

## **Award of Honorary Degree of Doctor of Visual and Performing Arts**

### **FRED SCHEPISI**

Fred Schepisi was born in Melbourne 26 December 1939 and has become one of Australia's finest film directors emerging from Australia's "New Wave" of the 1970s. Fred was one of the first Australian directors of this period to work in Hollywood.

In the 1960s Fred made his mark in the advertising world setting up in 1966, with his partners, Alex Stitt and Bruce Weatherhead "The Film House" film production company known for its innovative commercials and documentaries.

Fred's first fiction film made in 1975 in collaboration with Thomas Keneally was "The Priest", a half hour segment for the episodic feature "Libido". It earned him a Silver Award from the Australian Film Institute (AFI). He wrote, directed and produced his first feature, "The Devil's Playground" (1976), a semi autobiographical look at a young boy in a Catholic seminary that won 6 AFI awards, including Best Film. This was followed in 1978 by another collaboration with Thomas Keneally, "The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith", which brought him to international attention winning him a New York Critics Circle Award and leading to a series of US features including "Barbarosa" (1981), "Plenty" (1985) and "Roxanne" (1987). He returned to Australia to make "Evil Angels" (1988) which was based on John Bryson's book on the media frenzy around the Lindy Chamberlain case. It won the AFI award for best film as well as gaining Fred a Golden Globe award nomination for best writer and director.

Fred has continued to make films overseas but has a base in Melbourne. Other film credits include "Iceman" (1983), "The Russia House" (1990), "Mr Baseball" (1992), "Six Degrees of Separation" (1993), "I.Q." (1994), "The Last Orders" (2001), "It Runs in the Family" (2002) and the mini series "Empire Falls" (2005) for which he gained an Emmy nomination for best director and won a Golden Globe for Best Mini-Series. He is currently in pre-production in Australia with "Last Man", a film about Vietnam war-veterans.

Fred has directed some of the best leading actors including Meryl Streep, Kirk and Michael Douglas, Paul Newman, Helen Hunt, Stockard Channing, Meg Ryan, Helen Mirren, Donald Sutherland, Ed Harris, Bob Hoskins, Michael Caine, Sam Neill, Phillip Seymour Hoffman, Tim Robbins and Steve Martin. Fred has developed a reputation as an "actor's director" excelling at translating difficult material into entertaining and captivating work for the screen. He also has extensive credits as a producer and a writer of adapted and original work and has won writers guild awards for "The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith" and "Roxanne".

Fred has continuously contributed his expertise to the Film industry most recently as the president of the 2006 Bangkok International Film Festival. He was awarded the AFI Raymond Longford Lifetime Achievement award in 1991, the Brisbane Film Festival's Chauvel award in 1994, the Australian Screen Directors Association's Outstanding Achievement Award in 2003 and an Order of Australia in 2004 "For services to the Australian film industry as a director, producer and screenwriter, the development of creative talent as a mentor and to support for the preservation of Australia's film heritage."