



# COMMENTARY



**Art Phillips, composer,  
AGSC Vice-President**



I HAD THE HONOUR this year of being on the judging panel for the AFI feature film nominations (composers category). Overall there were some wonderful films entered and as our film industry attempts to thrust forward we are seeing more and more co-productions, with foreign dollars invested, as the years progress. I view this as a positive step towards Australian film making awareness throughout the world market. As this occurs, we often end up with foreign talent nominations (and possibly winners) in many categories. This controversial matter has brought concerns amongst many of us in the Australian film industry as the A.F.I awards were originally designed to be awards of excellence for Australians working in the industry.

There were seven judges on the composers panel and we were faced with having to choose five foreign composers for "best original music score in a feature film". (Note: There was one film which

successful big budget cinema release. Therefore, viewed as a much higher profile composer than the Australian.

Our decision with respect to the music nominations was based purely on what we, as a committee, felt were the best of all the entries. We voted for excellence in design of composition and I do not believe that we were swayed by depth of orchestration, music production quality or for that matter quality of the film itself. It just so happened that it did not include an Australian composer, and I believe it is as simple as that. Nine out of the twenty four films which were eligible for music nominations had foreign composers. Therefore when you look at this ratio it was feasible that this could occur.

Whilst it is fortunate for our film industry that there are so many co-productions taking place it is obvious that it will also incorporate foreign talent. I would hope that Australian producers are taking serious consideration of local

talent, especially when there are healthier budgets.

However, we must understand that they may not always have the final decision on composers in every co-production

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had two composers credited - there are four music nominations in total).

Our decision was based on our observation of excellence in the craft of screen composition. As the nominations were given to foreign craftsman I suppose it raises the issue of "WHY ....?" I write this article as I have been asked this question dozens of times since the nominations were announced.

Firstly, I feel the mere suggestion that overseas composers are better suited to the art of screen composition is utter nonsense. They may have better opportunities arising more often, therefore allowing them to demand bigger dollars, but the bottom line is that they end up fortunate enough to get on a

situation.

We can only continue to take pride in what we do and hope that it attains acknowledgement on a global scale. I will close with one final observation. I arrived in this country 5 years ago. (I am an American citizen and have recently become an Australian, with dual citizenship status). .....It is interesting to note that when an Australian attains success overseas we all applaud them, and rightly so, however if we want to compete in the international arena then we must reciprocate by acknowledging their success in our country.