

Screenrights is a non-profit company which administers copyright licences in Australia and New Zealand and collects similar royalties from Europe and North America for its 2,200 members from 51 countries.

November 2005

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### Screenrights

Level 3, 156 Military Road  
Neutral Bay NSW Australia  
Post Office Box 1248  
Neutral Bay NSW 2089  
Australia

Australia  
Ph: +61 2 9904 0133  
Fax: +61 2 9904 0498

New Zealand  
Freephone: 0800 44 2348  
Freefax: 0800 44 7006

info@screenrights.org  
www.screenrights.org

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## Feature: A multi-platform ride with Spike

Like many other film producers, Cathy Henkel had been hearing about the importance of multi-platform delivery for a number of years. When she made **I Told You I Was III: The Life and Legacy of Spike Milligan** she took a leap into the deep end and found out what it was all about. She speaks to **Off the air** about a multi-platform ride that was not without its challenges.

"I've been touring to festivals and conferences and meeting with broadcasters for four or five years now and I've kept hearing about the importance of delivering across a range of platforms," Henkel said.

As she saw it, the idea was to move beyond seeing the television broadcast as the main outlet for reaching an audience.

"Basically TV is a limited market that is undermined by all the other options for people's time," she said. And Henkel's plan was to tap into those other options. Henkel's first experience of using other platforms for her work was with her previous documentary, **The Man Who Stole My Mother's Face**.

The film dealt with sexual assault, and its broadcast was accompanied by a major website. Rather than dealing with countless one-on-one emails from audience members who wanted to discuss the issue, Henkel felt the website would provide a more effective way of managing response to the film.

"With Spike we decided to take multi-platform seriously right from the beginning," she said. "He had a huge fan base around the world, and we wanted to draw those fans to us rather than just waiting for the TV broadcast."

The website was launched before the film to raise awareness about the project.

"We also had a lot of fun with marketing items such as T-shirts and badges," Henkel said.

Next, the film hit the festival circuit. "Every session was sold out," Henkel said. "We then did a theatrical tour, including a live show, to regional areas, to clubs and RSL's— venues where the Spike fans are."

With the launch of each new platform, whether it was the web, the festival circuit or the regional tour, Henkel and her team tried to increase the media profile of the project, and with that, the size of their audience. "And everywhere we went we pushed the website," she said. "It has lots of fun interactive elements that draw people in."

When the film was finally broadcast on the ABC, it rated well.

"We had almost one million viewers and I would like to think that some of them came to us because of the whole exercise," Henkel said.

A lot of venues are still contacting Henkel to show the film, including a restaurant that is bringing people in by bus to have lunch and watch the documentary. However, Henkel believes that the DVD sales figures will be the real test of whether this experiment has worked in terms of revenue.

"The DVD is more than the film," she said. "It has six additional mini-docs, a game, more of the family archive and an animated Spike that takes you through the content. It's being positioned as a Christmas item and we will be able to see the sales figures after this period."



*Spike meets Queen Elizabeth*



*Spike with young Prince Charles*



*Producer/director Cathy Henkel and producer Jeff Canin*

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Despite not yet having these figures, Henkel has enough perspective on the project to be able to see where the challenges lay.

"I think what we learnt is that you need a lot of marketing money," she said. "We under-budgeted and worked so hard ourselves."

She also felt they bit off more than they could chew with their regional tour of the film. "We took a risk taking a live show with us," she said. "We're not a touring company equipped to deal with all that that involves. It was also very expensive to sustain."

Despite this, Henkel recognises that the tour was worthwhile. "As a marketing exercise it was incredibly valuable," she said. Next stop is the education market, with Henkel and her team targeting libraries followed by schools. At this stage, they have not yet settled on all the details of their approach, although the film does have a study guide available on Screenrights' resource centre for teachers, [www.enhancetv.com.au](http://www.enhancetv.com.au)

"Because of the nature of Spike Milligan we are always trying to think quirky, unexpected and outside the traditional," Henkel said.

If you would like more information about the project visit [www.spikemilliganlegacy.com](http://www.spikemilliganlegacy.com)

## Unique numbering system for audio-visual works

ISAN, a unique international numbering system for audio-visual works, will soon be adopted in Australia, with Screenrights and the Australasian Performing Right Association (APRA) declared as the ISAN Australasian Registration Agency.

ISAN, which is similar to the ISBN used in the print industry, is used to provide identification of works in a digital environment. Possible applications include improved efficiencies in:

- Program Scheduling
- Video/DVD distribution
- Inventory and digital asset management
- Anti-piracy measures
- Collective rights administration
- Online trading of audio-visual works.

