event will be the special presentation of the AACTA Raymond Longford Award, the highest accolade which AACTA can bestow on an individual, which will be presented to Don McAlpine.

AACTA's inaugural Awards season will culminate with the **Samsung AACTA Awards Ceremony, which will be held at the Sydney Opera House on 31 January 2012**. The Ceremony will be broadcast on the Nine Network, and will recognise excellence across film and television, including the Samsung AACTA Awards for Best Film, Best Television Drama Series, Best Direction, Best Lead Actor and Best Lead Actress. The Byron Kennedy Award will also be presented, recognising outstanding creative enterprise and innovation within the film and television industries.

The recipients of the newly established AACTA International Awards will also be announced at the Samsung AACTA Awards Ceremony.

For further information, please see the new AACTA website: [www.aacta.org](http://www.aacta.org)

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