Screenrights expects to launch the system early in 2006. Producers who wish to obtain an ISAN will need to supply certain data about their titles to Screenrights. Each ISAN is then linked to an online database containing underlying information about the work including the title, year of production, producer and other fields. Members who have already registered titles with us for retransmission or international royalties will, in many cases, have already supplied us with the necessary data.

Producers will also need to pay a fee. The fees are currently being finalised by Screenrights based on a rate card issued by ISAN IA, the international ISAN agency based in Europe, and are intended to cover administration costs.

Screenrights will keep members informed about the development of the service. If you would like further information either email [info@screenrights.org](mailto:info@screenrights.org) or visit [www.isan.org](http://www.isan.org)

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## Bridget Godwin re-elected as Screenrights' Chairman

The Screenrights Board has re-elected Bridget Godwin as Chairman at its first meeting following the Annual General Meeting in October.

Bridget is Manager, Business and Regulatory Affairs, at the Seven Network. She has been a director since 1995 and was first elected Chairman in 1999.

The Board also elected Jill Bryant as Deputy Chairman. Jill was formerly the Marketing Director, Asia-Pacific, BBC Worldwide Ltd. and is now the Chief Executive for WW T-Rex Pty. Ltd. She has been a director since 2003.

## More than \$1.6 million paid out in September - October

Screenrights' Member Services team has paid out \$1.69 million to members between 1 September and 31 October, with a significant proportion of this money being the tax rebate payments for titles broadcast during 2002/03 and 2003/04.

The tax rebate payments, which totalled \$1.04 million, were made following changes to tax legislation exempting Screenrights from certain tax obligations.

This money was previously taken out of the 2003 and 2004 distribution pools but was refunded and returned to the pools following the changes to the tax legislation. Of this amount, more than 1000 payments totalling \$915,000 were made to more than 320 members during September and October.

Screenrights Member Services team is continuing to distribute the remaining amount.

Members who have queries should email [memberservices@screenrights.org](mailto:memberservices@screenrights.org)

## New Member Services Officer

The Member Services team has a new Member Services Officer. Annabel Holt, who hails from Melbourne, has a background in member services with other film industry organisations.

## Cowboys and Communists win NZ Screen Producers Conference pitch

A documentary on a restaurant in the former East Germany that was run by a US biker, and had an old communist living upstairs, has won first prize at the Screenrights brunch held at the NZ Screen Producers' Conference.

There was a strong field of ideas pitched at the annual Screen Production and Development Association (SPADA) conference brunch, ranging from stories on Antarctic explorers to animated films about skate boarders.

Jess Fest, a freelance director working in Wellington, won a trip to Cannes for her documentary, **Cowboys and Communists**, which she shot while working in Germany. The restaurant, which was called White Trash, is described as the real face of East meets West.

More information about the annual SPADA Conference can be found at [www.spada.co.nz](http://www.spada.co.nz)

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## For Love and Money

Following a recent article in *The Australian* highlighting the importance of Screenrights royalties to the documentary industry, Screenrights Chief Executive Simon Lake spoke about how to maximise these returns at the *Small Screen Big Picture* Conference held in Freemantle, WA.

The session, which was entitled **For Love and Money** and held on the 24th of November, asked how filmmakers could "make a buck in this business".

Lawrie Zion's article in *The Australian* ([www.theaustralian.news.com.au](http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au)) on November 16 discussed the difficulties in surviving as a documentary producer, citing both the financial hardships of working in this area and the short life of a program. However, as the article states, this isn't the entire story. Screenrights royalties have become an important source of revenue to the industry. Mike Piper from Adelaide-based Piper Films is quoted as stating that 35% of the returns from one of his films came from Screenrights royalties.

Speaking at the session, Lake emphasised the importance of maximising these returns, particularly through using [www.enhancetv.com.au](http://www.enhancetv.com.au) to promote programs for free to the education market.

"The site now gets more than 120,000 page views each month," Lake said. "And over 4000 educators subscribe to its online guide highlighting upcoming educational programs."

Other panellists at the *Small Screen Big Picture* session were: Marian Bartsch from Mago Films; David Court, Director of the AFTRS Centre for Screen Business; Michael McMahon, Executive Producer of Canada's Primitive Entertainment; and John Gregory, CEO of the Freehand Group.

Screenrights was delighted to sponsor the conference as part of its commitment to the film industry. For more information about this and other sessions, visit [www.ssbp.com.au](http://www.ssbp.com.au)